



Homeland
Security

Press Release

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S&T STAFF RECOGNIZED FOR EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE BY DHS SECRETARY JOHNSON

WASHINGTON—Two teams from the Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS) Science and Technology Directorate (S&T) were honored yesterday by Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson yesterday for extraordinary service and outstanding contributions to the Department and the Nation. The teams were among 312 DHS employees from across the country recognized in the Secretary’s Awards ceremony at the DAR Constitution Hall in Washington DC.

“The Secretary’s Awards are a reflection of the character and commitment that I see in our employees throughout the ranks for DHS,” said Secretary Johnson. “Like so many others at this Department, the awardees today have performed well beyond what is expected, responding in extraordinary ways to obligations higher than themselves. They have set a sterling example for all 240,000 employees of DHS as we strive to keep our homeland safe, secure and resilient.”

"Since even before I first came to S&T, I knew the people here did great things and made significant impacts on the nation's security," said DHS Under Secretary for Science and Technology Dr. Reginald Brothers. "The recognition these teams have received from the Secretary validates those impressions. I am proud to see them honored in this way."

The Foot and Mouth Disease Vaccine Team, a joint team of scientists from S&T and the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Agricultural Research Service, received the Secretary’s Exceptional Service Gold Medal – the highest service award granted by the Secretary of Homeland Security and honors distinguished achievements of unique national or international significance in improving homeland security.

Lauded for their work in licensing the world’s first molecular foot-and-mouth disease vaccine for cattle, were S&T’s **Dr. Larry Barrett**, DVM, director of the Plum Island Animal Disease Center (PIADC); **Dr. Michelle Colby**, chief of the Chemical and Biological Defense Division’s Agriculture Defense Branch; **Dr. John Neilan**, chief of PIADC; **Jeffrey Babcock**, animal care supervisor; **Michael Santillo**, animal care supervisor; **Dr. Christopher Schutta**, scientist; and

Assistant General Counsels **Robert Webb** and **Elle Ratnam**; and three researchers from the U.S. Department of Agriculture who work at Plum Island: **Dr. Luis Rodriquez**, **Dr. Teresa de los Santos**; and researcher **Zsak Laszlo**. An outbreak of FMD could potentially cost tens of billions of dollars and disrupt our nation's food supply.

"The new molecular vaccine is the most significant scientific accomplishment in this field in the past 50 years," Secretary Johnson said. The vaccine protects against a high-threat strain of the disease, is the first FMD vaccine that can be manufactured on the U.S. mainland, and veterinarians can differentiate between an animal that has been vaccinated and one that is infected.

S&T's **First Responder Technologies (R-Tech) Team** received the Secretary's Award for Excellence, which recognizes achievements resulting in superior performance, significant operational improvements or notable innovation in support of DHS missions. The R-Tech team of Director **Jose Vazquez**; and Deputy Director **Phil (King) Waters**, and program managers **William Deso**, **Christine Lee**, **D'Arcy Morgan**, **Milton Nenneman**, **Greg Price**, **John Price** and **William Stout** was recognized for fielding new technologies to strengthen first responder safety and effectiveness including: the Finding Individuals for Disaster Emergency Response (FINDER) system that detects victims buried in rubble, and a Low-Light Internet Protocol-Based Camera and Encoder to improve covert surveillance in low light conditions. The team worked with the U.S. Forest Service to develop protective garments to dramatically reduce heat stress injuries for fire response personnel. The team is providing better simulation tools for first responders by developing a virtual training platform that can be tailored to help jurisdictions respond to day-to-day incidents and large-scale emergencies.

For more information about the DHS Secretary's Awards, visit:

<http://www.dhs.gov/news/2014/10/23/secretary-johnson-recognizes-department-employees-exceptional-service>

For a list of all awardees click here: <http://www.dhs.gov/2014-awards>

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