

Source: Marquette University Libraries; Tommy G. Thompson Collection; Series 9-2:  
Health and Human Services (HHS) Speeches

REMARKS BY: TOMMY G. THOMPSON, SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
PLACE: Adventis Smallpox Event, Washington, D.C.  
DATE: March 29, 2002 Smallpox Vaccine Stockpile

Good morning, thank you all for being here.

Today we have even more good news in our bioterrorism preparedness effort. The Department of Health and Human Services intends to obtain between 75 and 90 million doses of smallpox vaccine from Aventis Pasteur if the vaccine is shown to be effective and safe to use.

This supply would bolster our emergency smallpox stockpile and provide an extra layer of protection for Americans should a smallpox outbreak occur. It strengthens our safety net in the event of a biological attack.

Over the past several months, our scientists have been working with Aventis on preliminary tests on the efficacy of the Aventis supply. We are very encouraged by the initial results. Encouraged enough to talk to you about it today, even though we do not yet have a formal agreement with Aventis because there are still some issues to be resolved.

But I caution that more tests need to be done yet before we know for sure that the supply is usable. And any agreement we enter into with Aventis would require that the vaccine be proven effective and safe.

The national institutes of health would conduct clinical trials to confirm the effectiveness of the vaccine.

I appreciate Aventis for coming to us and working with us on the issues of efficacy and how the government might obtain this supply.

Aventis first approached my office in October and they've worked with us in a forthright and productive manner as we explore the quality of their supply.

I want to thank Dick Markham and his company for working closely with us as we pursue this opportunity.

Hopefully, we can get an agreement finalized soon. We will certainly keep you up to date as we proceed in that endeavor, and as we continue our testing on the efficacy of the vaccine.

Again, we are very encouraged that this will end in good news.

Let me be clear about another issue, too.

The Aventis supply is not interchangeable with our existing plan to purchase 155 million doses from Acambis Baxter and 54 million doses from Acambis. These products are the next generation of smallpox vaccine using modern manufacturing processes.

Regardless of the Aventis supply, we need to proceed with the new production of smallpox vaccine by Acambis and Baxter. This new supply is essential to our stockpile and preparedness efforts.

**Source: Marquette University Libraries; Tommy G. Thompson Collection; Series 9-2: Health and Human Services (HHS) Speeches**

What the Aventis supply could give us in as extra layer of protection- particularly in the short term while we await delivery of the new vaccine by the end of this year.

In the end, we'll have a larger stockpile of smallpox vaccine in the event of an outbreak or biological attack. This should provide even greater security to Americans.

I do want to emphasize that the probability of an intentional release of the smallpox virus is low, but the risk does exist and we must be prepared. Americans should take comfort in the progress we are making in bolstering our smallpox defenses.

The NIH showed yesterday that our existing 15.4 million doses of smallpox vaccine can be diluted up to five times - giving us 77 million doses.

The Acambis/Baxter partnership is on pace to produce and deliver 155 million doses of new smallpox vaccine, and Acambis is on track to deliver its 54 million doses.

Combined, these 286 million doses will give us enough vaccine to cover every man, woman and child in America by the end of the year.

And if the Aventis product is shown to be usable, we will be in even stronger stead.

I think anyone who follows the production of vaccines would acknowledge that the amount of progress we have made in bolstering our defenses in just six short months is remarkable.

We're moving faster in building our pharmaceutical stockpiles than imagined was possible. The president challenged us to get ready fast, and we're rising to the challenge because everyone is working together.

We're also moving quickly to help the states build their ability to respond to a bioterrorism attack. As you know, we're in the process of getting \$1 billion to the states for strengthening the public health system. And the states are committed to bolstering their efforts and a strong partnership with the federal government.

I want to thank D.A. Henderson and his team as well as the dedicated scientists throughout this department for helping us move so quickly and effectively - both in bolstering our pharmaceutical stockpile and building our public health system with the states. They are the finest public servants.

Working together - at all levels of government and with the private sector - we're making sure America is prepared in the event of a biological attack.