

22 May 2015

# Army Public Health Weekly Update

U.S. Army Public Health Command



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## Airborne Hazards Related to Deployment

This book was edited by Coleen P. Baird, MD, MPH and Deanna K. Harkins, MD, MPH of the Environmental Medicine Program and covers the diagnosis and workup of symptomatic individuals, exposure characterization, current epidemiology, the role of spirometry in surveillance, research planning, clinical follow-up and registries, and risk communication.

This book represents a compendium of what is known regarding the potential long-term health consequences of exposure to airborne hazards during OEF, OIF, and OND deployments.



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## U.S. MILITARY

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### Ambulatory visits among members of the active component, U.S. Armed Forces, 2014

April 2015 - ... In the past 5 years, the distribution of illness- and injury-related ambulatory visits in relation to their reported primary causes has remained fairly stable. However, during 2010–2014, the numbers of visits that were documented with diagnostic codes referring to mental disorders or the musculoskeletal system increased by 14.3% and 17.9%, respectively. In 2014, musculoskeletal system and mental disorders accounted for nearly one-half (47.6%) of all illness and injury-related diagnoses. ... It should be noted, however, that the annual numbers of visits for these two major categories peaked in 2012 and have declined slightly since then. In fact, with one exception, the annual numbers of visits for all of the major diagnostic categories of illness and injury peaked in 2012 or earlier and have subsequently declined. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

### Gillibrand vows to add sexual assault proposal to defense bill

18 May - Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.) plans another push to take military sexual assault cases outside the chain of command when the chamber takes up its defense policy bill next month. ... The renewed vows came the same day Human Rights Watch released a 113-page report that found male and female soldiers who report sexual assault are 12 times more likely to be retaliated against, compared to the chances of his or her attacker being convicted of a sexual offense. "Mechanisms to protect service members are not utilized, are ineffective, poorly understood, hamstrung by jurisdictional limitations, not sufficiently independent of command structures, and mistrusted because they lead to new incidents of retaliation," the report states. [The Hill](#)

### IMF says energy subsidies rise to \$US5.3trn, more than is spent on public health

19 May - Global energy subsidies have ballooned to \$US5.3 trillion ... or 6.5 per cent of economic output this year, creating an inefficient market where consumer prices for energy are artificially low and diverting funds away from areas with greater welfare benefits. ... The cost of annual subsidies exceeds estimates for global spending on public health and has not declined as economists would expect relative to the decrease in commodity prices. [Sydney Morning Herald](#)

### Lawmakers back broader access to contraceptives for women in the military

19 May - Both houses of Congress are moving to guarantee greater access to contraceptives for women in the military, actions that lawmakers say are prompted in part

#### Xtreme Eating Awards

Nine "winning" chain restaurant meals especially high in calories fat, sugar and salt. From the Center for Science in the Public Interest.



## Classified Version of the Weekly Update

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<http://phc.army.smil.mil>

Look under Hot Topics & Current Issues.

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by concern about unplanned pregnancies in the armed forces. The annual defense policy bill, passed on Friday by the House, says military clinics and hospitals must be able to dispense any method of contraception approved by the Food and Drug Administration. Women have complained that they are sometimes unable to obtain contraceptives prescribed by their doctors, especially when they are deployed overseas. [New York Times](#)

## New channel aims to help veterans cope with depression

19 May - ... Glenn Towery started the Veterans Suicide Prevention Channel organization last year, after he struggled with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and much more. ... The Veterans Suicide Prevention Channel launched online, but the goal is to eventually broadcast the channel around the clock on TV. ... "It's in the quiet times at home, when you're alone or with family members that these feelings can be most devastating," said Glenn, "and to just have a channel...some way for you to escape." The organization needs to raise \$300,000 for equipment and a facility to house productions. They are hosting a crowdfunding event on June 22 on [Indiegogo](#). [KXAN](#)

