

Statement of Senator Jerry Moran
Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee
“Homeland Threats and Agency Responses”
Washington, DC
September 19, 2012

I thank the Chairman and the Ranking Member for holding this hearing, and I appreciate our three witnesses being here to testify. I want to express my gratitude to them for their efforts in making certain that Americans remain safe and secure around the world.

Today I want to focus my attention on our pressing need to address the threat of a biological attack against the United States. As Secretary Napolitano mentioned, there is real danger of a “sophisticated biological threat” against the United States. Such an attack could have a very detrimental impact on our citizenry, our supply chain, and the U.S. and international economies. An attack could be something like Anthrax or Ricin, or an animal disease like foot and mouth disease. According to the FBI’s Law enforcement bulletin, many believe foot and mouth disease to be the greatest threat due to its highly contagious nature, stability, and survivability. A foot and mouth disease outbreak could spread to as many as 25 states in as little as 5 days, and could cost taxpayers up to \$60 billion in damage. There is no doubt that an act of agroterrorism would deliver a major blow to the US agricultural industry, which is the largest single sector in the US economy. Such an attack could unravel the health, wealth, and economic fiber of our nation. In fact, DHS’s own website says that an attack against our food and agricultural industry “would have dire economic and potentially human health consequences.”

Current and previous Administrations have affirmed these threats and the need to prepare and respond. For example, the Bush Administration addressed this issue in the Homeland Security Presidential Directive 9 (HSPD 9: Defense of United States Agriculture and Food (January 2004)), and the Obama Administration did so in the National Security Strategy for Countering Biological Threats (NSSCBT) (November 2009). Despite the widespread attention this issue has received, currently no facility meets the requirements identified in HSPD 9, and we are not taking the appropriate measures based on the NSSCBT – the Graham-Talent WMD Commission gives the U.S. an “F” grade for bioterrorism readiness. The Congressional report, *The Clock Is Ticking*, pointed to the prospect of biological threats and stated that “it is essential that the US government move more aggressively to address the threat of Bioterrorism.”

A critical component to addressing these threats is actively researching biological and zoonotic diseases and developing the capability to rapidly and inexpensively produce vaccines and other remedies for such diseases. For a long time, the Department of Homeland Security has been the lead Department in developing a new facility where this research can take place, the National

Bio and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF), in Manhattan, Kansas. I thank Secretary Napolitano for her support of the facility, the location, and the process by which Manhattan was chosen. She has repeatedly stated there is a definitive need for NBAF and research on biological and zoonotic diseases to protect our national security and economic stability. She has stated that “Plum Island does not meet the Nation’s needs in this area,” and she “believes in NBAF, and it should be in Kansas, and we need to get on with it.” I agree with the Secretary. We need to move forward, and the time to do so is now.

All of the hurdles with regard to proceeding with NBAF have been cleared, the most recent being the National Academy of Science (NAS) report, which was released in July. We are now at the point where there is no reason for the Department of Homeland Security not to allow the facility to proceed. All of the funds spent on the project thus far have been from the state of Kansas – the appropriated \$40 million for use on the central utility plant and \$50 million to begin general construction are being held back. It is clear to me that the release of these appropriated funds now rests in the Secretary’s hands. The ability to proceed depends on releasing those funds and authorizing the land to be transferred. The time is now and the decision should be made to move forward.

As we know, with the passage of time, the more costly the NBAF project becomes; not only in dollar amount, but also costly in terms of risking American lives and our national and economic security. Whether manmade or natural, biological and zoonotic threats are imminent and we need to be actively engaged in research to find vaccines and other appropriate response mechanisms. We should not wait any longer; enough has been said and it is time to act. In the absence of a land transfer and the release of the already appropriated funds, the confidence of many Kansans who believe that our money is being well spent is diminishing. Now is the time and it is a matter of a few weeks that this transfer needs to happen. The entire Kansas delegation stands ready to work with you on this, and we thank you in advance for your continued hard work.