



## **THE ARMED FORCES RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES AND INFECTIOUS DISEASES RESEARCH: THAI MILITARILY IMPORTANT INFECTIOUS DISEASES**

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### **Abstract**

The Armed Forces Research Institute of Medical Sciences (AFRIMS), Bangkok, Thailand originated in 1958 when a group of scientists from Thailand and the United States established the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) Cholera Research Laboratory. It was renamed the SEATO Medical Research Laboratory when the mission was expanded in 1961 and the Laboratory became the AFRIMS upon dissolution of SEATO in 1977. AFRIMS operates as a joint American–Thai military medical research venture with a mission to provide medical research, disease surveillance, and development and evaluation of medical products for militarily important infectious diseases. This year 2011, AFRIMS celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of good collaboration between the Royal Thai Army (RTA) and the United States (US) Army to conduct outstanding research on infectious diseases. Not only Thai and US component of AFRIMS, but also local and regional partners of AFRIMS such as Universities, Thai Ministry of Public Health, and World Health Organization (WHO) collaborate for the medical research efforts. For Thai Militarily Important Infectious Diseases, we focus on malaria, HIV, rickettsioses, leptospirosis and respiratory diseases. One of the accomplishments of AFRIMS research is the Thai Phase III HIV vaccine clinical trial (RV144) which tested the "prime-boost" combinations. The study was made possible by an international collaboration involving numerous partners from the Thai and U.S. governments, private companies, non-profit organizations and more than 16,000 volunteers. The trial showed for the first time that HIV vaccines can provide protection, though partial. This findings reinvigorated the field of HIV vaccinology. In addition, AFRIMS is responsible for health screening of Thai soldiers in peace-keeping operations with United Nations since 1999 for studying the epidemiology of infectious diseases in the locale of assignments such as East Timor, Afghanistan, Iraq, Burundi and Sudan. Infectious diseases research studies at AFRIMS mostly involve in epidemiology and disease surveillance, vaccine development, and basic science research. Together with research collaborative partnerships, our research studies on military infectious diseases will prevent diseases threat of military and global health importance and contribute significantly to advancement in multiple areas of infectious disease.

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