## VA's ability to increase health professionals is 'seriously fractured'

17 May - Agency understaffing was a key flaw exposed during last year's scandal over the cover-up of long patient wait times at the Department of Veterans Affairs. It has too few health-care employees to timely serve the wounded warriors and others among its clientele. [The] Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014 ... became law in August and authorized \$5 billion for the department to hire medical professionals and social workers. ... The department plans to add 10,000 workers to its Veterans Health Administration crew of 200,000 medical professionals and clinical support staff by the end of fiscal 2016, according to Lynch. "To date, VHA has recruited more than 2,500 additional medical professionals and support staff leveraging the Choice Act resources, approximately 25 percent of the overall target," he said. ... "The department's ability to effectively and efficiently recruit, on-board and retain qualified medical professionals to treat veteran patients is seriously fractured," [Rep. Dan Benishek (R-Mich.)] said. ... "I think VA's overly bureaucratic hiring process," Benishek said, "is also a significant factor in this facility's inability to recruit a physician for multiple years running." [Washington Post](#)

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### GLOBAL

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## Amputees control bionic legs with their thoughts

20 May - Amputees can control their bionic prosthetic limbs with their minds, thanks to tiny implanted myoelectric sensors (IMES) developed by Icelandic orthopedics company Ossur

and surgically placed in a patient's residual muscle tissue. Ossur implanted tiny sensors in the residual muscle tissue of two amputees that they say trigger movement in the prosthesis via a receiver. Ossur President & CEO Jon Sigurdsson was due to announce in Copenhagen on Wednesday (May 20) that the two amputees are the first world-wide to be able to control their lower-limb prostheses subconsciously. [Reuters](#)

## Cold weather may be responsible for more deaths than heat waves

21 May – Just in time for summer in the Northern Hemisphere, a *Lancet* study reports that colder-than-optimal temperatures are associated with more deaths than hotter-than-optimal temperatures. Researchers examined some 75 million deaths in 13 countries occurring between 1985 and 2012. They recorded the average daily temperatures in various cities and related that to the mortality observed over the entire range of temperatures for the location. The "optimum temperature" — the temperature at which minimum mortality occurred — was established for each location, and the deaths above and below that were counted. The researchers estimate that roughly 8% of deaths were attributable to nonoptimal temperatures, with the preponderance of that burden (over 7%) being associated with colder temperatures. [NEJM Journal Watch](#)

## 'Home-brewed morphine' made possible

19 May - Scientists have figured out how to brew morphine using the same kit used to make beer at home. They have genetically modified yeast to perform the complicated chemistry needed to convert sugar to morphine. The findings, published in *Nature Chemical Biology*, raise promise for medicine but also concerns about "home-brewed" illegal drugs. Experts have called for tight control of organisms genetically modified to produce narcotics. [BBC News](#)

## Noise-induced 'hidden hearing loss' mechanism discovered

7 May - ... For decades, noise-induced and age-related hearing loss research efforts have focused on the loss of hair cells and the threshold elevations this causes. Hair cells have long been considered the most vulnerable elements in the inner ear, but researchers ... have now shown that nerve fibers are even more vulnerable to damage. ... " [Auditory] neuroscience didn't appreciate until recently that you can lose up to 90 percent of your cochlear nerve fibers without a change in the ability to detect a tone in quiet," he said. "Tone detection in quiet is the basis of the threshold audiogram. ... The fact that thresholds may transiently elevate and then recover within hours or days after an acoustic overexposure doesn't mean that the inner ear has recovered." Second, the most vulnerable part of the neuron turns out to be the synapse between the nerve terminal and the hair cell, and it happens to be difficult to see. ... The public health implications of this finding are quite sobering. "All of our federal noise exposure guidelines are based on the assumption that noise-exposures causing only transient threshold elevation are benign. That

assumption is almost certainly unwarranted," Liberman pointed out. [ScienceDaily](#)

## W.H.O. leader outlines changes in response to Ebola epidemic

18 May - The World Health Organization must act to ensure it will not be caught flat-footed by future crises the way it was by the Ebola epidemic in West Africa, the organization's director general said on Monday. ... As expected, Dr. Chan proposed an overhaul of the organization's emergency response system, intended to make it faster and more effective. The measures would create a dedicated health emergency work force reporting to the director, with a \$100 million contingency fund, and would streamline the organization's procedures for hiring staff, purchasing supplies and moving them swiftly to where they are needed. ... The proposals have helped to stave off suggestions that a new institution should be created to take the lead in tackling health emergencies. [New York Times](#)

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### INFLUENZA

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## CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 18 (May 3-9, 2015), influenza activity continued to decrease in the United States.

