Homegrown Bioterror

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New York Times Sep 4

BBC/Susan Watts, March 2002: *The New York Times carried a major investigation which at any other time would have been a story of huge significance. .. It revealed* (private) *contractors have been involved in **classified** bio-defence projects .. in the **first few days** of **September** last year - immediately prior to the attacks of the 11th.*

NYT, Sep 4, 2001: *In a program code-named **Clear Vision**, the Central Intelligence Agency built and tested a model of a **Soviet**-designed **germ bomb** that agency officials **feared** was being sold on the international market.*

*At about the same time, Pentagon **experts** assembled a **germ factory** in the **Nevada desert** from commercially available materials .. (that) demonstrated the **ease** with which a **terrorist** or **rogue nation** could build a plant that could produce pounds of the deadly germs.*

*Over the past several years, the United States has embarked on a program of secret research on biological weapons that, some officials say, **tests the limits** of the global treaty banning such weapons.*

*The 1972 treaty forbids nations from developing or acquiring weapons that spread disease, but it allows work on **vaccines** and other **protective measures**. Government officials said the secret research, which **mimicked** the major steps **a state or terrorist** would take to create a biological arsenal, was aimed at better **understanding** the threat.*

BBC/Susan Watts, March 2002: *One - run by a contractor - Battelle - was to create **genetically altered anthrax.***

NYT: *(A)dministration officials said, the Pentagon drew up plans to **engineer genetically** a potentially **more potent** variant of the bacterium that causes **anthrax,** a deadly disease **ideal** for **germ warfare**.*

*The **experiment** has been **devised** to assess whether the vaccine now being given to millions of American soldiers is effective against such a superbug, which was first created by **Russian** scientists. A Bush administration official said the National **Security** Council is expected to give the final **go-ahead** later this month.*

Destruction of Evidence

NYT, Nov 9, 2001: *Shortly after the first case of anthrax arose, the F.B.I.* (Mueller) *said it had* ***no objection*** *to the* ***destruction*** *of a collection of* ***anthrax samples*** *at* ***Iowa State University****, but some scientists involved in the investigation now say that collection may have contained* ***genetic clues*** *valuable to the inquiry.*

Last month (**Oct**)*, after consulting with the F.B.I.* (Mueller)*, Iowa State University in Ames* ***destroyed*** *anthrax spores collected over more than* ***seven decades*** *and kept in more than 100 vials. A variant of the so-called* ***Ames*** *strain* ***had been*** *implicated in the death of a Florida man from inhalation anthrax, and the university was* ***nervous*** *about security.*

New Yorker, Nov 12, 2001: Around 5:30 P.M. on ***October 12th****, college staff members wearing biosafety gloves removed the anthrax specimens from the laboratory cabinet and placed them in an autoclave, a steam sterilizer about the size of a filing cabinet.*

Roth had wondered about the possibility (of the) .. more than 100 vials being evidence .. and .. contacted the F.B.I. and the Centers for Disease Control before killing the specimens. Both agencies approved the destruction.

NYT: *(A) precise match between the anthrax .. and a particular strain in the collection might have offered hints as to when that bacteria had been isolated and, perhaps, how widely it had been distributed to researchers. And that, in turn, might have given investigators important clues to the* ***killer's identity****.*

James Roth: *They may be having some second thoughts about that, but it's too late now,*

James Roth, Distinguished Professor of veterinary microbiology, preventative medicine, Iowa: *On Oct. 9, a media report out of Florida stated that the anthrax that killed a man in Florida was stolen from* ***a lab in Iowa****. .. Several days later the FBI reported the connection was false.**

The decision to destroy vet med's collection of anthrax cultures was made by ***Vet Med Dean*** *Norman Cheville, Associate Dean Don Reynolds and* ***Roth****.*

New Yorker: *The school's anthrax collection had been stored in cabinets in the teaching laboratory, the doors of which were routinely locked at night. .*

When an associated laboratory nearby, run by the United States Department of Agriculture, had outgrown its building space a few years earlier, it had moved some of its work on anthrax and mad-cow disease to a rented space in an Ames strip mall.

Pentagon Bio-defense Preparedness board: *Dr.* ***James Roth,*** *Distinguished Professor, The Department of Veterinary and Microbiology and Preventative Medicine, College of Veterinary Medicine at Iowa State University and member of the National Academy of Medicine; Dr.* ***William Karesh****, Vice President for Health and Policy,* ***EcoHealth Alliance*** *and Interproject Liaison for the USAID* ***emerging threats****.*

FBI closing in - Ames strain

Wapo, 26 Oct 2001: *Office of Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge said yesterday that the bacterial spores that caused anthrax outbreaks in Florida, New York and Washington belong to the so-called* ***Ames strain*** *-- a subtype of the anthrax bacterium that is* ***commonly used*** *in universities around the world and was a* ***focus*** *of studies by the* ***U.S. military****. **

(re Daschle letter opened in his office **Oct. 15)**

Maj. Gen. John Parker, U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command: *We are trying very hard to characterize anything that would be associated with this sample and we're continuing to do that research. I won't have the absolute answers until all of those investigations are in.*

It is highly concentrated. It is pure and the spores are smaller. Therefore they're more dangerous, because they can be more easily absorbed in a person's respiratory system.

BBC, 19 Dec 2001: *For five weeks now* (=Nov 14)*, the FBI has been* ***working openly*** *on the premise that the terrorist is* ***home-grown.*** *Last week it was* ***acknowledged*** *that the US military has in recent years been* ***making weaponised anthrax****, of a type that* ***matches*** *the anthrax used to lace the* ***lethal letters.***

The Atlantic, June, 2002: *In November* (2001)*, the FBI issued a suspect profile identifying the likely anthrax attacker as a single adult male,* ***probably an American*** *with a scientific background,* ***lab experience****, poor social skills, and a grudge. **

Some people - I - was one of them - viewed this interpretation with skepticism. What would be the motive? Why the timing so close to September 11? A number of analysts, including David Tell in a useful article in The Weekly Standard on April 29, have subsequently cast doubt on the ***disgruntled-scientist hypothesis****,*

William C. Patrick III: *Anthrax is relatively easy to grow; it doesn't require any special nutrients,"* ***Patrick*** *said. "But having grown it, you have to dry it and keep it dry, and you have to have a pretty tight system. You need a minimum amount of equipment for that; you just can't go out in the woods and create this."*

* FBI (Mueller) suspected it was a homegrown scientist from beginning, knew from Nov 14.