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## Obama says no need to panic over Zika, requests \$1.8 billion

Republicans talk quarantines amid fund request for vaccines, mosquito control.

by [Beth Mole](#) - Feb 8, 2016 8:33pm UTC

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Executive Office of the President of the United States

The White House announced Monday that it is requesting \$1.8 billion in emergency funding to respond to and combat the [Zika virus](#), which is currently [spreading](#) in more than two dozen [countries and territories](#) throughout the Western Hemisphere.

“[There shouldn't be a panic on this](#),” President Barack Obama said in an interview aired Monday on CBS This Morning. “The good news is, this is not like Ebola,” he said. “People don't die of Zika.” But, he went on to mention the troubling link with Zika infections and birth defects in some babies, namely microcephaly, a condition of shrunken heads and skulls. “There's enough correlation that we have to take this very seriously,” he said of the risk for pregnant women and women planning to become pregnant.

In its Monday announcement, the [White House explained](#) that the requested funds, if approved by Congress, will “accelerate our ability to prevent, detect and respond to the Zika virus and bolster our ability to reduce the potential for future infectious disease outbreaks.”

Of the \$1.8 billion requested, the administration would direct \$1.48 billion to the Department of Health and Human Services. That chunk will mostly go to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (\$828 million) for enhancing mosquito control programs, improving Zika diagnostics and surveillance, and public outreach about prevention strategies. The rest will go to vaccine development (\$200 million), a new fund for urgent responses to Zika that would be available to states (\$210 million), and health services in Puerto Rico (\$250 million), where Zika virus is circulating in mosquito populations.

The US Agency for International Development (USAID) would also receive \$335 million to support countries dealing with Zika infections and Zika-spreading mosquito populations. The US Department of State would receive \$41 million for the medical needs of US citizens in stricken areas as well as funds to support the World Health Organization's response to Zika.

While the president took a calm tone in his response to Zika's spread, two Republican presidential candidates, New Jersey Governor Chris Christie and Ben Carson, said during a debate Saturday that they would consider instituting [quarantines](#) for travelers returning from affected areas.

The CDC has already issued a series of [travel advisories](#) for pregnant women and women planning on becoming pregnant. Last week, the WHO declared an international [public health emergency](#) over Zika-related microcephaly cases.

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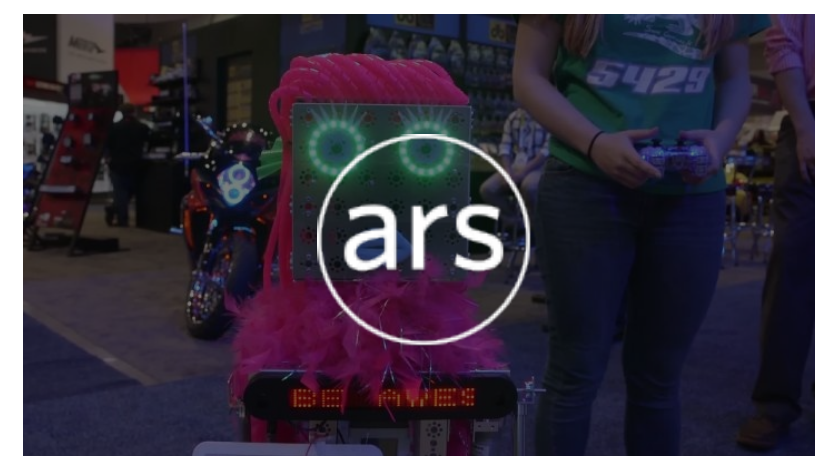


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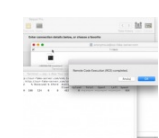
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