- Viral Surveillance: Of 7,533 specimens tested and reported by U.S. World Health Organization (WHO) and National Respiratory and Enteric Virus Surveillance System (NREVSS) collaborating laboratories during week 18, 372 (4.9%) were positive for influenza.
- Outpatient Illness Surveillance: The proportion of outpatient visits for influenza-like illness (ILI) was 1.2%, which is below the national baseline of 2.0%. All 10 regions reported ILI below region-specific baseline levels. [FluView](#)

## Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

- For 2015 Week 19 (through 16 May 2015):
  - Influenza: No new cases of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza among US military basic trainees.
  - FRI surveillance at all eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated FRI rates were at or below expected values. [NHRC Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update](#)

## WHO Influenza Update

18 May - Globally, influenza activity has been low. In the northern hemisphere influenza activity was nearing inter-seasonal levels and in the southern hemisphere influenza activity remained low. Countries in the tropical zones reported low influenza activity with the exception of some countries in tropical Asia and west Africa. ... Based on FluNet reporting (as of 12 May 2015 14:05 UTC), National Influenza Centres (NICs) and other national influenza laboratories from 86 countries, areas or territories reported data for the time period from 19 April 2015 to 2 May 2015. The WHO GISRS laboratories tested more than 51 009 specimens. 4728 were positive for influenza viruses, of which 1234 (26.1%) were typed as influenza A and 3494 (73.9%) as influenza B. Of the sub-typed influenza A viruses, 456 (53.8%) were influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 and 391 (46.2%) were influenza A(H3N2). Of the characterized B viruses, 285 (94.7%) belonged to the B-Yamagata lineage and 16 (5.3%) to the B-Victoria lineage. [WHO](#)

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### VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

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## BP oil spill responsible for Gulf of Mexico dolphin deaths

20 May - Lesions in the lungs and shrunken adrenal glands distinguish dolphins that washed up dead in the Gulf of Mexico between June 2010 and December 2012 compared with those found in beachings elsewhere. As a result, researchers have linked the mass deaths to BP's oil spill. "The dolphins have adrenal disease and lung disease consistent with exposure to petroleum products," explains Stephanie Venn-Watson, lead author of the study. ... There were three mass strandings of dolphins on the Gulf coast from the Texas-Louisiana border to Florida, more than 1,000 dead dolphins in all, including babies. [Scientific American](#)

## Mozart-loving chickens may answer quest for healthier nugget



16 May - In barns filled with classical music and lighting that changes to match the hues outside, rows of chickens are fed a diet rich in probiotics, a regimen designed to remove the need for the drugs and chemicals that have tainted the global food chain. As food giants face growing pressure to offer healthier produce, Southeast Asian poultry firm Kee Song Group says its use of "good" bacteria in feed and water means it can meet one the industry's biggest challenges: how to mass produce drug and hormone-free poultry at a reasonable price. ... Kee Song says the cost to produce drug-free chickens using probiotics

is now only 10-12 percent more than using antibiotic-fed poultry. It sells these birds at a 30 percent premium in stores, far less than expensive free-range organic chicken. [Reuters](#)

## ***Salmonella* outbreak possibly tied to raw fish reaches 51 cases in 9 states**

19 May - An unusual *Salmonella* outbreak believed to be tied to raw fish now includes 51 cases in nine states, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported today. CDC spokeswoman Kristen Nordlund told CIDRAP News that most of the patients are from states in the Southwest or reported travel to that region. Among 45 people with available information, 10 (22%) reported being hospitalized, but no deaths have been reported. As reported yesterday, Arizona and New Mexico recently reported a total of 15 *Salmonella* Paratyphi infections that were thought to be caused by eating raw fish. Arizona officials said raw tuna in restaurant sushi was implicated in the cases. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

## **Sanderson sees no alternatives to antibiotic use in chicken production**

20 May - Sanderson Farms Inc, the third largest U.S. poultry producer, plans to continue using antibiotics on its birds partly because there are no alternatives on the horizon for treating a deadly but common gut disease, Chief Executive Officer Joe Sanderson said on Wednesday. Other major poultry producers, including market leader Tyson Foods Inc, have announced plans to eradicate antibiotics, which are also crucial in human healthcare, from their flocks but have not ruled out their use on sick birds. ... Two of the biggest makers of animal drugs have told Sanderson Farms that developing products to treat the gut disease necrotic enteritis is not profitable enough to justify the effort, the CEO said. [Reuters](#)

