

Press Release

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Contact: DHS Press Office (202) 282-8010

DHS ISSUES UPDATED SITE-SPECIFIC RISK ASSESSMENT FOR PROPOSED NATIONAL BIO AND AGRO-DEFENSE FACILITY (NBAF)

WASHINGTON – As required by Congress, Public Law 112-10, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Science and Technology Directorate (S&T) today issued the Updated Site-Specific Risk Assessment (SSRA) for the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF) in Manhattan, Kansas.

“The United States works on the frontline of livestock animal health research to defend against foreign animal, emerging, and zoonotic diseases that could threaten the U.S. livestock industry, food supply, and public health,” said Homeland Security Under Secretary for Science and Technology Tara O’Toole. “To address Congressional requirements, this detailed, updated risk assessment reaffirms that we can build a safe and secure facility to meet this important mission.”

As part of its on-going risk assessment process and to comply with recent Congressional requirements, DHS updated the 2010 SSRA by incorporating the recommendations from the National Academy of Sciences and the most recent design plans for NBAF. The Updated SSRA satisfies the Congressional requirements for demonstrating how calculated risks have been significantly reduced by incorporating mitigation measures into the risk assessment and updating the analysis to allow for a cumulative risk calculation. The current design incorporates significant changes beyond the industry standard to reduce risk. The Updated SSRA also found that the proposed NBAF design is sound and incorporates best practices used in other animal and zoonotic pathogen laboratory facilities that safely operate throughout the country.

S&T will continue to work with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Centers for Disease Control and update future strategies to mitigate the risks of operating a high-containment laboratory through the incorporation of best practices for operational plans and response procedures. NAS will also provide an independent review of S&T’s risk assessment.

The NBAF is envisioned as a state-of-the-art, bio-safety level (BSL) 3 & 4 facility to enable the United States to conduct comprehensive research; develop vaccines and anti-virals; and provide enhanced diagnostic capabilities to protect our country from numerous foreign animal and emerging diseases. DHS chose a site on the campus of Kansas State University after a comprehensive three year federal examination of potential sites, studying varied and stringent evaluation criteria, environmental impacts, and the threats and risks of operating the NBAF.

The Administration requested \$150 million for NBAF in FY 2012. Congress appropriated \$50 million and placed additional requirements on the facility, which have increased the costs by an estimated 30%. In light of the Congressional appropriation for NBAF in FY 2012 as well as the constraints of the Budget Control Act, S&T is in the process of evaluating the scope of such a facility. Beginning this spring, DHS/ S&T will convene an expert and stakeholder committee, in conjunction with the interagency, to conduct a comprehensive assessment, taking into account 1) the current threats from terrorism, foreign animals and the global migration of zoonotic diseases to U.S. agriculture; and 2) the project's viability in the current budget environment, evaluating the cost, safety and capabilities of the current plan.