

# 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- $\mu$ m particles, *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 and 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.

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