



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

East and West African Malaria Task Force Meeting

Bujumbura, Burundi

25-27 August, 2014

The United States Africa Command (USAFRICOM) and the Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center's Division of Global Emerging Infections Surveillance and Response System (AFHSC-GEIS) sponsored the first joint meeting of the East and West Africa Malaria Task Forces (E&W-AMTF), hosted by the Burundi National Defense Force (BNDF) in Bujumbura, Burundi. The Burundi Minister of National Defense and War Veterans, H.E Major General Pontien Gaciyubwenge, the US Ambassador to the Republic of Burundi, Ambassador Dawn Liberi, the USAFRICOM Command Surgeon, CAPT David Weiss, the Director of AFHSC-GEIS, COL James F. Cummings, and the chair of the E-AMTF, BG Kristopher Arrumm, delivered opening remarks at meeting commencement.

The joint meeting of the E&W-AMTF was attended by military medical representatives from 13 of the 15 member nations: Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Djibouti, Ghana, Kenya, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Togo, and Uganda. South Sudan and Liberia were not in attendance. US Department of Defense (US DoD) organizations in attendance included AFHSC-GEIS, USAFRICOM, US Army Medical Research Unit Kenya (USAMRU-K), US Naval Medical Research Unit No. 3 (NAMRU-3), US Army Combined Joint Task Force Horn of Africa, and representatives from the American Embassy-Burundi.

The first day of the meeting was comprised of summary presentations and discussion of task force member nations' experiences during peace-keeping operation (PKO) missions and analysis of strengths, gaps and shortcomings in their military malaria programs during deployment. These presentations were prepared in response to gaps identified during previous East and West Africa Malaria Task Force meetings, in order to provide greater clarity on malaria prevention and control needs during deployment. Recurring themes identified included identifying a lack of supplies, such as insecticide treated uniforms, long lasting insecticide-treated nets and mosquito repellent, as well as lack of preventive guidelines for deployment situations, including chemoprophylaxis policies, and training and education for deploying soldiers. Additionally, many member nations cited a need for more developed vector control strategies, including habitat sanitation and insecticide application.

The second day of the meeting concluded the review of member nation PKO experiences, and also consisted of US DoD malaria experts briefing on capacity building opportunities for malaria control programs, including malaria microscopy training, medical entomology training, and establishing electronic health surveillance systems. MAJ Elizabeth Wanja (USAMRU-K) and LT Joseph Diclaro (NAMRU-3) discussed their respective microscopy and entomology training programs, urging interested E&W-AMTF members to advocate for these capacity building activities within their respective commands. Some progress has already been made on this front, with USAMRU-K having provided successful microscopy and entomology training to available East Africa Malaria Task Force (E-AMTF) partners in 2014, and similar training for West Africa Malaria Task Force (W-AMTF) partners is being



planned by USAFRICOM and NAMRU-3 for 2015. Dr. Sanchez from AFHSC-GEIS introduced the E&W-AMTF members to an open-source toolbox for electronic disease surveillance called the Suite for Automated Global Electronic bioSurveillance (SAGES). SAGES is an AFHSC-GEIS supported system available to African militaries (and other partners) that can be adapted to establish or strengthen locally-owned electronic health surveillance systems. Dr. Sanchez encouraged interested E&W-AMTF members to speak with AFHSC-GEIS directly regarding the establishment of SAGES in their countries.

The final day of the meeting was a closed session restricted to E&W-AMTF member nation representatives and support staff. The two task forces met separately to address their respective administrative requirements and future plans. The E-AMTF members discussed future roadmap and plans with members of six countries represented (Burundi, Djibouti, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania & Uganda). The Burundi Ministry of National Defence and War Veterans Director General, Lt Col Marc Nimburanira, was nominated as the E-AMTF chair to replace BG Kristopher Arrumm from the Kenya Defence Force (KDF). Dr. Refaat Hanna from USAFRICOM suggested the creation of a malaria military assistance program, supported through USAFRICOM and AFHSC-GEIS, and this approach will be further discussed by both agencies in the coming year. Several E-AMTF members suggested continuing support by NAMRU-3 in terms of entomological training and stated a need for continued malaria diagnostic training support. Lt Col Charles Mwanziva, Director of Preventive Services for the Tanzanian People's Defence Force (TPDF) has offered the support of the TPDF's Malaria Diagnostics Center (MDC) at Lugalo Military Hospital in Dar es Salaam; this MDC can extend microscopic diagnostic training support to all African militaries with QA/QC slides to be provided by USAMRU-K.

The W-AMTF members discussed three outstanding items: the election of Task Force executive officers, the review and ratification of draft Task Force charter and by-laws, and the development of a roadmap outlining future activities and country leads for designated focus areas. Military representatives from seven of the W-AMTF countries were present for the discussions (Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal & Togo). The Nigerian delegate, COL (Dr.) Tay Saidu Olasupo, was nominated as the W-AMTF chair to replace Commodore (Dr.) Roland Sowa from the Ghanaian Armed Forces (GAF). Dr. Fataoulaye Soumana Hassane, the Nigerien delegate, was appointed to the position of Executive Secretary, and Dr. Akpedze Koumbaney, the Togolese delegate, was appointed to the position of Communication Secretary. W-AMTF members reviewed and tentatively approved the W-AMTF charter, while the by-laws were reviewed in part but not ratified by those attending. Members desired additional time to permit more thorough review of both documents over the next month. Suggested focus areas for Task Force roadmap generation to guide future activities were briefly discussed and future discussions are planned to further explore and elucidate short and long term goals of the WAMTF.

In support of the stated need for information sharing across the East and West Africa Malaria Task Forces, USAFRICOM will be improving the E&W-AMTF website, currently on All Partners Access Network (APAN) but potentially to be moved to another hosted site, to allow for easier communication and exchange of timely, relevant information between member nations.