



Advancing innovation to save lives

March 17, 2015

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
113 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Vice Chairwoman
Senate Appropriations Committee
503 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
Vice Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Defense
711 Hart Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Members of the Appropriations Committee:

The undersigned organizations—members of, or partners with, the Global Health Technologies Coalition (GHTC), a group of 25 nonprofit organizations working to raise awareness about the role of health technologies in saving lives in the developing world—are writing to express our gratitude for your support for the critical global health research and development (R&D) programs at the US Department of Defense (DoD). We recognize that you face many challenging decisions about expenditures during these difficult economic times, especially given current US military engagements.

Understanding that the primary mission of the DoD is to support our military men and women, we want to emphasize the importance of the DoD's infectious disease research to not only the men and women in uniform but to vulnerable populations around the world.

For fiscal year (FY) 2016, we respectfully urge the Subcommittee to sustain and protect funding for research to develop new global health technologies at the DoD.

In today's globalized world, the health of Americans—service members and civilians—is interdependent with the health of populations abroad. Health threats know no borders, and protecting the well-being of Americans now requires a global effort.

As you know, for decades, global health research at US agencies has supported the development and introduction of affordable health products, policies, and practices appropriate for addressing diseases and health issues in developing countries. Each of these agencies occupy a unique niche in the fight against global diseases, providing skills and leadership in areas that complement the scope of other US government agencies. The DoD plays an especially unique role in the advancement of global health technologies, such as

new vaccines and drugs that prevent and treat infectious diseases. The US military services' medical research operations respond to diseases many Americans may never see up close, but which service personnel stationed in the developing world experience alongside local communities.

The study of diseases, including malaria, dengue fever, leishmaniasis, and smallpox has historically been an important component of the DoD's medical research programs worldwide. While focused on protecting and treating US armed forces, the global health efforts of DoD and its partners include substantial R&D, infrastructure and capacity building, as well as training programs that benefit countries with few resources for health care.

HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, leishmaniasis, and other neglected diseases are diseases our military encounters when deployed. These diseases not only devastate hundreds of millions of people around the world, but also pose public health threats in the United States and inhibit the economic growth of our global trading partners. History has shown that strategic US investment saves lives and produces cost savings and efficiencies. **The DoD continues to conduct research aimed at developing solutions to global health challenges. For example:**

- For more than three decades, DoD researchers have played a key role in the development and testing of malaria vaccines. The Walter Reed Army Institute of Research was an early partner in the development of the RTS,S malaria vaccine candidate and again became involved through the KEMRI-Walter Reed trial site in Kenya – 1 of 11 sites across Africa that ran the now-complete phase 3 trial.
- The US Military HIV Research Program (MHRP) continue its efforts to develop a safe and effective HIV vaccine. Researchers began screening participants for a new follow-up study, supported by the MHRP to the RV144 HIV vaccine candidate regimen. MHRP also announced that it was selected as a Clinical Trials Unit and will received funding from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases to continue work on HIV vaccine and therapeutics research. DoD programs in leishmaniasis and dengue fever research have led to breakthroughs in treatment for these diseases.
- The Defense Advance Research Program Agency pioneered technology that has led to electrochemical generators of chlorine that may be able to fulfill a community's needs for effective disinfectants for water or surfaces by using just salt water and a simple battery source, such as a car or motorcycle battery—an intervention that could have profound health implications for populations in low-resource settings.
- The Defense Threat Reduction Agency is conducting groundbreaking work on vaccine and chemical reagent thermo-stabilization as well as point-of-care diagnostic tests for infectious diseases, with positive implications for both global health and US military health in low-resource settings.
- The Army and Navy overseas medical research laboratories are part of the vital global health research network, and the staff of the infectious disease programs have years of hands-on experience with some of the most deadly global diseases.

- The Army co-developed the anti-malarial drug candidate Tafenoquine, which is currently in Phase III clinical trials and is a potential single-dose treatment for the radical cure of *P.vivax* malaria.

The advancement of global health through new innovations is bolstered by the DoD's research and support of product development. Only by ensuring the future growth and stability of R&D will we protect servicemen and women from global diseases, while maintaining gains made in global health. The United States must continue to invest in research for new ways to diagnose, treat, and prevent these diseases to ensure that the progress made in the past several years is not reversed. We urge you to work with the DoD to prioritize research and product development for global health diseases within their budgets and programming plans.

In these times of fiscal constraint, we understand the unique pressures that you face in setting priorities for our nation and in providing them funding. Global health research improves the lives of soldiers and other people around the world, creates enormous goodwill that enhances our own national security, and at the same time creates jobs and spurs economic growth at home. These benefits are unquestionably among the nation's highest priorities.

We must bolster and sustain the role of the United States in developing new global health tools to save lives and maintain US leadership in today's global society. We stand ready to work with you on these important issues that are essential to achieving our nation's goals. Please do not hesitate to contact Erin Will Morton, coalition director, at ewmorton@ghtcoalition.org or (202)822-0033 if you have questions or need any additional information.

Thank you very much for your leadership.

Sincerely,



