

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 3, 2023

Lawrence A. Tabak, D.D.S, Ph.D.  
Acting Director, National Institutes of Health  
9000 Rockville Pike  
Bethesda, MD 20892

Dear Dr. Tabak:

We write to inquire about funding issued by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) to foreign organizations under investigation for animal cruelty.

Recently, experiments conducted by two Colombian organizations, Caucaseco Scientific Research Center (Caucaseco) and Malaria Vaccines and Development Center (MVDC), were halted by the Colombian government due to mistreatment of animal research subjects.<sup>1</sup> To date, these two organizations have received over \$17 million from the NIH.<sup>2</sup> Caucaseco has two awards currently funded by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID). The award 5U01AI155363 was renewed in November 2022 and the funding of the award 5R01AI148843 was scheduled to be renewed in January.

On January 16, 2023, Colombian authorities ordered the suspension of all experiments on monkeys, including those funded by the NIAID,<sup>3</sup> after inspectors found monkeys living in filth and denied adequate veterinary care.<sup>4</sup> Officials discovered a dead baby monkey, monkeys suffering from eye disease, and at least one monkey who was missing an eye.<sup>5</sup>

The heads of these organizations, Sócrates Herrera and his wife Myriam Arévalo, are under investigation for violations of animal care and other laws by three separate Colombian agencies: the Office of the Attorney General;<sup>6</sup> the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation;<sup>7</sup> and the environmental agency Corporación Autónoma Regional del Valle del Cauca (CVC).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hurtado DL. Ruling 0710, January 19, 2023. Corporación Autónoma Regional del Valle del Cauca.

<sup>2</sup> National Institutes of Health. NIH RePORTER: [https://reporter.nih.gov/search/fs0CRs\\_bzUCgS-8zxmUwLw/projects?sort\\_field=fiscal\\_year&sort\\_order=desc&shared=true](https://reporter.nih.gov/search/fs0CRs_bzUCgS-8zxmUwLw/projects?sort_field=fiscal_year&sort_order=desc&shared=true) (accessed February 24, 2023).

<sup>3</sup> Hurtado DL. Ruling 0710, January 19, 2023. Corporación Autónoma Regional del Valle del Cauca.

<sup>4</sup> Rodríguez GO, Valencia RN. Report of Inspection to Centro de Investigación Científica Caucaseco and Fundación Centro de Primates, January 16, 2023. Corporación Autónoma Regional del Valle del Cauca.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> Fiscalía General de la Nación. Press Release 47761, February 17, 2023. Fiscalía verifica posible maltrato animal en centro de investigación que utiliza monos para sus pruebas científicas en Valle del Cauca.

<sup>7</sup> Ministerio de Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación. Press Release, January 7, 2023.

<sup>8</sup> Hurtado DL. Ruling 0710, January 19, 2023. Corporación Autónoma Regional del Valle del Cauca.

The NIH and NIAID have yet to comment publicly about the millions of dollars U.S. taxpayers sent to these organizations. This is particularly troubling because the chief of the NIAID's Malaria Immunology Section has collaborative agreements with Herrera.<sup>9</sup>

In accordance with our congressional oversight duties, we write to ask the following questions:

1. Does the NIH intend to renew Caucaseco's award 5R01AI148843?
2. Will the NIH cancel the current funding for Caucaseco?

We look forward to your prompt response to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Troy E. Nehls  
Member of Congress



Don Davis  
Member of Congress

cc: Hugh Auchincloss, M.D.  
Acting Director, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases

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<sup>9</sup> Herrera S. Discovery and preclinical evaluation of Plasmodium falciparum and P. vivax coiled coil antigens for malaria vaccine development, page 130. July 2020