PEER REVIEW TRANSPARENCY VISIT AT RICHARD LUGAR CENTER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH RESEARCH TBILISI, GEORGIA
(REPORT FROM THE VISITING EXPERT TEAM)

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PEER REVIEW TRANSPARENCY VISIT

• Richard Lugar Center for Public Health Research of the National Center for Disease Control and Public Health (NCDC)

• 14-15 November 2018

Source: Ketevan Zardize, NCDC
OBJECTIVE OF THE VISIT

To demonstrate that the Richard Lugar Center for Public Health Research of the National Center for Disease Control and Public Health, Georgia complies with the provisions and obligations of the BTWC and that its activities are fully in line with stated peaceful purposes and the information provided in the relevant Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) form.
19 experts and diplomats: Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cameroon, Chile, Colombia, Germany, Hungary, Iraq, Italy, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mali, Montenegro, Myanmar, Uganda, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America

3 observers: European External Action Service, BWC Implementation Support Unit, King’s College London (civil society)
VISIT’S FORMAT AND METHOD

1st day
Welcome ceremony and a briefing on the NCDC/Lugar Center’s mission, capacities and current activities.
VISIT’S FORMAT AND METHOD

Visiting team was split into two groups, which both completed the same tour of the facility, including all BSL-2 laboratories and all spaces used by the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR), a tenant unit of the Lugar Center.
VISIT’S FORMAT AND METHOD

2nd day

• 4 experts from the visiting team accessed all areas of the BSL-3 laboratory.
• The rest of the group examined the facility’s premises and surrounding buildings.

Source: NCDC, Georgia
VISIT’S FORMAT AND METHOD

The methods applied included:

• Visual examination of laboratory activities, equipment and installations, 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.
VISIT’S FORMAT AND METHOD

• The visiting team was escorted on site and was able to assess all aspects of the facility that are relevant to provisions of the BTWC and provided on the CBM form.

• 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.

Source: NCDC, Georgia
VISIT’S FORMAT AND METHOD

- Documentation was provided to the team upon request:
  - National legislation relevant to the implementation of the 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.)
  - Agenda and schedules for training on dual-use bioethics, including BTWC obligations.

Source: NCDC, Georgia
VISIT’S FORMAT AND METHOD

• The visit was concluded by a closing session including:
  - further discussion;
  - finalising the summary report, and
  - presenting the summary report to the host institution.
SUMMARY REPORT

• The visiting team recorded its findings in a concluding summary report.

• The report was finalised jointly by all members of the visiting team.

• The host institution did not contribute in the drafting of the summary report.
OUTCOME

• 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.
• 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.
OUTCOME

• All of 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.
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.
OUTCOME

• 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.
• 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.
• The visiting team found the Lugar Center demonstrated **significant transparency** about its activities.

• The visiting team observed **nothing** that was inconsistent with prophylactic, protective and other peaceful purposes.
CONCLUSION

• Peer Review Transparency Visit could serve as a tool to improve national implementation, increase transparency and provide some level of reassurance of state parties’ compliance with the BTWC.

• The exercise provided a useful platform for the exchange of scientific knowledge, good practices, discuss national implementations, raise awareness and establish contacts amongst all participants, which could serve to enhance international cooperation.
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THANK YOU