DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
ARMED FORCES EPIDEMIOLOGICAL BOARD
5109 LEESBURG PIKE
FALLS CHURCH, VA 22041-3258

REPLY TO ATTENTION OF

AFEB (15-1a) 00-1 29 March 2000

MEMORANDUM FOR THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE (HEALTH AFFAIRS)
THE SURGEON GENERAL, DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
THE SURGEON GENERAL, DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
THE SURGEON GENERAL, DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

SUBJECT: Armed Forces Epidemiological Board Recommendation Regarding the Anthrax Vaccine Immunization Program

1. On February 28-29, the Armed Forces Epidemiological Board (AFEB) held its winter meeting at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio. Because of the adverse publicity associated with the military use of anthrax vaccine, the Board asked for a presentation from the Anthrax Vaccine Immunization Program Agency. The AFEB was concerned and somewhat surprised at the criticism surrounding the program given the high level of professionalism that had characterized this effort.

2. On February 29th, LTC John Grabenstein, Deputy Director of Clinical Operations, Anthrax Vaccine Immunization Program Agency, reviewed the status of the program. As was the case in prior briefings, the AFEB was very impressed with the attention being lavished on this program. While the AFEB is not in a position to discuss the reasons that prompted a decision to begin a comprehensive anthrax immunization program, the Board does have the technical expertise to comment on the safety of the vaccine and the management of the program.

a. **ANTHRAX VACCINE IS A FULLY LICENSED FDA VACCINE. THE VACCINE DOES CAUSE LOCAL SIDE EFFECTS, BUT HAS AN EXCELLENT SAFETY PROFILE. THE ANTHRAX VACCINE IMMUNIZATION PROGRAM HAS CAREFULLY TABULATED PERSON-SPECIFIC IMMUNIZATION DATA AND HAS ASSIDUOUSLY INVESTIGATED REPORTED COMPLICATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH RECEIPT OF ANTHRAX VACCINE. THESE DATA HAVE BEEN REGULARLY REVIEWED BY THE BOARD AND ATTEST TO THE SAFETY OF THE VACCINE.**

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b. **THE BOARD ALSO ENCOURAGES CONTINUED CLINICAL RESEARCH INTO NEWER ANTHRAX VACCINES AND STUDIES USING THE CURRENT VACCINE. FOR EXAMPLE, INTRA-MUSCULAR RATHER THAN SUBCUTANEOUS INJECTIONS WITH ANTHRAX VACCINE ARE ASSOCIATED WITH A DECREASED INCIDENCE OF LOCAL SIDE EFFECTS WHILE MAINTAINING ANTIGENIC RESPONSE.**

c. **IN SUMMARY, THE AFEB CONSIDERS ANTHRAX VACCINE TO BE A SAFE, PREVENTIVE AGENT AGAINST ANTHRAX AND WISHES TO CONGRATULATE THE ANTHRAX VACCINE IMMUNIZATION PROGRAM AGENCY FOR THE CARE AND ATTENTION IT HAS PAID TO THIS IMPORTANT PROGRAM.**

3. The above statement of support and recommendation was unanimously approved by the Board.

FOR THE ARMED FORCES EPIDEMIOLOGICAL BOARD:

Marc LaForce

F. MARC LaFORCE, M.D.
AFEB President

Benedict M. Diniega

BENEDICT M. DINIEGA
Colonel, USA, MC
AFEB Executive Secretary

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