

# EPILOGUE

**SINCE THE CELEBRATION OF AFRIMS's** 50th anniversary, Major General Boonyarak Poonchai started his 4th year as director general, and Colonel William Geesey became the commander of the US component, 5 years after an earlier assignment as executive officer. These leaders face challenges including aging buildings that need replacement and likely budget cuts in a period of austerity.

In June 2011, a half century after the founding of the Medical Research Laboratory of the South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), former AFRIMS staff and alumni joined the current officers and staff for a symposium celebrating the Institute's science and history, and a formal dinner where friendships were made and renewed. A few months later, as the rainy season ended, central Thailand suffered its most severe flooding in memory. Many AFRIMS staff members were displaced from their homes for weeks to months as the flood waters swept across the central plains. Despite these disruptions, staff participated in an extensive team effort to protect the AFRIMS facility in northern Bangkok that houses over 100 freezers and irreplaceable biological specimens. Fortunately, the waters did not reach the Institute's main buildings in the heart of the city.



In 2012 the Royal Thai Army (RTA) Medical Department hosted (with the US Army Pacific Command) the Asia-Pacific Military Medicine Conference and, as the year ended, the Asian regional meeting of the International Congress of Military Medicine.

Research programs are ongoing, utilizing multiple collaborations both within Thailand and, more than ever before, with other partners in the region. Currently highlighting the Institute's product development mission is its participation in the multinational phase III testing of a dengue vaccine in study sites in Kamphaeng Phet, Thailand, and Cebu, Philippines.

In addition to the Institute's research in tropical diseases over the past 5 decades, which supported military medicine as well as global health, the contributions at the individual level are also noteworthy. Many





AFRIMS researchers gained invaluable experience and later became leaders in their fields. Local civilian scientists went on to senior academic positions in Thailand, while many RTA officers rose to higher positions of leadership in the RTA Medical Department, including surgeon general. Four American scientists from the SEATO/AFRIMS laboratory went on to become presidents of the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene, while others worked in senior World Health Organization or academic positions.

In 2013 the diplomatic relationship between the United States and Thailand reached 180 years' duration. Within the broader diplomatic relationship, the military connection continues to be strengthened: in November 2012, the US Secretary of Defense and the Thai Minister of Defense signed a joint vision statement for a new Thai-US Defense Alliance. Despite the near-term infrastructure and budgetary challenges, a strong collaborative future is likely, since the Institute's history has shown this path to be well worth the price. AFRIMS's bi-national research efforts can be expected to continue to enrich global health in years to come.

The storage facility in Rangsit (north of Bangkok) that holds the Institute's off-site freezer farm. The whole industrial complex was flooded in October and November 2011 during the massive flooding of central Thailand. A team from the logistics department, laboratory operations section, and the departmental laboratories worked around the clock to move specimens, build barriers to hold back water, run pumps, and monitor changing conditions. Preventive measures were also made by staff of the two components at the AFRIMS main buildings near Victory Monument. (MFN#003818, AFRIMS photograph archives)



[Left] Virology researchers from AFRIMS and the Philippine Departments of National Defense and Health started collaborating in 2006. A dengue study site was established in Cebu City; influenza diagnostic laboratories were built in both Cebu and Manila. In this photo, US Ambassador Harry K. Thomas visits the new molecular laboratory at the Armed Forces of the Philippines Medical Center. The opening ceremony, on March 30, 2011, was presided over by the ambassador and Secretary of National Defense Voltaire T. Gazmin. (MFN#003732, AFRIMS photograph archives)

[Right] In June 2011, AFRIMS celebrated its 50th anniversary with a scientific symposium. Here, US Ambassador Kristie A. Kenney and the two surgeons general, Lieutenant General Sahachart Pipithkul and Lieutenant General Eric B. Schoomaker, discuss the history and future of the AFRIMS collaboration prior to opening the scientific symposium. (MFN#003814, AFRIMS photograph archives)













[Top Left] Distinguished guests, speakers, and attendees at the AFRIMS 50th anniversary scientific symposium held June 7–8, 2011, in the main amphitheater of the Phramongkutklao (PMK) College of Medicine. (MFN#003814, AFRIMS photograph archives)

[Bottom Left] The Royal Thai Army Medical Department co-hosted (with the US Army Pacific Command) the 22nd Asia-Pacific Military Medicine Conference (APMMC) in April and May 2012. Most of the planning and coordination was led by Major General Boonyarak Poonchai, director general of AFRIMS, and his staff. This was the fourth time that Thailand has been the conference co-host. (MFN#003815, AFRIMS photograph archives)

[Right] The Royal Thai Army Band leading the opening procession at the APMMC in Bangkok, April 2012. (MFN#003816, AFRIMS photograph archives)







Senior delegates to the 2012 APMMC visited AFRIMS, where they were given briefings on the Institute's history and research, and tours of the facility. (MFN#003820, AFRIMS photograph archives)



[Inset] Malaria researchers from AFRIMS and the Cambodian Ministries of Health and Defense started collaborating in 2004. Studies of falciparum malaria drug resistance and chemoprophylaxis were the initial foci; subsequently, surveillance for pathogenic influenza was added. This plaque is from a research laboratory built at the government referral hospital in Battambang, which brought technology for molecular diagnosis of malaria and influenza to the region. The laboratory's opening ceremony was held on November 30, 2010, presided over by US Ambassador Carol A. Rodley and Cambodian Minister of Health Mam Bun Heng. (MFN#003462, AFRIMS photograph archives)



[Left] Senator Richard Lugar, ranking member of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, visited AFRIMS in October 2012. Here he is greeted by the director general of the PMK Medical Center, Lieutenant General Krisada Duangurai. Colonel William Geesey, USAMC-AFRIMS commander, is at the center of the photograph. (MFN#003819, AFRIMS photograph archives)

[Right] Ambassador Kenney takes note of the poster displayed at the 50th anniversary in 2011 announcing that a photo history of AFRIMS was in production by the US Army Medical Department's Borden Institute. You now are enjoying this book. (MFN#003813, AFRIMS photograph archives)





Research Institute of Medical Sciences

AFRIMS  
1960-2010

<http://www.afrims.go.th>  
<http://www.afrims.org>

**A History of Dentistry**  
1960-2010

**In production  
Coming soon  
from the  
Borden Institute**

**A Photo History  
1960-2010**





