

TESTIMONY

Statement of

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Biological Terrorism

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Mr. Chairman and distinguished committee members, I am Dr. Anna Johnson-Winegar, Deputy Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Chemical and Biological Defense. My office is the single focal point within the Office of the Secretary of Defense responsible for oversight, coordination, and integration of the joint chemical and biological defense programs.

The tragic events of September 11th and the recently reported anthrax cases in Florida and elsewhere have heightened the public's awareness of the threat posed by biological terrorism. For some years, the Department of Defense has considered the use of biological weapons as a possible means by which states and non-state actors might counter America's overwhelming conventional warfighting strength—often referred to as asymmetric means. In response to this threat, Congress directed the Department of Defense to consolidate chemical and biological defense efforts. Since the establishment of a joint chemical and biological defense program in 1994, and with continued congressional support, the Department of Defense has made significant progress in fielding biological defense equipment for our warfighters and stands ready to meet the most credible threats.

Biological warfare threats. In addition, my office stands ready to assist civilian agencies through technology sharing, technical advice, or as otherwise requested by the appropriate authorities.

In order to meet the challenge of biological warfare across the spectrum, our program must address the need for both materiel improvement and operational concepts to use the new and improved equipment. In order to address the issue of bioterrorism, we have documented gaps and deficiencies in exercises, such as Top Off, and these will be the focus of reprioritized efforts within the Department of Defense. One of the lessons of the Top Off exercise was that to work effectively during an actual crisis, various governmental agencies must actually exercise beforehand or their "cultural differences" will overcome any plan. We will continue to work with other agencies, including the new Office of Homeland Security, to ensure good working relationships. One specific area we will focus on is to help define what support the Department of Defense can provide and work with other agencies to define what support they request and need.

While the DoD can provide unique expertise and materiel support, it is not charged with lead federal agent responsibilities as described in the federal response plan. In the area of domestic terrorism medical response, the

department of health and human services takes charge and requests support as needed. In my testimony today, i will outline the ways the department of defense provides materiel support to other organizations and how we coordinate efforts.

Materiel support

Congress has provided a number of statutory methods for the department of defense to support other federal, state, and local agencies in preparing for and responding to weapons of mass destruction (wmd) terrorism. Requests may come to the department for operational support or for the purchase of equipment. These requests are approved on a case-by-case basis. My office has dealt with a number of requests from other-federal agencies for individual and collective protective equipment and access to vaccines, while the operational support provided by the department is coordinated through the secretary of the army as the dod executive agent for such matters. The department will continue to provide this support within statutory and regulatory limits and balance requests against the readiness of military forces to accomplish their warfighting mission.

Dod can offer many of its systems, either in the field or in development, and expertise that may prove useful to civilians. Dod's chemical and biological detection equipment could be applied in civilian situations, as can many of our medical countermeasures. However, the provision of materiel alone does not enhance capability, it needs to be accompanied by valid operational concepts, training, and maintenance.

The mission of the dod chemical and biological defense program is to provide materiel to allow our armed forces to be trained and equipped to conduct their operational missions in environments contaminated with chemical or biological agents. Our armed forces are trained primarily for traditional warfighting requirements. However, our forces also maintain significant capabilities to support homeland security, through such operational units as the technical escort unit, the wmd-civil support teams, and the marine corps' chemical and biological incident response force (cbirf).

In order to enhance our nation's overall capabilities the department of defense participates in programs to support the transition of military equipment and concepts to other-than-dod agencies. Specifically, The technical support working group (tswg), rapidly prototypes emerging technologies for high priority federal interagency requirements (www.tswg.gov);

The interagency board for equipment standardization and interoperability (known as the iab), is a partnership with federal, state, and local agencies focused on the capabilities necessary for fire, medical, and law enforcement responses to wmd terrorism (www.iab.gov);

The domestic preparedness program, mandated under the 1997 nunn-lugar-domenici legislation, trained and equipped municipalities to address wmd terrorism (the program transferred to the department of justice in 2000, reports remain available at www2.sbcom.army.mil/hld/); and

Interagency agreements with departments of justice's office of domestic preparedness to purchase equipment in support of justice's grant program. Medical training programs from the us army medical research institutes for infectious disease and chemical defense; and

The white house office of science and technology policy chaired weapons of mass destruction program, research and development subgroup.

These efforts represent a snap shot of the department's procurement and research support to address bioterrorism. As the lead federal agencies assess their needs, dod anticipates additional requests of or participation in these

groups.

Coordination

The department of defense has established a set of requirements for the successful completion of military operations in chemical and biological environments. We submit an annual report to congress documenting our progress in meeting these requirements. My office regularly coordinates its efforts with the department of energy, department of health and human services, and the intelligence community through the counterproliferation program review committee, which reports annually to congress on its progress (provided as a classified document to the congress).

Some of the department's requirements to protect the military force correlate with civilian requirements to protect the population against biological terrorism. For instance, one of the concepts being investigated for the development and production of biological defense vaccines is a vaccine production facility. In order to coordinate the needs of the interested agencies, the dod, relatively early in the process of considering alternatives for vaccine acquisition, established a federal interagency advisory group. Participants, in addition to those from dod agencies, have included representatives from:

The white house [office of homeland security, office of science and technology policy, national security council, office of management and budget], Federal emergency management agency, Department of health and human services (dhhs) [national institutes of health, public health service, food and drug administration, centers for disease control and prevention, and the office of the assistant secretary for health and the surgeon general].

This group, which i chair, has served as a highly effective and productive forum for discussions concerning u.s. vaccine acquisition—particularly vaccines for defense against biological warfare agents—for force health protection and public health needs for the civilian sector.

Conclusion

Dod works regularly with the lead federal agents to coordinate requirements and development efforts for biological terrorism. In addition to coordination, there are a number of mechanisms for dod to provide assistance to other-federal, state, and local agencies. In light of recent events, dod anticipates a greater number of requests for assistance. Dod will address these requests on a case-by-case basis to ensure that public safety is enhanced and dod can still accomplish its warfighting mission. Thank you for the opportunity to speak here today, i would be happy to respond to any questions. Thank you.

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