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### **WELLNESS**

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## **Caffeine powder poses deadly risks**



18 May - ... Sold as a dietary supplement, caffeine powder is virtually unregulated and widely available from online vendors, and in some stores, often marketed alongside vitamins and protein powders to fitness buffs who blend their own supplements. The packages typically include warning labels, but these are voluntary. ... In its pure form, caffeine is quite powerful. A teaspoon of caffeine powder is roughly equal to 16 to 25 cups of coffee. ... [The] Food and Drug Administration in July advised consumers to avoid the

powder. ... In December, the Center for Science in the Public Interest, a consumer advocacy group, petitioned the F.D.A. to ban retail sales. [New York Times](#)

## E-cigs hamper ability to cough

18 May - Exposure to electronic cigarette vapors significantly diminished cough reflex sensitivity in a group of healthy volunteers, a researcher reported here. Using a capsaicin cough challenge, the time until the concentration of capsaicin that can induce five or more coughs (C5) was significantly longer after an electronic cigarette "vaping" session. ... "We have previously shown that chronic smokers of tobacco cigarettes have reduced cough reflex sensitivity to capsaicin compared with healthy nonsmokers, presumably on the basis of chronic cigarette smoke-induced desensitization of airway cough receptors," he said. "What impressed us in this study was that this was just one exposure, and there was a real effect, a significant effect," he said in a press conference. [MedPage Today](#)

## Flakka: Scientists say dangerous recreational drug is as addictive as bath salts

18 May - ... Flakka is the street name for a cheap synthetic drug with the active chemical ingredient of alpha-PVP (alpha-Pyrrolidinopentiophenone), which makes it a chemical cousin to MDPV (methylenedioxypropylvalerone), or the drug known as bath salts. The latter is thought to be one of the world's most addictive substances. Users of flakka achieve an intense high, but the drug can also cause aggressive behavior and panic-inducing hallucinations. Now, scientists at Scripps Research Institute in La Jolla, Calif. have confirmed that the close chemical relationship also means that flakka is as addictive as bath salts in tests with rats. ... The researchers found that the rats were willing to push the lever hundreds of times in order to receive a single dose. [International Business Times](#)

## IBS: Peppermint oil may be a treatment option

18 May - A slow-release peppermint oil (IBgard) appeared to significantly reduce severe abdominal symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), researchers said here. ... When patients with severe or unbearable abdominal pain took peppermint oil, they reported a 79.4% reduction in symptoms while placebo patients reported a 40.2% reduction in symptoms after 4 weeks of therapy ( $P < 0.0009$ ). [MedPage Today](#)

## Many probiotics taken for celiac disease contain gluten

19 May - Last year, doctors at Columbia University found that people with celiac disease frequently use probiotic supplements, but that those who take these products tend to experience more symptoms of the disease than those who do not. Now these experts say they may know why: More than half of the top-selling probiotic supplements they analyzed contained gluten, a protein found in wheat, barley and rye that is harmful to people with celiac disease. The authors of the study found gluten in probiotic supplements that carried "gluten-free" claims on their labels, and they discovered that the most expensive supplements were just as likely to contain gluten as the cheapest products. [New York Times](#)

## Most Americans still don't use sunscreen

20 May - Despite years of public health messages, barely one third of Americans use sunscreen regularly, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Researchers found that sunscreen is most often used by women on the skin of the face, and by people with higher household income. The cost of sunscreen may be a barrier to use, said lead author Dawn Holman, a behavioral scientist with the CDC Division of Cancer Prevention and Control in Chamblee, Georgia. Based on a summer 2013 online survey of more than 4,000 adults, 18% of men and 43% of women use sunscreen on the face always or most of the time when outside on a sunny day for more than an hour. About 20% of men and 34% of women do the same for other areas of exposed skin. [Reuters](#)

