

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

Of

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US DHS Plum Island Animal Disease Center

**National Bio- and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF) Decision
Process**

**House Energy and Commerce Committee
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations**

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Good morning, Chairman Stupak and Ranking Member Whitfield. I am pleased to appear before you today to discuss the important mission of the Plum Island Animal Disease Center (“PIADC”), which is to protect US livestock from the accidental or deliberate introduction of high-consequence foreign animal diseases.

I was raised on a cattle ranch in Oklahoma and became a veterinarian due to my desire to protect public health and animal health. I have worked as California’s State public health veterinarian and as the program manager for the State’s food safety programs. I also served on active duty in the military as a veterinarian and just retired as a reserve Colonel. I applied for the position of Director of PIADC due to my strong support for protecting this Nation’s livestock from high threat foreign animal diseases with vaccines and other biologic countermeasures.

As Center Director, I support USDA on a daily basis in its important mission of protecting the Nation from foreign animal diseases. As an example, if foot-and-mouth disease is suspected in the US, the samples are shipped to PIADC for confirmatory testing by USDA APHIS. DHS provides operations support for these activities to ensure testing is conducted immediately. In addition, we support APHIS in its training of over 200 veterinarians a year in the Nation’s only Foreign Animal Disease Diagnostics training class. These are the veterinarians who would be the Nation’s first responders in a foot-and-mouth disease or other foreign animal disease outbreak.

I also support USDA ARS at PIADC which is involved in basic and applied research on foreign animal diseases including classical swine fever and foot-and-mouth disease. As an example of their important work, ARS conducted research and early development of a new foot-and-mouth disease vaccine that does not use live virus as part of its production and can therefore be manufactured in the US. PIADC’s DHS science program – the Targeted Advanced Development

Unit -- was established with the mission of developing biological countermeasures. We are working with industry, USDA ARS and APHIS and the USDA Center for Veterinary Biologics in obtaining licensing for this new vaccine.

DHS is committed to maintaining positive, proactive relations with PIADC's surrounding communities. We established a Community Forum with 28 members from the local New York and Connecticut communities which meets on a quarterly basis. We use this method to keep the public informed of PIADC's scientific and other activities. In addition, we have an Industry Stakeholders Working Group with representatives from agencies and organizations such as the National Cattlemen's Beef Association and the National Milk Producers Federation. I have provided presentations to these organizations and communicate with the Stakeholders Working Group to keep them apprised of the important work being done at PIADC.

At PIADC, we have a Senior Leadership Group which, besides myself, is comprised of the APHIS Director of the Foreign Animal Disease Diagnostics Laboratory and the Chief of Research for ARS' Foreign Animal Disease Research Unit. We work closely on a daily basis and meet regularly to ensure communication and partnership in supporting our important science activities. We also elevate issues, as appropriate, to the PIADC Board of Directors which is comprised of the Administrators of ARS and APHIS and a senior representative from DHS S&T. PIADC's Senior Leadership Group is conducting strategic planning to identify current research strategies and address future research needs as we move toward a new facility. We will report and coordinate these plans through the Board.

We have also made and continue to make many operational improvements at PIADC, including enhancements to the security of our facility. A GAO inspection conducted in 2004 identified 26 findings and we have closed out 18 of them. We have also taken appropriate action to address the remaining six items and are

informing the GAO of our progress. Examples of the security improvements include the augmentation of physical infrastructure measures for perimeter protection and monitoring systems. We are also in the process of upgrading our critical infrastructure, including projects to expand animal housing and training space in the facility.

We also have Memoranda of Agreement with the Town of Southold for security support and with Suffolk County for Fire Rescue and Medical Support. In addition to our contract security guards, we have Federal Protective Service presence at PIADC.

As Director, I also coordinate on a daily basis with other components of DHS, including the Office of National Labs, the Chem Bio Division, the University Programs Office, the Centers for Excellence and the Health Affairs Office. I am also pleased to report I have a great relationship with USDA's upper management.

The scope of DHS' science activities at PIADC is focused on the targeted advanced development of countermeasures for foot-and-mouth disease. We are currently developing – in partnership with industry and the USDA – a new FMD vaccine that can be manufactured in the US and provides many improvements over the current, traditional vaccines which require use of live FMD virus as part of this production.

In summary, PIADC plays a critical role in the daily protection of our Nation against foreign animal diseases. As Director, I am committed to providing support to the USDA in fulfilling their important missions at PIADC as well as providing a sense of urgency and support for DHS' and USDA's development of a new, improved FMD vaccine for the protection of the Nation's livestock.