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Update on the U.S. Public Health Response to the Ebola Outbreak
House Committee Energy & Commerce Subcommittee on
Oversight & Investigations
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Questions for the Record

The Honorable Ben Ray Lujan:

Q: Can you speak to the present and future role the National Labs play in our response to the Ebola crisis and similar outbreaks? Do you expect any of the funding in this request to go to the National Laboratories – either directly or through partnerships?

A: The Department of Energy's (DOE) national laboratories and technology centers participated in modeling discussions during the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) response to the Ebola epidemic in West Africa. HHS engaged with DOE through the Biomedical Advanced Development and Research Authority (BARDA) within the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR) to provide computational analytical services on several areas related to the Ebola response, such as:

- determining breaking points for receiving hospitals and controlled degradation of care;
- assessing the supply chain for in country resiliency;
- investigating the impact of Ebola genetic selection on the efficacy of diagnostics, therapeutics, and vaccines;
- assessing strategic factors for spillover risk and consider the likelihood of a subsequent large Emerging Infectious Disease (EID) outbreak; and,
- determining the level of surveillance and under reporting.

Also, within the Department of Health and Human Services, our colleagues at CDC have been collaborating with interagency partners to develop a cohesive strategy for building sustainable laboratory capacities in West Africa. Specifically, they have been working with the DOE's Sandia National Laboratory (SNL) to coordinate and leverage expertise and resources in response to laboratory needs in the affected countries (Please see HHS CDC QFR response).

The Honorable Michael Burgess, MD:

Q: During the hearing, you mentioned that we have not declared a national emergency; therefore FEMA has not been activated. Alternatively, in coordination with partners

across the Federal Government you have been doing "aggressive planning" for the what-ifs. Please provide the committee with the details of that planning.

A: ASPR is the Emergency Support Function (ESF) 8 Coordinator and Primary Agency for ESF 8 (Public Health and Medical) of the National Response Framework and for the Health and Social Services Recovery Support Function of the National Disaster Recovery Framework. ASPR provides leadership and support for activities to prepare for, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the impacts of public health and medical incidents. Planning is one key component that supports ASPR's programs and initiatives. With respect to planning for a possible Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) outbreak in the continental United States, ASPR has been involved in numerous efforts to make sure the Federal Government is best positioned to respond should such an outbreak occur. Specific activities include:

- In coordination with partners at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), drafted the HHS Support Plan and Communication Plan for a first case of EVD diagnosed in the United States.
- In coordination with partners at the CDC, continue to draft and finalize the U.S. Government Ebola Virus Disease Plan to provide a framework for an EVD outbreak in the United States.
- In coordination with partners at the Department of Defense and the CDC, support a Department of State-led initiative to develop standard operating procedures and notifications for EVD patient movement.
- In coordination with CDC and other Federal partners, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) developed a scalable unified coordination structure to include Federal, state, and local authorities, to support a response to a single EVD event or multiple EVD events (in multiple states)..
- In coordination with FEMA and other interagency partners, reviewed the support that would be provided to the lead Federal Agency and the resources available in the first 72 hours of multiple EVD cases.
- Leading up to the African Leaders Summit in August 2014, ASPR discussed contingency planning for the National Capital Region in case one of the delegates from an African nation developed symptoms resembling Ebola. The procedures provided for enhanced medical surveillance, hospital incident tracking, and epidemiologic investigation.
- In coordination with partners at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), advised on plans for VA facilities to screen suspected EVD patients, care for confirmed EVD patients, and on interaction between VA and non-VA facilities designated for EVD patient use.

In addition, ASPR has participated in a number of exercises and training events to test planning assumptions, identify existing gaps, and strengthen planning efforts as needed. Specific activities include:

- Participated in a SOUTHCOM table top exercise in Miami, Florida assessing roles and responsibilities of the interagency in the event of an EVD event.
- Participated in a Maryland table top exercise in Baltimore, Maryland assessing roles and responsibilities of the local and state agencies in the event of an EVD event.

- Participated in a Federal table top exercise for the Domestic Resilience Group at the White House assessing roles and responsibilities of the Federal Departments in the event of an EVD event.
- Participating in an interagency Latin American/Caribbean EVD planning effort. Reviewing actions to inhibit mass migration, assisting the Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection to determine medical screening and processing support, and assisting U.S. Coast Guard in determining maritime medical screening and treatment guidance for para-professional medical providers.

BARDA has developed infrastructure crucial for medical countermeasure development and response capabilities. This infrastructure includes a Nonclinical Studies Network, Centers for Innovation in Advanced Development and Manufacturing, a Fill Finish Manufacturing Network, and a Clinical Studies Network to provide core service assistance to developers of medical countermeasures on an everyday basis. Conversely, during a public health emergency like Ebola, these resources are then activated for response. BARDA's modeling capabilities have helped measure domestic hospital capacity and forecast the impact of the Ebola disease burden and vaccination efforts in affected West African countries. Investments made to our medical countermeasure infrastructure since 2010 have paid off domestically and globally during the current Ebola epidemic by developing, manufacturing, and evaluating Ebola medical countermeasure candidates. Furthermore, they have helped better prepare us for future response efforts and have provided needed flexibility when dealing with new and prospective challenges.