## One third of U.S. adults have the metabolic syndrome

20 May - Roughly a third of U.S. adults have the metabolic syndrome — and nearly half of those aged 60 and older have it — according to a research letter in JAMA. Researchers evaluated National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey data from 2003 through 2012. Among the other findings: The prevalence of the metabolic syndrome increased from 2003–2004 to 2007–2008 (from 33% to 36%) and remained stable thereafter. Women were more likely than men to be affected: in 2011–2012, the prevalence was 37% and 33%, respectively. Hispanics had the highest prevalence, at 39% in 2011–2012. The metabolic syndrome was more common among older than younger adults, ranging from 18% for those aged 20–39 years to 47% for those aged 60 and older. [New England Journal of Medicine](#)

## Sleep apnea linked to depression in men

20 May - Obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) is associated with an increased risk of depression in men, a large Australian study found. Among 1,875 men ages 35 to 83 who were assessed for depression at two time points about 5 years apart ... previously undiagnosed severe OSA was associated with depression. ... This statistical significance remained even after adjustment for age, waist circumference, smoking, relationship status, financial difficulties, erectile dysfunction, and nocturia, she noted. "Depression is highly prevalent in OSA, reaching 39% in clinic studies," ... Lang said. [MedPage Today](#)

## The younger women at the highest risk for health problems later in life

19 May - Single mothers may face a higher risk of health problems later in life, but the risk differs depending on the part of the world they live in, according to a new study. ... [Researchers] gathered data from 25,000 women 50 or older who lived in the United States or Europe. ... Overall, there was still a link between single motherhood and a higher rate of health problems later in life, compared with married mothers. In fact, the women who were at the highest risk either became single parents before turning 20, were single parents for more than eight years, or were single parents to two or more children. But not all countries were alike. The association between single motherhood and poor health was much weaker

in southern European countries. Researchers speculated that the strong social support they received from family could be the key. Lack of money — likely from lack of education and career opportunities — was the main factor in greater health risks, the researchers found.

[Yahoo! Health](#)

## Why an iron fish can make you stronger



17 May - ... Anaemia is the most common nutritional problem in the world, mainly affecting women of child-bearing age, teenagers and young children. In developing countries, such as Cambodia, the condition is particularly widespread with almost 50% of women and children suffering from the condition, which is mainly caused by iron deficiency. ... [Iron] tablets are neither affordable nor widely available. ... Dr Charles ... decided to put a lump of iron into the cooking pot, made from melted-down metal. His invention, shaped like a fish ... was designed to release iron at the right concentration to provide the nutrients that so many women and children in the country were lacking. ... Dr Charles says it should provide 75% of an adult's daily recommended intake of iron - and even more of a child's. Trials on several hundred villagers in one province in Cambodia showed that nearly half of those who took part were no longer anaemic after 12 months. [BBC News](#)

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### USAFRICOM

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## Burundian refugees in Tanzania hit by devastating outbreaks of cholera



19 May - Outbreaks of cholera and severe diarrhoea have struck tens of thousands of refugees from the small African nation of Burundi who are jammed into a village in neighbouring Tanzania. Aid agencies working in the village on the edge of Lake Tanganyika said on Tuesday that the sick Burundians are overwhelming the health infrastructure and sanitation facilities. Between 500 and 2,000 people are arriving daily in the tiny fishing village of Kagunga, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said. ... Kagunga's original population of 11,382 has increased to above 90,000 since April, WHO said in a statement. There is not enough safe water for drinking. [The Guardian](#)

## Ethiopia detains 200 suspected human smugglers

18 May - Two hundred suspected human smugglers have been detained as part of the Ethiopian government's efforts to stem the number of citizens trying to illegally migrate to Europe, a senior official said. The government is looking for 80 other alleged smugglers who are conducting overseas operations. ... Along with neighbor Eritrea, Ethiopia is the source of many of the migrants making the perilous journey by sea to Europe, often via Sudan and then Libya. [VOA](#)

## Guinea, Sierra Leone: Ebola cases rise, expand

20 May - Continued unsafe burials are largely fueling Ebola flare-ups in Guinea and Sierra Leone, where 35 cases were reported last week, just days after the countries had seen their lowest weekly case tallies of the year, according to outbreak updates today. The geographic range of cases also expanded amid the rise in cases, which the World Health Organization (WHO) today said was substantial. The number of new cases reflects the region's highest weekly total in the past month. Top outbreak response officials have warned that the end of the outbreak could be long and bumpy. [CIDRAP](#)

