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Watchdog Organization: Bio-Terror Labs Not Keeping Americans Safe; Negligence Endangers Public, Kills Subjects, Violates Federal Laws

WASHINGTON, DC – U.S. bio-terror laboratories are not keeping Americans safe, and the facilities entrusted with dangerous research on select agents including Ebola and anthrax are violating federal laws, endangering public health and wasting federal tax dollars, according to a research watchdog group, which noted that several of these facilities are targets of federal investigations.

Federal records obtained by SAEN, a research watchdog that monitors U.S. research facilities, document system-wide failures at the Galveston National Laboratory (at University of Texas, Medical Branch, Galveston (UTMB), Tulane, Lovelace Respiratory Research Institute (Albuquerque), Battelle Memorial Research Institute (Columbus, OH) and Fort Detrick (MD), a notorious military lab.

The **Galveston National Laboratory** (BSL4 facility) is currently the subject of federal investigations and prosecutions by at least two federal agencies for negligence in connection to multiple primate experiments involving bio-terror agents, including Marburg Virus and Ebola. Leaked federal reports, protocols, and whistleblower complaints have placed UTMB squarely in the center of a swirling controversy. Ongoing probes by the U.S. Dept of Agriculture and the National Institutes of Health focus on the deaths of multiple primates.

The National Institutes on Allergies and Infectious Disease has authored a scathing audit report, while the NIH's Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare has stated it is ". . . extremely concerned with the functioning of the UTMB animal care and use program and with the ability of the IACUC to appropriately carry out its functions as outlined in the PHS Policy and described in the Assurance."

> **Centers for Disease Control** (BSL4 facility) new information reveals accidental contamination of ferrets with influenza A(H3), ferret deaths without vet care, and accidental contamination of prairie dogs with monkeypox -- as well as an escape of a monkeypox-contaminated prairie dog.

> **Lovelace Respiratory Research Institute** (NM BSL3 facility) is currently the focus of an "Open Case" within the USDA for multiple incidents of negligence including primate deaths, injuries and escapes, as well as an incident of accidental animal contamination.

> **Tulane University's** bio-terror research programs remain suspended, and the USDA has cited the lab in connection to the accidental contamination of primates with severely pathological organisms. The lab has also been cited for leaving a critically ill monkey in a van overnight to die.

> At **Fort Detrick**, the Army's BSL4 laboratory, recent federal reports obtained by SAEN document negligent primate deaths within the classified lab. Federal records show one primate died and three others were sickened by dehydration caused when a cage bank was accidentally left disconnected from a water supply in Feb. 2015.

> **The Battelle Memorial Research Institute** (BSL3) has been repeatedly cited by the USDA and issued a USDA Official Warning for the negligent deaths of guinea pigs. One guinea pig was left in a cage which was sterilized while others were drowned by a malfunctioning watering system.

"U.S. Bio-terror labs are among the most careless in the nation," said Michael A. Budkie, A.H.T., Executive Director, SAEN. "Negligence in connection to animal deaths, escapes, and injuries, as well as failures to follow protocol, failures to collect critical data, and accidental animal contamination is rampant. It is only a matter of time before carelessness leads to a catastrophe."

All leaked documents, federal reports, etc. are available upon request from SAEN.