Bio-terror

Pumping up the fear factor

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Jennifer Lopez - The Guardian

The Guardian: FBI officers **dressed in moon suits** have been searching the offices of American Media - publisher of the lurid supermarket tabloid National Enquirer - since 63-year-old picture editor Bob Stevens died after inhaling anthrax.

Investigators in Florida suspect that foul play is almost certainly involved in the outbreak of anthrax at a newspaper office that has killed one employee and hospitalised another, fuelling fears that Americans have been **targeted by bio-terrorists.**

(P)art of the investigation is focusing on **a letter** that arrived at the company about a week before the September 11 attacks. It was described by sources as a **"weird love letter to Jennifer Lopez"** *NBC*: - similar, outwardly, to the types of mail the tabloids often get.

Guardian: But inside the oddly-worded letter was a “soapy, powdery substance” and in the pile of that a cheap Star of David charm. Employees said the letter was handled both by Stevens and Blanco.

AMI - an empire built on the screaming headlines and lurid stories of the lunatic supermarket tabloids - had yesterday become the panicked subject of a story most would say only it could make up.

Sources at AMI .. said the FBI has asked employees about any "enemies" the company or its papers might have. Given the content of the weekly tabloids, "that list would go on forever", joked one employee.

Bio-Terrorism

Debra Bottcher (worked *down the corridor* from Mr Stevens) Oct 11, 2001: *It's just starting to hit me. At first I thought it was a fluke but now I find myself wondering about all these crazy things going on. Bob Stevens lived in Lantana. Atta, that terrorist, was in Lantana. All these amazing coincidences are just too amazing for me. I'm very worried.*

George W. Bush, Oct 23: *I want to first thank **Chairman Biden** .. for standing solidly with the administration to formulate and conduct a foreign policy that's in the best interest of our country. It's oftentimes said that when it comes to foreign policy, **partisanship stops**, and that's **exactly what's happened** here at this table.*

*Well, there's no question that the **evildoers** are continuing to try to harm America and Americans. Today, at a remote facility, we detected some anthrax. And just like at the Congress, our government's responding **very quickly**.*

*Two postal workers passed away, and our hearts are with their families; **our prayers** are with their loved ones. But the **evil ones** continue.*

*We're working hard to find out who is doing this and **bring them to justice**.*

*It's hard for Americans to imagine how **evil the people** are who are doing this.*

*We're having to **adjust our thinking**. We're a kind nation, we're a compassionate nation, we're a nation of **strong values**, and we value life. And we're **learning** people in this world, you know, want **to terrorize** our country by trying to take life.*

*They won't succeed. This country is too strong to allow **terrorists** to affect the lives of our citizens.*

*I understand people are concerned, and **they should be**. But they need to know our government is doing everything we possibly can to **protect** the lives of our citizens **- everything**.*

*We're waging an **aggressive** campaign overseas to bring Al Qaeda to justice.*

NEWSWEEK: *Newsweek has learned that the FBI is **aggressively** trying to locate a **summer intern** from nearby Florida Atlantic University in connection with the investigation. The intern, who **sources said** came from a **Middle Eastern** country, had sent an e-mail to all employees that ... **thanked** company employees for the help he gave them, but then contained language suggesting that he wasn't saying "goodbye."*

AMI official: (The email had) *a sense of foreboding - it referred to a **"surprise" -** something that he left behind **-** it was weird.

Al Qaeda

The Atlantic:, June 1, 2002: *If anything, hints that anthrax and Al Qaeda may be linked have grown harder to dismiss.*

Dot one: Several of the hijackers, including their suspected ringleader, Mohamed Atta, are reported to have ***looked at crop dusters*** *in Belle Glade, Fla.*

Dot two: Among five targeted media organizations, only one was not nationally prominent—American Media, of Boca Raton, Fla., which happens to be a few miles from where Atta and other terrorists lived and attended flight school. (Atta rented an apartment from a real estate agent whose husband worked for American Media.)

*Dot three: In March a doctor in Fort Lauderdale announced that he had treated one of the terrorists for what, in r****etrospect,*** *he* ***believes*** *was cutaneous anthrax.* ***Doctors*** *at* ***Johns Hopkins University*** *examined the case and* ***concurred*** *that anthrax was "the most probable and* ***coherent interpretation*** *of the* ***data available****."*

Deseret News, Apr 2002: *Assessing a medical case in Florida, in which one of the Sept. 11 hijackers sought treatment for a leg wound in June, O'Toole and Inglesby concluded that the skin lesion* ***might*** *have been* ***caused by anthrax****. That was the conclusion too of the attending physician****, Dr. Christos Tsonas of the Holy Cross Hospital*** *in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., but it was reached only after reviewing his notes taken while treating Ahmed Ibrahim Al Hanzawi for what appeared to be a* ***simple****, if unusual,* ***leg injury.***

Stephen D. Bryen, ex-head of Pentagon's Defense Technology Security Administration, Reagan - managing partner of Aurora Defense: (Mailing) *is not how regimes think about dispersing a biological or chemical weapon, which should say that the guy distributing it was a total amateur.* (That leads me to) "*sample*" *theory*" **-** *the sample theory being that somebody gave these guys a small amount. It has all the characteristics that it was given to people who* ***didn't have any idea*** *how to use it.*

The Atlantic:: *Other recent reports cite* ***captured documents*** *and an* ***unfinished lab in Afghanistan*** *that* ***suggest*** *Al Qaeda was interested—as* ***presumably*** *it would be—in producing* ***biological weapons****, including anthrax. In 1999, an Arabic-language newspaper in London reported that: "elements loyal to [Osama] bin Laden" had, for* ***a few thousand dollars,*** *"managed to obtain an offer for the supply of samples of anthrax and other poisons" from a former Soviet bloc country.*

BBC: Red Thomas is a retired army officer living in Mesa Arizona. He wrote what has become the definitive article on the internet preaching against overblown fears.