## Niger: Health officials race to combat unprecedented outbreak of meningococcal disease

18 May - From Jan. 1 to May 10, 2015, Niger's Ministry of Public Health notified the World Health Organization (WHO) of 5,855 suspected cases of meningococcal meningitis, including 406 deaths. This is a rapidly growing outbreak with some unprecedented features. Suspected cases have been increasing very quickly, tripling over the last two weeks. This is the first large-scale meningitis outbreak caused by *Neisseria meningitidis* serogroup C to hit any country in Africa's meningitis belt. ... The outbreak is of high concern because it affects a densely populated urban area of 1 million people, creating a high risk of rapid spread and a large caseload. [Infection Control Today](#)

## Nigeria: Meningococcal disease

15 May - As of March 29, 2015, a total of 1,346 cases of meningitis, including 50 deaths, have been reported from the Nigerian states of Kebbi, Sokoto, and Zamfara. ... A vaccine campaign is taking place in this region of Nigeria in response to the outbreak. [CDC](#)

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## USCENTCOM

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### Saudi Arabia: Middle East Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV)

17 May – Between 4 and 9 May, the National IHR Focal Point for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia notified WHO of 5 additional cases of Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) infection. ... [WHO](#)

### United Arab Emirates: Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV)

18 May - On 13 May 2015, the National IHR Focal Point of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) notified WHO of 1 additional case of Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) infection. ... Globally, WHO has been notified of 1118 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with MERS-CoV, including at least 423 related deaths. [WHO](#)

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## USEUCOM

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### EU approves military plan to target migrant traffickers

18 May - European Union nations approved plans Monday for a naval operation to go after the human trafficking networks that are sending thousands of migrants weekly across the Mediterranean toward Europe or to their deaths. NATO said it stood ready to help out if needed. EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini said she expects the operation to be fully launched next month after Britain, France, Italy and other nations pledge military equipment. More than 10,000 migrants have been picked up alive from Mediterranean waters in recent weeks as they attempted to enter Europe from Libya. The International Organization for Migration estimates that nearly 1,830 migrants have died on the sea route this year compared to 207 in the same period last year. [Yahoo! News](#)

### United Kingdom: Britain launches billboards against female genital mutilation

19 May - Two survivors of female genital mutilation (FGM) have launched Britain's first billboard campaign to raise awareness and encourage girls at risk to get advice as public pressure mounts to stamp out the practice. ... An estimated 137,000 women and girls in England and Wales have undergone FGM. ... The campaign was launched amid growing public pressure for authorities to take more action to stop FGM, which has been illegal in Britain for 30 years but has yet to be eradicated. [Reuters](#)

## United Kingdom: Mentally ill patients sent home unsupported, experts warn

19 May - Pressure to free up mental health beds may be leaving vulnerable people at risk, says a watchdog. Healthwatch England put in a Freedom of Information request and found psychiatric patients now spend six fewer days in hospital than in 2012-13. The data, from 32 mental health trusts, shows average number of "bed days" per patient per year has fallen by 10%. Healthwatch England says some patients are being discharged too early and without enough support. ... Between 2010-11 and 2011-12, investment across the three priority areas - crisis resolution, early intervention and assertive outreach - fell for the first time, by £29.3m from £520m. ... "Mental health accounts for about 23% of the burden of disease in England, but it only receives around 11% of the funding," he said. [BBC News](#)

## United Kingdom: Scotland mumps outbreak prompts travel warning

16 May - Federal health officials are advising travelers to Scotland ensure they are immunized against mumps due to an ongoing outbreak of the viral disease in that country. On Friday, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued a travel notice after reports from Health Protection Scotland say that 242 mumps cases have been confirmed as of March 22. This is an increase from the 45 cases reported during the same period in 2014. In 2014 there were 286 laboratory-confirmed cases of mumps which is similar to the 239 laboratory-confirmed cases seen in 2013. [Outbreak News Today](#)

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### USNORTHCOM

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## U.S.: California oil spill cleanup: Governor declares emergency to cut 'red tape'



