

The Armed Forces
Research Institute of Medical
Sciences, 1960-2010

A 50TH ANNIVERSARY PHOTOGRAPHIC HISTORY

*It is the US Army's Medical Research
and Materiel Command honor to share
AFRIMS with the Royal Thai Army.
Fifty years of excellence in working
together—that's just the beginning.
It is my hope that this book will honor
the contributions of both Thai and US
personnel during AFRIMS's first half
century while providing inspiration for
a continuing productive relationship.*

—MAJOR GENERAL JAMES K. GILMAN

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THE IDEA FOR THIS BOOK arose during the planning for a celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Armed Forces Research Institute of Medical Sciences (AFRIMS). Colonel Robert Bowden brought the project to Borden Institute, whose director, Colonel Martha Lenhart, supported the concept. At AFRIMS, the book became another accomplishment resulting from the joint efforts of staff from the institute's two components, the Royal Thai and US Army medical departments. The project progressed to completion even as several contributors retired from active duty.

We would like to thank Major General Boonyarak Poonchai, the director general of AFRIMS, and Colonels Bowden and William Geesey, commanders of the US component, for their continued support during this initiative. In addition, we are grateful for the support of the book by the senior leadership in each of our militaries.

The 50th anniversary itself came and went as the book was gestating, but the delay proved beneficial. Connections with former members of the institute were re-established; many came to the celebration and its scientific symposium. These renewed links became the source of many of the pictures in the book, provided from personal collections and usually accompanied by details pulled up from latent memories. These images are likely to be the ones you will linger over, as they capture the challenges and joys of daily work in the field and the laboratory. The names of those who shared their photos are noted in the legends, and we are grateful to them all.

Thanks go to the many who contributed directly and indirectly. Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) Kyle Webster shared his extensive historical knowledge of the establishment of the SEATO laboratory in the Origins chapter. Major General (Retired) Supanee Meesiri led the team from the Thai component, and we would like to express our appreciation to Colonels Pochaman Watcharapichat, Chaiyaphruk Pilakasiri, Duangporn Phulsuksombati, and Suchitra Sukawit for their dedication to the project. From the US component perspective, we benefited greatly from the institutional knowledge and personal involvement in the project of Colonel (Retired) Michael Benenson. The photo archives at AFRIMS were the major

source of images for this book. During AFRIMS's 50 years, film became digital, and fortunately many of the institute's older slides and prints have been digitized. Khun Oranuch Pruekwatana led the audiovisual team that produced these photos and the library team that retrieved the historical documents. We would especially like to thank team members Khun Pattraporn Jullasing, Khun Prinya Yoophasook, Khun Puwanai Sangsri, and Khun Anuwat Chamrat for their behind-the-scenes dedication to this project.

Finally, we thank our editor at the Borden Institute, Ms. Joan Redding. She walked this inexperienced team through the process that led to this finished product. We are pleased to have captured this bit of AFRIMS history in a way that we hope will be of interest to our alumni, militaries, collaborators, visitors, and other readers. As noted in the foreword and preface, the institute is unique in its partnership and contributions to global health, and we are happy for this opportunity to share AFRIMS's singular story.

ARTHUR BROWN, MD, MPH

Colonel (Retired), US Army Medical Corps

FOREWORD

IT IS AN HONOR TO PEN THE FOREWORD to this tribute to the 50-year history of the Armed Forces Research Institute of Medical Sciences (AFRIMS). The AFRIMS Thai-US military medical partnership began in 1959 when US Army and Navy investigators along with scientists from the National Institutes of Health responded to a cholera epidemic in Thailand. The US military medical presence was codified in 1961 under the auspices of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization. In 1977 the Thai-US bilateral agreement was renewed as “AFRIMS.”

In the early years, medical research in Thailand focused on tropical infectious diseases such as cholera, dengue, Japanese encephalitis, and malaria. More recently, AFRIMS provided the clinical trials network for conducting the only successful vaccine trial for human immunodeficiency virus infection to date.

Thailand has changed significantly in the 50-year history of AFRIMS. Our Thai partners have made dramatic strides in studying infectious diseases and public health threats and improving the health of their population. At the 2012 Asia-Pacific Military Medicine Conference, a session chair posed a question to the audience, “Why has AFRIMS been so successful?” The answer is really quite simple: AFRIMS has been so productive because the Thais are such great partners. Thailand is willing to confront the global health issues challenging its people and welcome international academic and military partnerships. It is the US Army’s Medical Research and Materiel Command honor to share AFRIMS with the Royal Thai Army. Fifty years of excellence in working together—that’s just the beginning. It is my hope that this book will honor the contributions of both Thai and US personnel during AFRIMS’s first half century while providing inspiration for a continuing productive relationship.

JAMES K. GILMAN, Major General
Commanding General, USAMRMC

PREFACE

THE ARMED FORCES Research Institute of Medical Sciences (AFRIMS) has now been one of the leading medical research institutes in Asia for over 50 years.

The name AFRIMS and its buildings are nonliving, but they are the outward signs of a center where living people dedicate their lives to the combat of infectious diseases that threaten this region of the world. Those who benefit are not just people from the United States and Thailand, but also populations from other countries in the region such as Laos, Cambodia, Nepal, and Vietnam. Situated in the center of Bangkok, the AFRIMS buildings are witness to the researchers of these two military medical communities working shoulder by shoulder as brother and sister. The Institute is a model for the world of military personnel who make contributions not just for the military but for the people also.

The combined forces of Western and Eastern societies bring peace, life, and happiness for the people, not just of Southeast Asia, but also for the people in other parts of the world. From cholera, which has disappeared from Thailand, to malaria and HIV, which will be wiped out in the future, AFRIMS personnel will continue to meet the challenges that arise.

AFRIMS is a research center that exemplifies unity, contribution, and brotherhood among people without borders. It is a center that is characterized by more than just hard and soft power; it also exemplifies smart power.

KRISADA DUANGURAI, Lieutenant General
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