There is only one way, says Mr Thomas, to take out 10,000 people with one dirty letter:

Red Thomas: *We'd have to find 10,000 volunteers to line up and lay down on a big metal table while a doctor stuck a tube down into the lungs and blew the anthrax in there, and then we'd get all 10,000 of them and fly them to Pango Pango so they could avoid any medical intervention, and then yes, we could kill 10,000 people*

Al Qaeda in Cropdusters - The Experts

BBC, Sep 27, 2001: *The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) (headed by Robert Mueller, recently confirmed that **Mohammed Atta,** one of the suspected hijackers who is believed to have piloted a jetliner into one of the twin towers, was acquiring knowledge of **crop-dusting aircraft** prior to the devastating attack.*

Atta was reported to have visited an airport in Florida where he enquired how far crop dusters could fly and requested details of their carrying capacity.

Debora MacKenzie, NEW SCIENTIST(sorry, 404ed): *The **Al-Qaeda** group suspected of the 11 September terrorist attacks is **allied to Iraq**, and to Chechen rebels in the former Soviet Union. Iraq and the Soviet Union both developed anthrax weapons consisting of aerosolised spores that would cause pneumonic disease. The group is also known to be interested in bioweapons.*

NYT, 17 Oct 2001: *Thus far, the delivery system has been relatively crude: the mails. But if someone could spray this strain by a more sophisticated means - say**, a crop-duster** plane - the peril could be great, the **experts say**.*

Paul Ewald, biologist, Amherst College, author of Plague Time: *If this attack was caused by the Al Qaeda group—and I think that's the best explanation, given the evidence available - this small release would be most useful as a demonstration that they have anthrax on U.S. soil.*

*Smart terrorists would have made or obtained larger quantities of the stuff and stashed it, probably (if they're smart) before setting off alarms by sending out a few grams. Later, with **the potency of their weapon proved**, they could mount, or threaten to mount, a much larger attack.*

Larry Bush, 1st to diagnose Anthrax: *When dispersed in the air as 1-to-5-µm paticles, B. anthracis endospores may pose a risk even over large geographic distances. After an accidental release of endospores from a military biologic-weapons facility in Sverdlovsk, Russia, cases of anthrax in humans occurred as far as 4 km from the site, and cases in animals occurred as far as **50 km** away.*

U.S. Air Force Colonel Randy Larsen (Ret): *In an Oct. 21 progress report, this bipartisan board cautioned that **"a one-to two-kilogram release** of anthrax spores from a crop duster plane could **kill more Americans than** died in World War II**".***

*The commission's **crop-duster scenario** was conceived after Americans discovered two Afghan anthrax laboratories. "The 9/11 Commission Report" says Jemaah Islamiah **agent** Yazid Sufaat "would spend several months attempting to cultivate anthrax for al-Qaida in a laboratory he helped set up near the Kandahar airport."*

***Interestingly enough**, Sufaat was captured **thanks** to information that American interrogators **gleaned after waterboarding** KSM. Had America not **dampened KSM's nose**, U.S. soldiers or civilians already might have had Sufaat's anthrax up their nostrils.*

Stan Bedlington, ret. CIA, Counterterrorism Center: *Frankly, when I heard the news, I thought, 'It's got to be biochemical'. This is frightening enough and yet, you could **take a small plane a**nd **sprinkle anthrax** over New York City and **wipe out half the population.***

Matthew Meselson, Harvard biologist: *Very, very pure. If you look at it under the electron microscope, you don't see anything but anthrax spores.*

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Oct 5: *About **200 pounds of anthrax** spores released upwind of Washington, D.C., **could kill up to 3 million people,** according to a government study.*

Prof Brian Levin, Director Center on Hate and Extremism, California State University (404ed): *Because of the sophistication needed to put together an anthrax threat and the timing of this, I think it's far more likely that this is **foreign** rather than domestic.*

FBI Archives: *The FBI reminded the public that **the reward is up to $1.25 million***

FBI spokesman: ***Exhaustive** testing **did not support** that anthrax was present anywhere the hijackers had been.*

Pivot to Iraq

Guardian: *American investigators probing anthrax outbreaks in Florida and New York believe they have all the hallmarks of a terrorist attack - and have named **Iraq as prime suspect** as the source of the deadly spores.*

Senior US intelligence source: *Making anthrax, on its own, isn't so difficult. But it only begins to become effective as a biological weapon if they can be made the right size **to breathe in.** If you can't get airborne infectivity, you can't use it as a weapon. That is **extremely difficult.** There is very little leeway**.** Most spores are either too big to be suspended in air, or too small to lodge on the lining of the lungs.*

They aren't making this stuff in caves in Afghanistan. *This is prima facie evidence of the involvement of a state intelligence agency. Maybe Iran has the capability. But it doesn't look likely politically. **That leaves Iraq.***

Administration official: *We see **this war** as one against the **virus of terrorism**. If you have bone marrow cancer, it's not enough to just cut off the patient's foot. You have to do the complete course of chemotherapy. And if that means embarking on the next **Hundred Years' War**, that's what we're doing.*

FBI email to US biologists: Jan 2002: *The perpetrator might be described as 'standoffish' and likely prefers to work in isolation as opposed to a group/team setting. It is possible this person used off-hours in a laboratory or (borrowed) equipment to produce the anthrax.**

* Indicates FBI was aware that Anthrax attack was likely homegrown terrorism as early as 3 months after mailings.