21 May - Gov. Jerry Brown has declared a state of emergency to help clean up an oil pipeline spill that may have dumped more than 100,000 gallons of crude in Southern California. ... A ruptured 24-inch pipeline gets the blame for leaking oil near Refugio State Beach, a protected state park about 130 miles northwest of Los Angeles. ... [Rick McMichael, Plains All American Pipeline's director of pipeline operations] told reporters an estimated 21,000 gallons of crude had gone into the Pacific Ocean. The rest was spilled on land. The cause of the spill was still being investigated, he said. [CNN](#)

## U.S.: DEA announces four-state crackdown on illegal pill distribution

20 May -The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration on Wednesday announced the results of a four-state crackdown aimed at stopping illegal distribution of addictive prescription medicines, such as opioid painkillers, that yielded 280 arrests. Dubbed Operation Pilluted, the DEA said 22 doctors and pharmacists were among those arrested on federal and state criminal charges over the course of 15 months. Led by the DEA's New Orleans Field Division, the action, which the agency called its largest-ever prescription drug operation, took place in Louisiana, Arkansas, Alabama and Mississippi. [Reuters](#)

## U.S.: Geckos linked to dangerous Salmonella outbreak in 16 states



15 May - A dangerous Salmonella outbreak in 16 states has been linked to pet geckos, according to a new report by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Starting on Jan. 1, 20 people ranging in ages from 1 to 57 years old have been reported as being infected with the same strain of Salmonella,

according to the CDC. Of those sickened, three have been hospitalized as a result of the bacteria. Eleven of those sickened reported they had pet geckos, which are known to be carriers of the bacteria. ... Owners will not be able to detect visible symptoms in their pet reptiles and should be vigilant about washing their hands after holding their pets [ABC News](#)

## U.S.: Military gear that police won't get from Pentagon anymore

18 May - The federal government will stop sending grenade launchers, weapons mounted on airplanes, and some other types of military gear to local police under new rules approved by President Barack Obama. Other types of equipment will be provided only under tighter controls. The ban comes months after the nation watched images of police dressed in camouflage and riot gear dispelling racially charged protests in Ferguson, Missouri. [ABC News](#)

## U.S.: Public health response may have prevented hundreds of illnesses in fungal meningitis outbreak

18 May - The rapid response by thousands of public health officials and clinicians is estimated to have averted more than 153 cases of meningitis or stroke and 124 deaths during the 2012-2013 fungal meningitis outbreak linked to methylprednisolone acetate (MPA) distributed by a compounding pharmacy in Massachusetts. A new report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that the coordinated investigation

by federal, state and local public health officials, speedy recall of the contaminated lots, prompt notification of the more than 13,500 patients who may have been exposed and rapid dissemination of guidelines for diagnosis and treatment likely prevented many additional exposures, cases of illness and deaths. [Infection Control Today](#)

## U.S.: Rise in suicide by black children surprises researchers

18 May - The suicide rate among black children has nearly doubled since the early 1990s, while the rate for white children has declined, a new study has found, an unusual pattern that seemed to suggest something troubling was happening among some of the nation's most vulnerable citizens. Suicide among children ages 5 to 11, the age range the study measured, is rare, and researchers had to blend several years of data to get reliable results. ... Suicide rates are almost always lower among blacks than among whites of any age. But the study, published in the journal *JAMA Pediatrics* on Monday, found that the rate had risen so steeply among black children — to 2.54 from 1.36 per one million children — that it was substantially above the rate among white children by the end of the period. The rate for white children fell to 0.77 per million from 1.14. [New York Times](#)

## U.S.: Severe mental illness found to drop in young, defying perceptions

20 May - The rate of severe mental illness among children and adolescents has dropped substantially in the past generation, researchers reported Wednesday, in an analysis that defies public perceptions of trends in youngsters' mental health. The new report, published in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, comes at a time of fierce debate over the rates and treatment of childhood mental disorders. Critics argue that modern psychiatry is over-diagnosing and treating an increasing number of the worried well or merely quirky. Child psychiatrists insist that while some children may be given treatments they do not need, the larger problem is that youngsters who could benefit from treatment too often do not get it. More fundamentally, experts said, the new analysis exposed gaps in scientists' grasp of mental health trends, especially when it comes to young people. Without a good handle on baseline levels of severe pediatric mental disorders, policy makers and research-funding organizations lack a good guide to targeting their resources, these experts said. [New York Times](#)

## U.S.: State-specific prevalence of current cigarette smoking and smokeless tobacco use among adults aged ≥18 Years — United States, 2011–2013

