



ACQUISITION
AND SUSTAINMENT

THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

3010 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-3010

FEB 29 2020

The Honorable Anthony G. Brown
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Brown:

Thank you for your February 5, 2020, letter concerning the funding of Army medical research facilities. I am responding on behalf of the Secretary of Defense. The Department of Defense (DoD) shares your concerns about current and emerging chemical and biological warfare threat agents around the world. The Chemical and Biological Defense Program (CBDP), under the leadership of the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment (OUSD(A&S)), leads our efforts to mitigate these threats to our warfighters while the Defense Health Agency, with oversight by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, is the DoD lead for responding to public health emergencies, such as the recent coronavirus outbreak.

The CBDP funds chemical and biological defense research, development, and acquisition efforts and reimburses laboratory operations through research and development projects. The Department uses a rigorous process to allocate research and development funds appropriated for chemical and biological weapons defense work. This process includes input from the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Chemical and Biological Defense, the Services, the Joint Staff, and the Combatant Commands. As part of this process, the CBDP negotiates and reviews work proposals with industry, academia, and the DoD Service laboratories to plan critical research based on threat prioritization and what is needed to support the warfighter. The review process ensures that each appropriated dollar goes to developing and fielding priority capabilities that enable our warfighters to maintain lethality in a chemically or biologically contaminated environment. We have placed greater emphasis on emerging chemical, biological warfare agents, and delivering advanced capabilities to our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines. Budgeting for surge capacity that is not directly delivering capabilities to the warfighter is challenging when making decisions with limited resources.

During the allocation process, the CBDP identified a potential \$104 million of FY 2020 projects for execution by the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute for Infectious Disease (USAMRIID) and U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Chemical Defense. However, the laboratories were unable to perform much of the planned work due to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) shutdown of USAMRIID and concerns of potential financial mismanagement at both of the laboratories. The funding decision was not related to the Defense-Wide Review Process.

On September 24, 2019, the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear, Chemical, and Biological Defense Programs sent a memorandum (see attached) to the Army

Staff stating that funds planned for chemical and biological defense research work to the labs would be released when:

1. The laboratories are back online and operational as determined by CDC certification of USAMRIID for Biosafety Lab 3/4 use;
2. Business plans, internal controls, and processes are in place to ensure that proper fiscal controls are in place, and that the capabilities and workforce of these facilities are both auditable and sustainability; and
3. A plan that outlines the traceability of funded research efforts and associated milestones has been developed to ensure the CBDP does not pay for the same work twice.

The Army has completed the first request, and the CDC has authorized limited work so they can complete a new assessment of the laboratory. OUSD(A&S) is working with Army leadership and staff to accomplish the last two requirements and ensure both the transparency and accountability of CBDP funds to the Army's medical research laboratories. The CBDP is continuing to negotiate work proposals for research efforts that the Army medical research labs can perform.

We look forward to restoring the U.S. Army medical research laboratories as viable performers as we continue our mission to develop capabilities to protect our warfighters against future chemical and biological weapons threats. The OUSD(A&S) has provided \$29.8 million since October 2019 to fund salaries and contracts, prevent workforce layoffs, and sustain critical capabilities.

The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear, Chemical, and Biological Defense can answer any additional questions or provide more information as needed. Thank you for your continued support for the chemical and biological defense of our warfighters. We have sent an identical response to the other signatories of the February 5, 2020, letter.



Ellen M. Lord