

Peer Review Transparency Visit Exercise
14-15 November 2018
Richard Lugar Center for Public Health Research
National Center for Disease Control and Public Health
Tbilisi, Georgia

1. The visiting team comprising 22 experts and observers visited the Richard Lugar Center for Public Health Research (Lugar Center) of the National Center for Disease Control and Public Health (NCDC) on 14-15 November 2018. Access was provided to all areas of the site, including all spaces used by the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR), a tenant unit of the Lugar Center. The assessment was conducted by splitting the visiting team into two groups, which both completed the same tour of the facility, including all BSL-2 laboratories. In addition, four experts from the visiting team accessed all areas of the BSL-3 laboratory.
2. The methods applied by the team included: visual examination of laboratory activities and equipment, mechanical systems, storage and administrative areas, infrastructure and security measures; visual access to paper documents and electronic records; interviewing of laboratory personnel; demonstration of the Pathogen Asset Control System (PACS); and procedures for pathogens and toxins control and transfer. Information provided in the 2018 Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) submission and other information provided, as well as that observed during the visit, was taken into account.
3. The size of the laboratory areas, number of personnel, scientific disciplines represented in the scientific/engineering staff, and information on types of pathogens and toxins handled and studied in the facility were consistent with the information provided in the CBMs and other information provided to the visiting team.
4. Physical security measures included secured perimeter fencing, surveillance and monitoring system, security checks, security guards and several layers of access control (access cards, PIN code, biometrics devices, keys, etc.) to prevent unauthorised access to sensitive areas. Staff and visitors are required to wear identification badges. All visitors are required to complete the Visitor Access Request form at least 72 hours in advance and are

escorted on site. All staff, including contractors and cleaning and maintenance staff, must undergo security vetting on a regular basis.

5. All the equipment and infrastructure observed was relevant to the prophylactic, protective and other peaceful research and diagnostic purposes stated by the visited facility. Several laboratories are accredited to international standards such as those of ISO and WHO. Biosafety and biosecurity measures were demonstrated to meet international standards.
6. Pathogens handled by the facility are kept in a repository and the process for access control and inventory management, including auditing, was explained in detail to the visiting team. A demonstration of the Pathogen Asset Control System (PACS) was also given to the team. The pathogen strains held are consistent with use for prophylactic, protective, and other peaceful purposes. The Center has trained personnel certified by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) to prepare and ship hazardous materials. Decontamination processes and waste management procedures are in place and were explained in detail.
7. Documentation was also provided to the team upon request, including national legislation relevant to the implementation of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), quality and biosafety manuals, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) on emergency response and training, biosafety committee meeting records, maintenance records, staff training records (technical, biosafety, biosecurity, emergency drills, etc.), and agenda and schedules for training on dual-use bioethics, including BTWC obligations.
8. Staff were made available for interviews and to answer questions throughout the visit. This included maintenance, engineering, security, administration and operational staff, in addition to the relevant scientific and technical experts. Throughout the visit, all laboratory personnel and escorts were very engaged and responsive to questions and requests for access to facility areas, documentation and information. These interactions allowed exchange of best practices on a number of occasions. Laboratory staff indicated a desire to participate in international External Quality Assurance Exercises in the future.

9. Procedures for biosafety, biosecurity and dual-use research; handling and transport of pathogens and toxins; biosafety and biosecurity education and awareness programs; and other measures mentioned demonstrated commitment to implementing the obligations under Articles III and IV of the BTWC. Information was also provided on regional and international assistance and cooperation activities relevant to Article X of the BTWC.
10. The facility demonstrated significant transparency about its activities. The visiting team observed nothing that was inconsistent with prophylactic, protective and other peaceful purposes.
11. The visiting team thanks the staff of the Lugar Center and NCDC, the escort team and all other officials involved for their welcome and cooperation given to the visiting team.