22 May - ... From 2011 to 2013, there was a statistically significant decline in current cigarette smoking prevalence overall and in 26 states. During the same period, use of smokeless tobacco significantly increased in four states: Louisiana, Montana, South Carolina, and West Virginia; significant declines were observed in two states: Ohio and Tennessee. In

addition, the use of smokeless tobacco among cigarette smokers (concurrent use) significantly increased in five states (Delaware, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico, and West Virginia). Although annual decreases in overall cigarette smoking among adults in the United States have occurred in recent years, there is much variability in prevalence of cigarette smoking, smokeless tobacco, and concurrent use across states. In 2013, the prevalence ranged from 10.3% (Utah) to 27.3% (West Virginia) for cigarette smoking; 1.5% (District of Columbia and Massachusetts) to 9.4% (West Virginia) for smokeless tobacco; and 3.1% (Vermont) to 13.5% (Idaho) for concurrent use. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

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## USPACOM

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### Cambodia: Mental health services 'critically neglected'

18 May - Cambodia has some of the world's worst mental health statistics – largely due to the effects of Pol Pot's murderous Khmer Rouge regime. Yet mental health services remain underfunded and – in the words of the World Health Organization – “critically neglected.” There's little sign of that changing in the near future, in part because few Cambodian students are interested in psychiatry as a career. The psychiatric clinic at the government's Khmer-Soviet Hospital in Phnom Penh is one of Cambodia's busiest. Fifteen years ago, said clinic director Yem Sobotra, it saw between 70 and 150 patients a day. When VOA visited in April, the daily average was 400. With few mental health services in rural areas, where most Cambodians live, patients have to come to centers like this for treatment. But with just 10 psychiatrists and as many nurses, most get just a few minutes before leaving with a bottle of pills. [VOA](#)

### Glimmer of hope for Southeast Asia's migrants

20 May - Indonesia and Malaysia have agreed to provide temporary shelter and assistance to thousands of migrants still stranded at sea in Southeast Asia, but they have stopped short of offering to find their boats and bring them ashore. An estimated 7,000 migrants, the majority of them Rohingya Muslims from Myanmar, have been adrift on the Andaman Sea and the Malacca Strait for over a week with dwindling supplies of food and water after being abandoned by their smugglers. Until today's agreement, boats that had tried to come ashore in Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia had been turned away and even towed back out to sea. [IRIN](#)

### South Korea confirms second case of MERS virus; third case possible

20 May - South Korean health officials have confirmed the country's second case of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) in a patient who nursed her infected husband before he

was diagnosed with the disease after a trip to Bahrain. The woman is in stable condition. A 76-year-old man who shared the hospital room with the first confirmed patient had developed a high fever on Wednesday, a statement from the health ministry said. The ministry said on Wednesday it saw no chance of the disease spreading into the wider population because those who had been in contact with the first patient have been isolated.

[Reuters](#)

## Thailand could stop thousands of HIV deaths with more tests and treatment: experts

21 May - Thailand could prevent more than 5,000 HIV-related deaths in the next decade if it expanded HIV testing and treatment among gays in Bangkok, where about one in three males who have sex with men is infected, researchers said. A third of the estimated 185,000 men who have sex with men in the Thai capital fail to use condoms or are involved in other behavior that puts them at high risk of infection, experts said in a World Bank-sponsored study. Yet in 2011, only 14,000 of men who have sex with men in Bangkok got tested, and only 30 percent of those diagnosed and eligible for treatment started taking lifesaving antiretroviral drugs (ARVs), the study said. [Reuters](#)

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### USSOUTHCOM

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## PAHO reports 5,600 new chikungunya cases

18 May - The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) reported late last week 5,684 new chikungunya cases in the Americas, bringing the outbreak total to 1,432,199, according to the agency's weekly update. The previous 2 weeks saw increases of 12,000 to 13,000 cases. But many countries have not reported new cases in weeks, so the numbers do not necessarily reflect an ebb in the outbreak, which began in December 2013 with the first locally acquired chikungunya case ever reported in the Americas, on St. Martin in the Caribbean. As in most recent weeks, the vast majority of new infections were in Colombia, which reported 4,858 new cases. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (fourth item)

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