

United States Senate

August 9, 2019

The Honorable Ryan D. McCarthy
Acting Secretary of the Army
101 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310-0101

Dear Acting Secretary McCarthy:

I write to express my deep concern regarding the indefinite cessation of activities at the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases (USAMRIID) at Fort Detrick, Maryland, following a June inspection and subsequent cease and desist order by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

According to press reports, “[t]he suspension was due to multiple causes, including failure to follow local procedures and a lack of periodic recertification training for workers in the biocontainment laboratories... The wastewater decontamination system also failed to meet standards set by the Federal Select Agent Program,” which oversees the possession, use, and transfer of biological agents with the potential to pose a severe threat to public health.¹

An additional report in the Frederick News-Post indicated that this work stoppage may harm ongoing research. USAMRIID had several active projects at the time the cease and desist order was received, including the development of therapies for lethal viruses with no approved vaccines or treatments.²

I was disappointed to have learned of this situation through press reports, rather than from the Army directly, even though it happened several weeks ago. I appreciate the Army’s offer to arrange a meeting with the commander of the U.S. Army Medical Research and Development Command at Fort Detrick. I look forward to receiving additional information about these events as expeditiously as possible, including:

1. background and relevant details of the CDC inspection at the USAMRIID;
2. the effect of the cessation of activities on ongoing research;
3. any exposure or potential exposure of any person to any biological agent or toxin; and,

¹ Mongilio, Heather. “Fort Detrick lab shut down after failed safety inspection; all research halted indefinitely,” *Frederick News-Post*, August 2, 2019, updated August 3, 2019.

² Mongilio, Heather. “Effect of USAMRIID shutdown on research at Fort Detrick unclear,” *Frederick News-Post*, August 7, 2019.

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4. the Army's plan to promptly and safely come into compliance with all applicable federal laws, rules, and guidelines and allow the USAMRIID to resume safe operation.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator