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New York Times

August 2, 2008

Pg. 1

Scientist's Suicide Linked To Anthrax Inquiry

By Scott Shane and Eric Lichtblau

WASHINGTON — After four years pursuing one former Army scientist on a costly false trail, F.B.I. agents investigating the deadly anthrax letters of 2001 finally zeroed in last year on a different suspect: another Army scientist from the same biodefense research center at Fort Detrick in Frederick, Md.

Over the last 18 months, even as the government battled a lawsuit filed by the first scientist, Steven J. Hatfill, investigators built a case against the second one, Bruce E. Ivins, a highly respected microbiologist who had worked for many years to design a better anthrax vaccine.

Last weekend, after learning that federal prosecutors were preparing to indict him on murder charges, Dr. Ivins, a 62-year-old father of two, took an overdose of Tylenol with codeine. He died in a Frederick hospital on Tuesday, leaving behind a grieving family and uncertainty about whether the anthrax mystery had finally been solved. The apparent suicide of Dr. Ivins, a Red Cross volunteer and amateur juggler who had won the Defense Department's highest civilian award in 2003, was a dramatic turn in one of the largest criminal investigations in the nation's history. The attack, the only major act of bioterrorism on American soil, came in the jittery aftermath of the Sept. 11 attacks. It killed five people, sickened 17 others and set off a wave of panic.

In the early days after the letter attacks, in September and October 2001, Dr. Ivins joined about 90 of his colleagues at the Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases in a round-the-clock laboratory push to test thousands of samples of suspect powder to see if they were anthrax. Later, in April 2002, he came under scrutiny in an Army investigation of a leak of potentially deadly anthrax spores outside a sealed-off lab at Fort Detrick. He later admitted he had discovered the leak but not reported it.

Whether the focus on Dr. Ivins had resolved the case of the anthrax letters was unclear. A federal law enforcement official said that Dr. Ivins had been regarded as a strong suspect and that agents had been nearing an arrest, and a lawyer familiar with the investigation said he believed that prosecutors had planned to charge only Dr. Ivins. The link between Dr. Ivins's suicide and the federal investigation was first reported on Friday in The Los Angeles Times.

But the Federal Bureau of Investigation declined on Friday to make public its case against Dr. Ivins, noting that evidence was under court seal as part of a grand jury investigation. Officials said they were briefing the victims of the anthrax letters — those who recovered, as well as family members of those who died — and would need to go to court to have evidence unsealed before it could even be summarized for the public.

A lawyer who had represented Dr. Ivins since May 2007, Paul F. Kemp, insisted that Dr. Ivins was innocent and had been driven to suicide by false suspicions.

"For six years, Dr. Ivins fully cooperated with that investigation, assisting the government in every way that was asked of him," Mr. Kemp said in a written statement, calling the microbiologist "a world-renowned and highly decorated scientist who served his country for over 33 years with the Department of the Army."

"We assert his innocence in these killings and would have established that at trial," Mr. Kemp said. "The relentless pressure of accusation and innuendo takes its toll in different ways on different people, as has already been seen in this investigation."

Mr. Kemp was clearly referring to the case of Dr. Hatfill, who was the focus of intensive F.B.I. and news media attention in the case beginning in mid-2002 and received a \$4.6 million settlement from the government in June to settle a lawsuit accusing the F.B.I. and the Justice Department of destroying his career and personal life with leaks. Whatever the cause of his suicide, Dr. Ivins had been behaving bizarrely in the weeks before his death. He was hospitalized briefly for depression and, according to a complaint filed with the police, threatened to kill a social worker who had treated him in group therapy, among others, in rants referring to his expectation that he would be charged with five counts of capital murder.

"It's out of character," said Norman M. Covert, a former spokesman and historian for the Army biodefense center who served with Dr. Ivins on an animal care committee. "But if the F.B.I. was really leaning on him, what a tremendous load that was on him."

A spokesman for the Frederick police, Lt. Clark Pennington, said he could not say whether Dr. Ivins had left a suicide note because the anthrax investigation remained open.

Investigators in the huge inquiry traveled to many countries and by late 2006 had conducted 9,100 interviews, sent out 6,000 grand jury subpoenas and conducted 67 searches, the F.B.I. said. But the prime focus steadily narrowed: first to the Army infectious diseases laboratories, apparently linked to the letters by genetic analysis, then to Dr. Hatfill, a medical doctor who had become a bioterrorism consultant, and finally to Dr. Ivins, who worked in the same building as Dr. Hatfill and lived two blocks away from him outside the gates to Fort Detrick.

Two puzzles have haunted investigators from the beginning: the motive of the perpetrator and his skills. Because the notes in some of the letters mailed to news media organizations and two senators included radical Islamist rhetoric, investigators initially believed the letters might have been sent by Al Qaeda.

But the F.B.I. quickly settled on a different profile: a disgruntled American scientist or technician, perhaps one specializing in biodefense, who wanted to raise an alarm about the bioterrorism threat. That theory accounted for the letters' taped seams and the notes' use of the word anthrax, a warning that allowed antibiotic treatment — not to be expected from a Qaeda attack intended mainly to kill.

That theory of a biodefense insider placed many scientists at the infectious diseases institute and other laboratories under scrutiny, even as they helped the F.B.I. analyze the anthrax powder in the letters.

“The F.B.I. would be remiss not to look at us, especially those of us who worked with anthrax,” said John W. Ezzell, an anthrax researcher who hired Dr. Ivins at the institute and knew him well. “We were all subjected to lie detector tests. We were all interviewed.”

Mr. Ezzell called Dr. Ivins “intense about his work, but a popular guy.” Asked whether he was aware that Dr. Ivins had become a more serious suspect, Mr. Ezzell declined to comment.

The other puzzle involved the skills necessary to produce the high-quality aerosol powder contained in the letters addressed to the senators, Tom Daschle, Democrat of South Dakota, and Patrick J. Leahy, Democrat of Vermont. Scientists familiar with germ warfare said there was no evidence that Dr. Ivins, though a vaccine expert with easy access to the most dangerous forms of anthrax, had the skills to turn the pathogen into an inhalable powder.

“I don’t think a vaccine specialist could do it,” said Dr. Alan P. Zelicoff, a physician who aided the F.B.I. investigation when he worked at the Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque.

“This is aerosol physics, not biology,” Dr. Zelicoff added. “There are very few people who have their feet in both camps.”

Mr. Ezzell said Dr. Ivins had worked on many projects involving anthrax spores and the toxin they produce, including experiments in which animals were exposed to anthrax to test vaccines. But he said the experiments, to his knowledge, involved anthrax spores in liquid and not in the dry powder form used in the letter attacks.

By their own admission, the F.B.I. and the Postal Inspection Service had little expertise in biological weapons in 2001, when they first loosed hundreds of agents on the investigation. Since then, at least 19 government and university laboratories have worked on the investigation, using clues like the genetic fingerprints of the anthrax, and radioactive isotopes in the water used to grow it, to try to trace it to a source.

The source, several officials said, was the infectious diseases institute, where the trail led to just a handful of vials in a single lab.

But the scientific evidence, some of it found using new methods, now may never be tested in a criminal trial, leaving questions about just how compelling it is.

“I would urge the bureau to publish its evidence if it declares the case solved and closed,” said Dr. Claire Fraser-Liggett, the former director of the Institute for Genomic Research, where the anthrax genome was decoded.

On Capitol Hill, where anthrax contamination in 2001 led to the evacuation of many offices, several members of Congress voiced skepticism about reports that the hunt for the anthrax killer might be over.

Representative Rush Holt, a Democrat whose district includes the Princeton, N.J., mailbox where investigators believe the letters were mailed, said the F.B.I. should provide a full briefing.

“What we learn,” Mr. Holt said, “will not change the fact that this has been a poorly handled investigation that has lasted six years and already has resulted in a trail of embarrassment and personal tragedy.”

William J. Broad and Nicholas Wade contributed reporting, and Jack Begg, Kitty Bennett and Barclay Walsh contributed research.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/02/washington/02anthrax.html?scp=1&sq=Scientist's%20Suicide%20Linked%20To%20Anthrax%20Inquiry&st=cse#>

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Washington Post

August 2, 2008

Pg. 1

A Scientist's Quiet Life Took A Darker Turn

By Joby Warrick, Marilyn W. Thompson and Nelson Hernandez, Washington Post Staff Writers

For most of his career, he was a casting agent's vision of a bench scientist: shy, eccentric, nerdy, soft-spoken. But sometime this spring, with the FBI closing in on him, Bruce E. Ivins's life took a dark turn that frightened his closest friends.

In March, police officers summoned to a quiet Frederick neighborhood found the 62-year-old microbiologist unconscious in his home. Four months later, he was admitted to a psychiatric clinic after making wild threats against co-workers at the Army research institute where he kept his lab. Then, a week ago, his therapist urgently petitioned a judge for protection from Ivins. She described a man spiraling out of control, making "homicidal threats, actions, plans."

His death Tuesday from a drug overdose was followed by a revelation even more jarring to those who knew him: a report that Ivins had been implicated in the 2001 anthrax attacks, one of the FBI's biggest unsolved mysteries and most baffling technical cases. Ivins, a leading expert on anthrax vaccines, was on the verge of being indicted in the case, according to officials familiar with the investigation, and took his life by swallowing a large quantity of acetaminophen.

The allegations of a possible link to the case known as "Amerithrax" dumbfounded friends and co-workers who knew Ivins as a gentle, bighearted family man who raised two children in Frederick, volunteered for community charities and played keyboards for the local Catholic church. His work with the deadly anthrax bacteria was devoted to developing more effective vaccines that could save lives in a future biological attack.

"He was passionate about it -- he really cared," said a fellow scientist who co-authored studies with Ivins.

Yet, slowly over the past two years, FBI investigators began to focus on Ivins under the theory that he had used his knowledge of anthrax bacteria to pull off the nation's deadliest episode of biological terrorism. As a researcher for the Army's main lab for studying bioterror agents, Ivins had easy access to anthrax bacteria, including the specific strain of *Bacillus anthracis* used in the attacks on media outlets and congressional offices in the fall of 2001. His expertise eventually earned him a front-row seat for the FBI's investigation, as he was called upon to help the bureau with its analysis of the wispy powder used in the attacks.

Despite the allegations -- and even after Ivins's apparent plunge into mental illness -- longtime friends and colleagues say it is inconceivable that Ivins could have been a bioterrorist. Many contend that he was driven to depression and suicide because of months of hounding by federal investigators.

"He just looked worried, depressed, anxious, way turned into himself," recalled W. Russell Byrne, an infectious-disease specialist who last saw Ivins on a recent Sunday at St. John the Evangelist, the Roman Catholic church in Frederick to which they both belonged. "It would be overstating it to say he looked like a guy who was being led to his execution, but it's not far off."

Added another co-worker: "Almost everybody . . . believes that he had absolutely nothing to do with Amerithrax."

Ivins was born in 1946, the youngest of three sons who grew up in Lebanon, Ohio. His father owned a drugstore and was active in the local Rotary Club and Chamber of Commerce, while his mother stayed at home and volunteered in her sons' PTAs, according to his eldest brother. The family went regularly to Lebanon Presbyterian Church.

"He was a bookworm," said Tom Ivins, 72, of Middletown, Ohio, who said he had been estranged from his youngest brother for two decades. "He liked things like science."

The 1964 yearbook from Lebanon High School shows a thin-faced young man with oversize, dark-rimmed glasses and a raft of extracurricular activities under his name: National Honor Society. Science fair. Current events club. The scholarship team all four years. He ran on the track and cross-country teams, worked on the yearbook and school newspaper, and was in the school choir and the junior and senior class plays.

Ivins entered the University of Cincinnati that fall and earned three degrees there: a B.S. with honors in 1968 and master's and doctoral degrees in microbiology in 1971 and 1976, respectively. His dissertation focused on different aspects of toxicity in disease-causing bacteria.

When he applied to Fort Detrick in the late 1980s, he had "an impressive résumé," said John Ezzell, a former top scientist there who was part of a hiring committee that selected Ivins to work on the human anthrax vaccine. "We thought he worked out really well. He was a critical part of our vaccine studies." Ezzell said Ivins participated in numerous animal experiments testing how the vaccine protected against various types of anthrax exposure.

Ezzell considered Ivins a friend and said they sometimes shared hotel rooms when they traveled to professional conferences. "Most of the time, he was very happy and outgoing," he said. "He did good work. He was very conscientious, and he worked long hours to get the work done."

Ezzell said the experiments did not involve anthrax in its dried form, the type found in the letter to then-Senate Majority Leader Thomas A. Daschle (D-S.D.) that was so finely ground it could immediately become airborne. Ivins worked with small teams of scientists; their findings had global significance in the field of anthrax studies and were later used by opponents of a mandatory vaccination program instituted by the Pentagon that has been highly controversial.

Meryl Nass, a physician and leader in the vaccine opposition movement, met Ivins at a conference in the early 1990s, and they talked regularly over the next decade. She said Ivins told her he had a chronic blood disorder and feared that it might be linked to the anthrax vaccine booster shots he had to take to work in the Fort Detrick laboratory.

"He had some issues with work," Nass said in an interview.

Ivins eventually would be awarded the Defense Department's highest honor for civilian performance for helping to resurrect a controversial vaccine that could protect against anthrax. At a March 2003 ceremony, Ivins described the award, which he received along with several colleagues, as unexpected. "Awards are nice. But the real satisfaction is knowing the vaccine is back on-line," he told a military publication.

After the anthrax mailings in October 2001, the Fort Detrick labs went into a frenetic response, testing suspicious mail and packages virtually round-the-clock. Ivins was part of a team that analyzed the handwritten letter sent to Daschle, packed with *Bacillus anthracis* spores that matched the primary strain used in Fort Detrick research.

In early 2002, without notifying his supervisors, Ivins began sampling areas in the Detrick lab space that he believed might be contaminated with anthrax. He took unauthorized samples from the lab containment areas and later acknowledged to Army officials that he had violated protocol.

Ivins's odd behavior was detailed in an Army investigation of the matter, but he did not surface as a potential suspect in the mailings case. "He was not on my radar," said a Senate source whose office was briefed on the FBI's progress. In fact, in early June 2003, when the FBI drained a pond in rural Maryland in search of clues to the perpetrator of the anthrax attacks, Ivins was one of the Red Cross volunteers who brought investigators coffee and donuts.

Investigators, however, singled him out and asked him to leave "because he was somebody involved in the investigation," said Byrne, Ivins's former colleague and fellow parishioner.

Outside the lab, Ivins's neighbors, friends and pastor say, he played the piano every Sunday at what he jokingly called "the hippie Mass" in the school hall at St. John the Evangelist. He played keyboards in a Celtic band and founded the Frederick Jugglers.

Robert and Bonnie Duggan, who live six houses away from Ivins's family -- his wife, Diane, and their daughter and son -- recalled that they once asked to borrow his chainsaw to cut down trees along their back fence. Ivins insisted on cutting down the trees for them.

Over the past two years, many who knew him saw the effects of accumulating pressure as the anthrax investigation veered toward him. "He would tell stories about how he would come home and everything he owned would be in piles," said a Fort Detrick employee who spoke on the condition of anonymity because workers there had been instructed not to talk with reporters. The employee said his files, lab samples and equipment were frequently seized by authorities.

He was finding it harder and harder to work and was planning to retire in September. But even as his troubles mounted and his mood darkened, "a lot of people cared about him," Byrne said. "He is not Timothy McVeigh. He's not the Unabomber."

Still, by spring, Ivins's life seemed to be falling apart. Police were first called to his house on March 19, when he was discovered unconscious and briefly admitted to a hospital. On July 10, they encountered Ivins again, this time after a counselor called from Fort Detrick to report that the scientist was a danger to himself, and was ranting about weapons and making death threats. He went peacefully with police to Frederick Memorial Hospital, where he was admitted to a psychiatric ward.

He was later released voluntarily, but his erratic behavior prompted his therapist, Jean C. Duley, to seek a protective order. Duley wrote that Ivins "has a history dating to his graduate days of homicidal threats, actions, plans, threats & actions toward therapists." She quoted his psychiatrist, Dr. David Irwin, as calling him "homicidal, sociopathic, with clear intentions." Irwin could not be reached for comment.

Early Sunday, police were again summoned to Ivins's house and found him unconscious on the bathroom floor. They took him to Frederick Memorial Hospital, where he died two days later.

That same day, the court dismissed Duley's case. A clerk explained the reason in a brief, handwritten note: "Respondent deceased."

Staff writers Aaron Davis, Amy Goldstein and Josh White and researchers Julie Tate and Meg Smith contributed to this report.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/08/01/AR2008080102326.html>

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New York Times

August 2, 2008

In Death Of Suspect, A Dark End For A Family Man And Community Volunteer

By Sarah Abruzzese and Eric Lipton

FREDERICK, Md. — Bruce E. Ivins arrived last month for a group counseling session at a psychiatric center here in his hometown with a startling announcement: Facing the prospect of murder charges, he had bought a bulletproof vest and a gun as he contemplated killing his co-workers at the nearby Army research laboratory.

"He was going to go out in a blaze of glory, that he was going to take everybody out with him," said a social worker in a transcript of a hearing at which she sought a restraining order against Dr. Ivins after his threats.

The ranting represented the final stages of psychological decline by Dr. Ivins that ended when he took his life this week, as it became clear that he was a suspect in the 2001 anthrax attacks.

For more than three decades, Dr. Ivins, 62, had worked with some of the world's most dangerous pathogens and viruses, trying to find cures in case they might be used as a weapon. Now he was a suspect in the nation's worst biological attack.

To some of his longtime colleagues and neighbors, it was a startling and inexplicable turn of events for a churchgoing, family-oriented germ researcher known for his jolly disposition — the guy who did a juggling act at community events and composed satiric ballads he played on guitar or piano to departing co-workers.

"He did not seem to have any particular grudges or idiosyncrasies," said Kenneth W. Hedlund, a retired physician who once worked alongside Dr. Ivins at the Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases in Frederick.

"He was the last person you would have suspected to be involved in something like this."

But to some anthrax experts, while reserving judgment on Dr. Ivins's case, his identification as a suspect fit a pattern they had suspected might explain the crime: an insider wanting to draw attention to biodefense.

Dr. Ivins, the son of a pharmacist from Lebanon, Ohio, who held a doctorate in microbiology from University of Cincinnati, spent his entire career at the elite, Army-run laboratory that conducted high-security experiments into lethal substances like anthrax and Ebola.

He turned his attention to anthrax — putting aside research on Legionnaire's disease and cholera — after the 1979 anthrax outbreak in the Soviet city of Sverdlovsk, which killed at least 64 after an accidental release at a military facility, said Dr. Hedlund, who worked with Dr. Ivins at the time.

The work became even more intense in the aftermath of the 2001 anthrax attack, as the field grew tremendously, with billions of dollars in new federal support for research on anthrax and other potential biological weapons and to buy new drugs or vaccines to handle a possible future attack.

Dr. Ivins was among the scientists who benefited from this surge, as 14 of the 15 academic papers he published since late 2001 were focused on possible anthrax treatments or vaccines, comparing the effectiveness of different formulations. He even worked on the investigation of the anthrax attacks, although this meant that he, like other scientists at the Army's defensive biological laboratory at Fort Detrick, Md., was scrutinized as a possible suspect.

Dr. Ivins and his wife, Diane Ivins, raised two children in a modest Cape Cod home in a post-World War II neighborhood right outside Fort Detrick, and he could walk to work.

He was active in the community, volunteering with the Red Cross and serving as the musician at his Roman Catholic church. His showed off his music skills at work, too, playing songs he had written about friends who were moving to new jobs.

But as investigators intensified their focus on Dr. Ivins, his life began to come apart.

Local police records show unusual calls this past spring, including the report of an "unconscious male" in March.

For at least six months of this year, he had attended group counseling sessions at a psychiatric center and had apparently been seeing a psychiatrist.

W. Russell Byrne, a former colleague of Dr. Ivins at the biodefense laboratory, criticized federal agents as harassing the germ scientist and his family.

"They searched his house twice and his computer once," he said in an interview. "We all felt powerless to stop it."

He said Dr. Ivins was recently escorted away from the laboratory by the authorities and "disgraced in a place he spent his whole career."

"That was so humiliating," he said. "It's hard to believe."

In court records, filed after Dr. Ivins discussed his plans to kill his co-workers, a social worker who led the sessions, Jean Duley, said that Dr. Ivins's psychiatrist had "called him homicidal, sociopathic with clear intentions." She went on to say that the Federal Bureau of Investigation was looking at Dr. Ivins and that he would soon be charged with five murders — the same number of fatalities in the anthrax attacks.

"He is a revenge killer," Ms. Duley told a Maryland District Court judge in Frederick as she sought a restraining order against Dr. Ivins. "When he feels that he has been slighted, and especially towards women, he plots and actually tries to carry out revenge killings."

After Dr. Ivins made the threats on July 9 about killing his co-workers, he was detained while at work and taken to a hospital before being transferred to a nearby psychiatric hospital. He was later released, but forbidden from going to Fort Detrick.

Ms. Duley said that Dr. Ivins had a history of making homicidal threats that dated to his college days. But several of Dr. Ivins's co-workers said that while he clearly was devastated after he was singled out for possible prosecution, that does not mean he was involved in the attack.

The police had come to Dr. Ivins's home in response to a call early on July 27 from the fire department for assistance; they found him unconscious on the bathroom floor. He was transported to the hospital, and died two days later.

His family has made no public statement about the investigation or about Dr. Ivins's suicide. But his children both placed messages on their Facebook pages, saying goodbye to their father, hinting at the torment he went through in his final months.

"I will miss you Dad. I love you and I can't wait to see you in Heaven," his son, Andy Ivins, wrote. "Rest in peace. It's finally over."

Sarah Abruzzese reported from Frederick, and Eric Lipton from Washington. William J. Broad contributed reporting from New York.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/02/us/02scientist.html?scp=1&sq=In%20Death%20Of%20Suspect,%20A%20Dark%20End%20For%20A%20Family%20Man%20And%20Community%20Volunteer&st=cse#>

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Baltimore Sun

August 2, 2008

Variety Of Research Carried Out At Fort Detrick

Center focuses on biodefense; Ivins worked on vaccine

By David Wood, Sun reporter

WASHINGTON - Fort Detrick, where scientist Bruce E. Ivins worked for more than three decades, is the largest U.S. government research center focused primarily on biodefense.

Set on a former airfield north of Frederick where the Maryland National Guard once based a fleet of biplanes, it houses dozens of labs.

Chief among them is the military's main research facility on biological weapons, the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases (USAMRIID), where Ivins and other microbiologists worked on anthrax and other deadly agents.

Since World War II, Detrick has been known primarily for its work on biological warfare agents, developing vaccines and other defenses and decontamination techniques. It gained notoriety in the 1940s and 1950s for medical experiments on human subjects, work that was cited by defense attorneys for Nazi doctors on trial at Nuremberg at the close of World War II, according to a history on the institute's Web site.

U.S. work on biological weapons was suspended by President Richard M. Nixon in 1969. Since then, research has focused entirely on defenses against bioweapons, according to U.S. officials.

Ivins was a microbiologist at the Army research facility for 35 years, the institute said yesterday, until his death, apparently by suicide, on Tuesday. He reportedly was about to be indicted in the mailing of anthrax-laced letters that killed five people in the weeks after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

Ivins and his colleagues had been studying the biomechanics of anthrax and other materials in order to understand how they react with the immune system, research that was aimed at developing vaccines.

In 1998 the U.S. military began requiring troops to be inoculated with an anthrax vaccine developed at Fort Detrick. The controversial program, which some soldiers said was unnecessary and dangerous, was temporarily halted in 2004 by a federal court order, but it resumed after further tests showed the vaccine was safe.

At Fort Detrick, Ivins had been working on a more specific vaccine that would work on multiple strains of anthrax. Detrick and the Army research institute also are known for a wide variety of military medical advances including lifesaving blood-clotting agents and microchips that carry individual soldiers' medical records.

"It really is a crown jewel for Maryland," said Norman Covert, a senior official at Fort Detrick for 22 years until he retired as its historian and public affairs director in 1999.

Covert said Ivins and others on the microbiology team "have developed a number of vaccines and prophylaxes against disease that have really helped to protect our soldiers in places which are environmentally dirty battlefields."

"Now," Covert said, "his reputation is in the toilet."

In a statement, USAMRIID said the center "mourns the loss of Dr. Bruce Ivins, who served the Institute for more than 35 years as a civilian microbiologist. In addition to his long and faithful government service, Bruce contributed to our community as a Red Cross volunteer with the Frederick County chapter. We will miss him very much."

Apart from the biomedical research centers, Fort Detrick houses dozens of offices for military and civilian agencies, including the Agriculture Department's Foreign Disease and Weed Science Research Institute, the National Cancer Institute, the Naval Medical Logistics Command and the Telemedicine and Advanced Technology Research Center. About 7,900 people work at Fort Detrick. The complex calls itself the largest employer in Frederick County, pumping more than \$500 million into the local economy annually and anchoring the Interstate 270 high-tech corridor.

Currently under construction at the 1,200-acre base is a biotechnology campus that will house civilian and military research centers including units of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, as well as USAMRIID.

<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/health/bal-te.detrick02aug02.0.5108456.story>

New York Times

August 2, 2008

Pg. 7

India: Nuclear Inspection Plan Is Adopted

By Associated Press

The International Atomic Energy Agency adopted a plan on Friday for inspecting India's nuclear reactors, enabling India to finalize a pact with the United States for fuel and technology. The deal is meant to end more than three decades of nuclear isolation resulting from India's refusal to sign the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and from its testing of atomic weapons.

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/02/world/asia/02briefs-NUCLEARINSPE_BRF.html?scp=1&sq=India:%20Nuclear%20Inspection%20Plan%20Is%20Adopted&st=cse

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Washington Post

August 3, 2008

Pg. 1

Scientists Question FBI Probe On Anthrax

Ivins Could Not Have Been Attacker, Some Say

By Joby Warrick, Marilyn W. Thompson and Aaron C. Davis, Washington Post Staff Writers

For nearly seven years, scientist Bruce E. Ivins and a small circle of fellow anthrax specialists at Fort Detrick's Army medical lab lived in a curious limbo: They served as occasional consultants for the FBI in the investigation of the deadly 2001 anthrax attacks, yet they were all potential suspects.

Over lunch in the bacteriology division, nervous scientists would share stories about their latest unpleasant encounters with the FBI and ponder whether they should hire criminal defense lawyers, according to one of Ivins's former supervisors. In tactics that the researchers considered heavy-handed and often threatening, they were interviewed and polygraphed as early as 2002, and reinterviewed numerous times. Their labs were searched, and their computers and equipment carted away.

The FBI eventually focused on Ivins, whom federal prosecutors were planning to indict when he committed suicide last week. In interviews yesterday, knowledgeable officials asserted that Ivins had the skills and access to equipment needed to turn anthrax bacteria into an ultra-fine powder that could be used as a lethal weapon. Court documents and tapes also reveal a therapist's deep concern that Ivins, 62, was homicidal and obsessed with the notion of revenge. Yet, colleagues and friends of the vaccine specialist remained convinced that Ivins was innocent: They contended that he had neither the motive nor the means to create the fine, lethal powder that was sent by mail to news outlets and congressional offices in the late summer and fall of 2001. Mindful of previous FBI mistakes in fingering others in the case, many are deeply skeptical that the bureau has gotten it right this time.

"I really don't think he's the guy. I say to the FBI, 'Show me your evidence,' " said Jeffrey J. Adamovicz, former director of the bacteriology division at the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute for Infectious Diseases, or USAMRIID, on the grounds of the sprawling Army fort in Frederick. "A lot of the tactics they used were designed to isolate him from his support. The FBI just continued to push his buttons."

Investigators are so confident of Ivins's involvement that they have been debating since Friday whether and how to close the seven-year-old anthrax investigation. That would involve disbanding a grand jury in the District and unsealing scores of documents that form the basis of the government's case against Ivins.

Negotiations over the legal issues continue, but a government source said that the probe could be shuttered as early as tomorrow. The move would amount to a strong signal that the FBI and Justice Department think they got their man -- and that he is dead, foreclosing the possibility of a prosecution. No charges are likely against others, that source added.

Once the case is closed, the FBI and Justice Department will face questions -- and possibly public hearings -- from congressional oversight committees, which have been largely shut out of the case the past five years. The

investigators have cited the ongoing nature of the case, as well as accusations of leaks to the media, for the information blackout to Capitol Hill.

One bioweapons expert familiar with the FBI investigation said Ivins indeed possessed the skills needed to create the dust-fine powder used in the attacks. At the Army lab where he worked, Ivins specialized in making sophisticated preparations of anthrax bacteria spores for use in animal tests, said the expert, who requested anonymity because the investigation remains active.

Ivins's daily routine included the use of processes and equipment the anthrax terrorist likely used in making his weapons. He also is known to have had ready access to the specific strain of *Bacillus anthracis* used in the attack -- a strain found to match samples found in Ivins's lab, he said.

"You could make it in a week," the expert said. "And you could leave USAMRIID with nothing more than a couple of vials. Bear in mind, they weren't exactly doing body searches of scientists back then."

But others, including former colleagues and scientists with backgrounds in biological weapons defense, disagreed that Ivins could have created the anthrax powder, even if he were motivated to do so.

"USAMRIID doesn't deal with powdered anthrax," said Richard O. Spertzel, a former biodefense scientist who worked with Ivins at the Army lab. "I don't think there's anyone there who would have the foggiest idea how to do it. You would need to have the opportunity, the capability and the motivation, and he didn't possess any of those."

Another scientist who worked with Ivins acknowledged it would have been technically possible to manufacture powdered anthrax at Fort Detrick, but unlikely that anyone could have done so without being detected.

"As well as we knew each other, and the way the labs were run, someone would discover what was going on," said the scientist, "especially since dry spores were not something that we prepared or worked with."

Scientists, co-workers and people who for years have researched the anthrax investigation, only to encounter frustration, misinformation and false leads, say law enforcement authorities should lay out their case as soon as possible. They want authorities to explain how Ivins, who led a seemingly normal life as a family man, churchgoer and volunteer, could have been responsible for one of the nation's most notorious unsolved crimes.

Authorities cast doubt yesterday on reports that Ivins had acted for financial gain based on patents and scientific advances he had made. Experiments by Ivins, working with several other Fort Detrick colleagues, led to two patented inventions considered crucial in the development of a genetically modified anthrax vaccine made by VaxGen, a California company that secured large government contracts after the 2001 anthrax attacks.

But sources familiar with details of the Army's patent process said it was unlikely that Ivins or the other scientists would reap a big financial windfall from VaxGen's vaccine production. They say the government restricts income from inventions produced in its laboratories to no more than \$150,000 per year, but the amount is often considerably less.

Jaye Holly, who lived next door to the Ivinses until she and her husband moved to New York a month ago, said she couldn't believe that her former neighbor, who was obsessed with grass recycling and who happily drove a 20-year-old faded red van, would endanger others for financial gain.

"I can't imagine him being involved in a scheme to make money or to make a profit, especially one that would put people at risk or even die," Holly said. "That's not the Bruce we knew. He was sweet, friendly. I mean, he was into grass recycling."

Court records obtained yesterday shed further light on the concerns of a mental health professional who met Ivins during his final months -- a period when, friends say, he fell into depression under the strain of constant FBI scrutiny. The records also suggest that a Frederick social worker, Jean Duley, passed on her concerns to the FBI after receiving death threats from Ivins.

Duley became so worried that she petitioned a local judge for a protective order against Ivins. According to an audio recording of the hearing, she said she had seen Ivins as a therapist for six months, and thought he had tried to kill people in the past.

"As far back as the year 2000, [Ivins] has actually attempted to murder several other people, [including] through poisoning," she said "He is a revenge killer, when he feels that he's been slighted . . . especially towards women. He plots and actually tries to carry out revenge killings," she told a judge.

She described a July 9 group therapy session in which Ivins allegedly talked of mass murder.

"He was extremely agitated, out of control," she said. Ivins told the group he had bought a gun, and proceeded to lay out a "long and detailed homicidal plan," she said.

"Because he was about to be indicted on capital murder charges, he was going to go out in a blaze of glory; that he was going to take everybody out with him," she said.

Staff writers Carrie Johnson and Paul Kane and staff researcher Julie Tate contributed to this report.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/08/02/AR2008080201632.html>

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New York Times
August 3, 2008

No Answer From Iran On Day Of Informal Nuclear Deadline

TEHRAN (Reuters) — President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran said Saturday that his nation would not back down “one iota” from its right to develop nuclear power, voicing defiance on the day of an informal deadline set by the West for a deal aimed at freezing uranium enrichment.

Western officials gave Tehran two weeks from July 19 to respond to their offer to hold off from imposing more United Nations sanctions on Iran, if it froze any expansion of its nuclear work.

That would suggest a deadline of Saturday. Mr. Ahmadinejad did not speak directly about the deal being offered by the West and has dismissed the idea of having only two weeks to reply.

The West accuses Iran of seeking to build nuclear warheads under cover of a civilian power program. Iran, the world’s fourth-largest oil producer, denies the charge.

Mr. Ahmadinejad made his remark in a statement posted on the presidential Web site after talks with the Syrian president, Bashar al-Assad.

The statement quoted the Syrian leader as saying that based on international agreements, all countries had the right to enrich uranium and have nuclear power stations.

The United States, China, Russia, Britain, France and Germany in June offered Iran economic and other incentives to coax it into halting its most criticized nuclear activities.

The freeze idea is aimed at getting preliminary talks started, although formal negotiations on the incentives package would not start until Iran stops enriching uranium.

Iran’s refusal to halt the work has drawn three rounds of United Nations sanctions since 2006.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/03/world/middleeast/03iran.html?scp=1&sq=No%20Answer%20From%20Iran%20On%20Day%20Of%20Informal%20Nuclear%20Deadline&st=cse>

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Los Angeles Times
August 4, 2008
Pg. 1

Anthrax Blend Led FBI To Ivins

Its origins pointed to one conclusion: that only the government scientist could be behind the 2001 attacks.

By David Willman, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer

Federal investigators cinched their case against alleged anthrax mailer Bruce E. Ivins after sophisticated genetic tests by a California firm helped them trace a signature mixture of anthrax spores, the Los Angeles Times has learned.

Well before the deadly 2001 anthrax mailings, Ivins, through his work as a government scientist, had combined anthrax spores obtained from at least one outside laboratory, people familiar with the evidence said.

With the help of leading outside geneticists and a fresh look at the evidence by a new team of street-savvy investigators, the FBI concluded in recent months that only Ivins could reasonably have perpetrated the crimes.

Ivins, 62, a senior microbiologist at the government's elite biodefense research institute at Ft. Detrick, Md., died last Tuesday in an apparent suicide as federal prosecutors prepared to bring murder charges against him.

Records reviewed by The Times and interviews with people knowledgeable about the investigation provide new details about the trail of evidence that finally led to Ivins.

Since 1980, Ivins had specialized in developing vaccines against anthrax and other biological weapons. He experimented with animals, including monkeys, rabbits and guinea pigs.

Ivins had mixed spores shipped to Ft. Detrick from the Army's Dugway Proving Ground in Utah, a facility operated by the Battelle Memorial Institute in Ohio, a private contractor that performs top-secret work for the CIA and other agencies.

By cross-referencing the dates when those spores were received and handled at Ft. Detrick, the FBI sharply narrowed the list of government employees with possible access to the material.

Instead of trying to trace anthrax that could have come from perhaps dozens of sources, investigators became convinced that it had to have originated at the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases, or USAMRIID, located within Ft. Detrick, about 50 miles north of Washington.

"Now, all of a sudden, you can put a time frame on this material," said one of the people familiar with the evidence.

"By mixing the material from the separate institutions, [Ivins] provided what became a signature."

With new analyses showing that the admixture of anthrax could not have come from anywhere in the world but Ft. Detrick, FBI agents plunged deep into Ivins' history.

That history included a pattern of letter-writing to newspapers. In one he defended the safety of research conducted on anthrax at Ft. Detrick.

"The only way I can think of being seriously injured by anthrax or plague vaccine is to get plunked on the head by a vial of the stuff," Ivins wrote in a letter published April 12, 1997, in the Frederick (Md.) News-Post.

Immediately after the 2001 mailings, the FBI had turned to Ivins and his Ft. Detrick colleagues to help them with initial analyses of the anthrax evidence recovered in their investigation.

As the investigation ground on, authorities enlisted colleagues of J. Craig Venter, founder of a Rockville, Md., institute that had helped map the human genome. Based on analyses performed at the Institute for Genomic Research, Venter said the culprit "almost had to be a government scientist." The institute's analysis was completed under contract to the FBI and the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

Venter said federal investigators within the last two years retrieved the anthrax evidence from the institute.

"FBI came in and took freezers and all the samples," he said in an interview Sunday.

Ibis Biosciences, a company in Carlsbad, performed some of the most recent anthrax analysis. The company tells its clients, including the FBI, that its high-resolution anthrax genotyping kit provides analyses more advanced than any other technology worldwide.

In fact, the company's test results buoyed FBI and Justice Department officials.

"Their capability is very sophisticated; it is faster and more elegant than what had been available," said Randall S. Murch, a former FBI scientist who earlier served as an outside consultant to the bureau for the anthrax investigation. Ibis provided its services to the anthrax investigation under a nondisclosure agreement with the FBI that bars company personnel from discussing their work without government authorization.

Ivins' government work with the separate batches of dry powder anthrax was not widely known at USAMRIID. Two former top officials there told *The Times* in recent weeks that they had no idea until being contacted by a reporter that USAMRIID had received anthrax in either powder or wet form from Dugway or Battelle, whose own anthrax testing is done in Ohio.

The former officials noted that USAMRIID typically supplies live anthrax spores for use at the two outside facilities, not the other way around. As part of his government job, Ivins, a microbiologist, grew spores used for experiments, called "challenges," on monkeys, rabbits and other animals at USAMRIID. He also occasionally prepared spores, in liquid or frozen form, for shipment to Dugway and Battelle.

The forensic analysis of the anthrax sent in the mailings had long posed a challenge to the FBI, whose in-house scientists were not equipped to decipher the potential origin of the material. Some of the first analysis was performed by Ivins and other scientists at USAMRIID; such efforts also were attempted at Battelle, but technicians there rendered some of the material forensically useless by first sterilizing it with steam, scientists told *The Times*. A spokesman for Battelle, T.R. Massey, declined earlier this year to discuss Battelle's role.

Six years ago, Ivins acknowledged to an Army investigator his use of "Ames strain" anthrax spores obtained from Dugway.

"We currently use Ames spores prepared at Dugway Proving Ground in 1997 for our challenges," Ivins told the investigator on May 10, 2002, as part of the Army's investigation of his failure to report what he described as accidental spillages of anthrax spores near or within his office and other nonlaboratory areas at USAMRIID.

After he bleached those areas, in December 2001, Ivins kept it a secret for five months, according to what he told the Army. It also was in December 2001 that FBI agents began questioning potential suspects at Ft. Detrick, a development that former colleagues say may have driven Ivins to panic regarding whether powder from the mailings could be traced to him.

When he acknowledged his stealth bleaching to the Army in April 2002, Ivins said that he had not wanted to "cry wolf" and distract his colleagues, who along with him were helping the FBI to analyze anthrax powder and other materials being gathered in the criminal investigation.

Until federal officials make public the details of the evidence that they say establishes Ivins' guilt, some former colleagues and outside skeptics say they will not be persuaded.

"The scientific community seems to be concerned that the FBI is going to blow smoke at us," said David R. Franz, a former Army commander who led USAMRIID during part of Ivins' tenure, in the late 1990s.

The FBI Sunday refused to comment on how it had focused on Ivins.

"As soon as the legal constraints barring disclosure are removed, we will make public as much information as possible," said FBI Assistant Director John Miller. "We will do that at one time, in one place. We will do that after those who were injured and the families of those who died are briefed, which is only appropriate."

Times researcher Janet Lundblad contributed to this report.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/science/la-na-anthrax4-2008aug04,0,4895687.story>

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New York Times

August 4, 2008

Pg. 13

Anthrax Evidence Is Said To Be Circumstantial

By Scott Shane

The evidence amassed by F.B.I. investigators against Dr. Bruce E. Ivins, the Army scientist who killed himself last week after learning that he was likely to be charged in the anthrax letter attacks of 2001, was largely circumstantial, and a grand jury in Washington was planning to hear several more weeks of testimony before issuing an indictment, a person who has been briefed on the investigation said on Sunday.

While genetic analysis had linked the anthrax letters to a supply of the deadly bacterium in Dr. Ivins's laboratory at Fort Detrick, Md., at least 10 people had access to the flask containing that anthrax, said the source, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the investigation publicly.

Agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation also have no evidence proving that Dr. Ivins visited New Jersey on the dates in September and October 2001 when investigators believe the letters were sent from a Princeton mailbox, the source said.

The source acknowledged that there might be some elements of the evidence of which he was unaware. And while he characterized what he did know about as "damning," he said that instead of irrefutable proof, investigators had an array of indirect evidence that they argue strongly implicates Dr. Ivins in the attacks, which killed 5 people and sickened 17 others.

That evidence includes tracing the prestamped envelopes used in the attacks to stock sold in three Maryland post offices, including one in Frederick, frequented by Dr. Ivins, who had long rented a post office box there under an assumed name, the source said. The evidence also includes records of the scientist's extensive after-hours use of his lab at the United States Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases around the time the letters were mailed, the source said.

In an indication that investigators were still trying to strengthen their case, F.B.I. agents took two public computers from the downtown public library in Frederick last week, The Frederick News-Post reported.

One law enforcement official said on Sunday that evidence against Dr. Ivins might be made public as early as Wednesday, if the bureau could persuade a federal judge to unseal the evidence and if agents could brief survivors of the anthrax attacks and family members of those who died.

Paul F. Kemp, a lawyer for Dr. Ivins who maintains his client's innocence, declined to comment for the record on Sunday on the alleged evidence.

The stakes for the beleaguered F.B.I. and its troubled investigation, now in its seventh year, could hardly be higher. The bureau, having recently paid off one wrongly singled-out researcher, Dr. Steven J. Hatfill, now stands accused by Dr. Ivins's lawyer and some of his colleagues of hounding an innocent man to suicide. Only by making public a powerful case that Dr. Ivins was behind the letters can the F.B.I. begin to redeem itself, members of Congress say and some bureau officials admit privately.

Tom Daschle of South Dakota, the former Democratic leader of the Senate and one target of the deadly letters, said on Sunday that he had long had grave doubts about the investigation.

"From the very beginning, I've had real concerns about the quality of the investigation," Mr. Daschle said on Fox News Sunday.

"Given the fact that they already paid somebody else \$5 million for the mistakes they must have made gives you some indication of the overall caliber and quality of the investigation," Mr. Daschle added. He was referring to the government's settlement in June with Dr. Hatfill, which pays him \$2.825 million plus \$150,000 a year for life to compensate him for what the F.B.I. now acknowledges was a devastating focus for years on the wrong man.

Mr. Daschle said he did not know whether the new focus on Dr. Ivins was "just another false track." He added, "We don't know, and they aren't telling us."

John Miller, an F.B.I. assistant director, declined on Sunday to address criticism of the investigation, one of the largest and most costly in bureau history.

"As soon as the legal constraints barring disclosure are removed, we will make public as much information as possible," Mr. Miller said in a statement. "We will do that at one time, in one place. We will do that after those who were injured and the families of those who died are briefed, which is only appropriate."

He added, "I don't believe it will be helpful to respond piecemeal to any judgments made by anyone before they know a fuller set of facts."

The unsealed evidence would likely include affidavits for search warrants laying out the bureau's reasons for focusing on Dr. Ivins, including summaries of scientific evidence that investigators consider central to their case. Dr. Ivins's house near the gates to Fort Detrick was the subject of an extensive search by F.B.I. agents last Nov. 1, and bureau surveillance vehicles openly followed the scientist for about a year, according to people who knew him. Dr. Ivins, 62, had acted strangely in the weeks before his death, and he was hospitalized from about July 10 to July 23 after associates concluded that he might be a danger to himself or others. Jean C. Duley, a social worker who had treated him in group therapy, sought a restraining order against him. He had said he expected to be charged with "five capital murders," she said, and had threatened to kill colleagues and himself.

Ms. Duley did not say that Dr. Ivins had confessed to the anthrax attacks, and the scientist left no suicide note, according to an official briefed on the investigation.

Critics say the Hatfill settlement was the culmination of a pattern of blunders in the investigation. The F.B.I. and the United States Postal Inspection Service have thrown a huge amount of resources into the hunt for the anthrax mailer, whose letters dislodged members of Congress and Supreme Court justices from contaminated buildings, which cost hundreds of millions of dollars to clean up.

Yet from the beginning, public glimpses of the investigators' work prompted serious questions. "What has bothered me is the unscientific, bumbling approach of our investigators," said Representative Rush D. Holt, a Democrat and physicist whose New Jersey district includes the contaminated Princeton mailbox.

Mr. Holt said in a recent interview that his first doubts came after anthrax was found in his Congressional office in October 2001 but investigators never returned to conduct systematic testing to trace the path of the anthrax spores. After that, he said, when contamination at a New Jersey postal processing center indicated that the letters had been mailed on one of a limited number of routes, it took investigators seven months to test several hundred mailboxes and identify the source.

"Within two days they could have dispatched 50 people to wipe all those mailboxes," Mr. Holt said. He wrote to Robert S. Mueller III, the F.B.I. director, on Friday to ask that he testify to Congress about the investigation as soon as it is closed.

When investigators questioned people around the Princeton mailbox about whether they had seen a suspect there, they showed passers-by photos of only Dr. Hatfill, according to local residents who were questioned. Criminologists said that only by showing photos of a number of people could investigators have confidence in an eyewitness identification of Dr. Hatfill or any other suspect.

Some experts also questioned the F.B.I.'s use of bloodhounds from local police departments to try to trace a scent from the recovered letters to suspects' homes, including that of Dr. Hatfill.

Law enforcement sources at the time said the bloodhounds' reactions at Dr. Hatfill's apartment were one reason for the F.B.I.'s intense focus on him. But independent bloodhound handlers said it was highly unlikely that a useful scent could be obtained from letters that might have been handled by the perpetrator with gloves, had rubbed against thousands of other scents in the mail and then were irradiated to kill the dangerous spores.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/04/us/04anthrax.html?scp=1&sq=Anthrax%20Evidence%20Is%20Said%20To%20Be%20Circumstantial&st=cse>

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Los Angeles Times

Iran ignores deadline to agree to talks on nuclear program

Instead, Tehran holds talks with key ally Syria as it focuses on ramping up support for its nuclear program, which it contends is for peaceful purposes.

By Borzou Daragahi and Ramin Mostaghim, Special to The Times

August 4, 2008

BEIRUT -- Over the weekend, Iran failed to respond to an informal two-week deadline to give a yes-or-no answer to negotiations on dismantling crucial parts of its nuclear program. It was instead busy in a flurry of diplomatic and military activity to bolster its position.

On Saturday and Sunday, Tehran received a Syrian delegation led by President Bashar Assad, an important Iranian ally, in an apparent effort to coordinate diplomatic strategy and fend off any possible U.S. or Israeli attack.

Last week, Iran rallied foreign ministers of the Non-Aligned Movement gathered in Tehran to support its nuclear program. In recent days, Iranian commanders of the elite Revolutionary Guard Corps met at a base outside the capital to plan defensive maneuvers in case of an attack.

On July 19, Iran declined to respond to a proposal backed by the U.S., Europe, Russia and China to begin preliminary talks meant to lead to the eventual dismantling of parts of its nuclear program, especially its uranium enrichment operation. Enriched uranium is used as fuel in nuclear power plants, but at higher concentrations can

make a bomb.

European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana gave Iran a two-week deadline to agree to the talks or face a renewed drive by the United Nations Security Council for a fourth round of economic sanctions. But pressure on Tehran eased after Russia's foreign minister said last week that he opposed "artificial" deadlines. U.S. State Department officials also backed away from the deadline, saying they hoped for an Iranian response soon and would resume the drive for more sanctions if Iranians rejected the offer.

"It is clear that the government of Iran has not complied with the international community's demand to stop enriching uranium and isn't even interested in trying," said Richard Grenell, spokesman for the United States mission at the United Nations.

"They leave the Security Council no choice but to increase the sanctions, as called for in the last resolution passed." Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said Sunday that his country was committed to diplomatic negotiations to resolve the standoff. "We are serious in continuation of fair talks that can produce practical and fruitful results," he told reporters in Tehran.

Iranian officials say they doubt that the nuclear dispute will lead to a military confrontation or even substantive economic sanctions soon. But they are trying to broaden their diplomatic, military and public-relations tools to prepare for any possibility, analysts said.

"The consequences of a possible military confrontation . . . are so heavy that everyone is trying all other options to find a solution," said Saeed Leylaz, an Iranian analyst and newspaper editor. "The Iran-U.S. crisis is spinning out of control. Tehran is willing to buy time in the coming four months to avoid a crisis."

Assad arrived in Tehran on Saturday for what a newspaper close to the Iranian leadership described as "sensitive negotiations" with supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and Ahmadinejad over Iran's nuclear program, as well as policy in Lebanon, Iraq and Israel.

The Syrian leader also came to relay a request by French President Nicolas Sarkozy that Iran respond favorably to the multinational proposal to start preliminary talks.

"He came here to convey the message of the French president," said an Iranian foreign policy advisor, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the Western media. "It is absurd because, at maximum, he can convey this message that the threat of the West is serious, which already is known to Iran." Assad was quoted Sunday by Iranian television as calling Iran's enrichment program in pursuit of nuclear energy "an inalienable right."

Still, Assad's visit could precede a softening of the Iranian's stance on the enrichment issue, analysts said, with credit going to Damascus rather than to Western pressure.

Diplomats and officials in Tehran say Iran has warmed to a proposal, dubbed "freeze for freeze," to stop adding new uranium-enriching centrifuges in exchange for a freeze on new economic sanctions during a period of pre-negotiations. Despite a statement by Ahmadinejad last month that Iran had more than 5,000 centrifuges running, officials say Iran has not added new centrifuges in months.

"Iran has accepted the idea of 'freeze for freeze,' but it does not make it public because of national pride," said a former Iranian diplomat still close to foreign policy circles.

"Iran does not want to fall in the trap laid by the Europeans. If it says publicly it accepts 'freeze for freeze,' the Europeans would take it one step ahead."

Solana and Iranian nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili are scheduled to speak today by phone, the London daily Independent reported Sunday.

Assad also came to Tehran to discuss ongoing talks between Syria and Israel, negotiations that Iran looks upon unfavorably but has not strongly opposed. Iranian foreign policy experts say Syria would coordinate any improved ties with the Jewish state with Tehran, which considers Israel an illegitimate state.

"On the whole, Iran and Syria are in unison, and before making any important decision, the other country should be consulted," said Ali Kadkhodazadeh, editor of the Middle East desk at Hamshahri, a conservative newspaper. Syrian officials now worry that Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's upcoming exit amid a corruption scandal might herald an end to rapprochement with the Jewish state. Iranians and Syrians are also concerned about the ascendancy of Israeli politicians such as Ehud Barak or Benjamin Netanyahu, whom they perceive as more likely to start a war against Iran or Syria.

When "Olmert resigns, the process of peace talks and negotiation over the [Israeli-occupied] Golan Heights will be murky and unclear once again," said Davoud Hermidas-Bavand, a foreign policy expert in Tehran.

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Time staff writer Daragahi reported from Beirut and special correspondent Mostaghim from Tehran.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/printedition/asection/la-fg-iran4-2008aug04,0,2143308.story>

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Accused Al Qaeda Sleeper Agent Held

The Pakistani mother, who studied at MIT, is said to have reached the terrorist group's inner command circles.

By Josh Meyer, Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON -- One of the more elusive and mysterious figures linked to Al Qaeda -- a Pakistani mother of three who studied biology at MIT and who authorities say spent years in the United States as a sleeper agent -- was flown to New York on Monday night to face charges of attempting to kill U.S. military and FBI personnel in Afghanistan. The Justice Department, FBI and U.S. military in Afghanistan said that Aafia Siddiqui, 36, was arrested in Ghazni province three weeks ago. She is accused of firing an automatic rifle at FBI agents and soldiers and is scheduled to appear before a federal judge in Manhattan today.

Authorities believe Siddiqui used the technical skills she acquired at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to do what virtually no other woman has accomplished -- work her way into the clubby inner circles of Al Qaeda's command and control operation, including its chemical and biological weapons program.

But questions swirled around her Monday evening, including whether she has been in Pakistani custody for at least part of the last five years and whether there is hard evidence that she was a trained, committed and hardened Al Qaeda operative, as former Atty. Gen. John Ashcroft and other U.S. officials have contended.

"This doesn't pass the sniff test," Elaine W. Sharp, a Massachusetts defense lawyer representing Siddiqui, said of the circumstances surrounding her client's arrest. She said her client was not an Al Qaeda terrorist, but an innocent woman who had been held at Bagram air base in Afghanistan or elsewhere for the last several years and tortured by some combination of U.S., Pakistani and Afghan officials.

Sharp said that Siddiqui had obtained an undergraduate biology degree from MIT and a doctorate in behavioral neuroscience from Brandeis University, both near Boston, and that she had lived a quiet life in the Boston area, and in Houston before that, before returning to her native Pakistan in late 2002.

One senior U.S. federal law enforcement official refused to comment on the case, except to say that Siddiqui was an extremely significant catch and that authorities had pledged not to discuss any details of the operation because of its sensitivity and relationship to ongoing counter-terrorism operations.

"We can't say anything about this one," said the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity. He confirmed that the woman in custody was the one near the top of the FBI's Most Wanted List of fugitive terrorism suspects wanted for questioning.

For years, the FBI and the CIA have been desperately trying to find Siddiqui, who they say spent several years in Boston as a "fixer" for admitted Sept. 11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, providing haven and logistical support for terrorist operatives that he sent to the United States to launch attacks.

Siddiqui also bought diamonds in Liberia as part of Al Qaeda financing efforts and married Mohammed's nephew, Ali Abdul Aziz Ali, according to several U.S. counter-terrorism officials and government documents.

One former CIA weapons of mass destruction analyst who tracked Siddiqui said that she became extremely frustrated years ago, however, when she was told by senior Al Qaeda leaders to help their cause by getting pregnant. "They told her that the best thing she could do for Al Qaeda was to start popping out little jihadists," said the former CIA officer, who left the agency in 2006. "She was furious; she knows more about this stuff than pretty much anyone in the organization."

Siddiqui never gave up her desire to launch attacks against the United States and its allies, according to FBI and Justice Department records made public Monday night.

According to court papers, Afghan national police officers in Ghazni province, south of Kabul, the capital, observed Siddiqui acting suspiciously near the provincial governor's compound July 17.

When they searched her handbag, they found documents relating to explosives, chemical weapons and weapons involving biological materials and radiological agents, along with descriptions of landmarks in New York City and elsewhere in the United States, and liquid and gel substances sealed in bottles and jars.

The next day, according to the court papers, she was being questioned by two FBI agents, an Army captain and an Army warrant officer, along with their interpreters.

"In the area where she was sequestered, they put their weapons down while trying to talk to her, and she seized a weapon and began to shoot," Lt. Col. Rumi Nielson-Green, a spokeswoman for U.S. forces at Bagram air base, said today. "Our officer returned fire. She was shot in the stomach, but continued to struggle."

She was subsequently hospitalized at Bagram and "was not in the detention facility at any time," Nielson-Green said. Siddiqui was flown to the United States after being found well enough to travel, the spokeswoman said.

Siddiqui is charged in a criminal complaint filed in the Southern District of New York with one count of attempting to kill United States officers and employees and one count of assaulting U.S. officers and employees. If convicted, she faces a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison on each charge.

Michael J. Garcia, the U.S. attorney in New York, praised the investigative work and said the investigation was continuing.

In the past Siddiqui's lawyer, some human rights advocates and Siddiqui's family members have said she disappeared with her three children in March 2003 while visiting her parents' home in Karachi -- around the same time the FBI said it wanted to question her. Mohammed was arrested just before that in Pakistan.

In 2006, Amnesty International listed Siddiqui as one of many "disappeared" suspects in the U.S.-led war on terrorism. Of allegations that Siddiqui had been detained at Bagram after her disappearance in Pakistan, Nielson-Green said: "That's absolute nonsense."

Pakistani government spokesmen declined to comment on the case early today.

Sharp said that the U.S. government's accusations were untrue, that Siddiqui's three children have never surfaced and that her family believes that public pressure from Amnesty and other organizations prompted authorities to concoct her suspicious behavior and arrest so they could hide the fact that she has been in custody all this time.

"We thought she was dead until her brother in Houston got a visit from the FBI the other day and said she is alive," Sharp said.

Times staff writer Laura King in Kabul contributed to this report.

http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-siddiqui5-2008aug05_0,4629105.story

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New York Times

August 5, 2008

Pg. 10

Iran Issues New Warnings After Defying A Deadline

By Nazila Fathi

TEHRAN — Iran warned Monday that it could easily close a critical Persian Gulf waterway to oil shipments and said that it had a new long-range naval weapon that could sink enemy ships nearly 200 miles away.

The warning, by the head of Iran's Revolutionary Guards, followed the weekend expiration of an informal deadline for Iran to respond to an offer of incentives from six world powers to stop enriching uranium.

The United States, which has warships deployed in the Persian Gulf, has said new sanctions should be imposed on Iran for failing to respond to the deadline. On Monday, a State Department official said the six powers — the United States, Russia, China, France, Britain and Germany — had agreed to pursue new sanctions, but it remained unclear what they might be or which nations would take part.

In comments carried by the semiofficial Iranian news agency, Fars, Gen. Mohammad Ali Jafari, the head of the Revolutionary Guards, said Iran was capable of imposing "unlimited controls" at the Strait of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf, an important oil route.

"Closing the Strait of Hormuz for an unlimited period of time would be very easy," he was quoted as saying.

"The Guards have recently tested a naval weapon which I can say with certainty that the enemy's ships would not be safe within the range of 300 kilometers," General Jafari was quoted as saying. "Without any doubt we will send them to the depths of the sea."

General Jafari gave no details about the type of weapon tested, but he said it was Iranian-built and "unique in the world."

He said it would have the range to reach enemy warships in the Persian Gulf, apparently a reference to United States warships, which have been conducting naval maneuvers there.

Iran has previously made similar claims about its military abilities, but analysts have treated them with skepticism.

Last month, Iran said it had test-fired a number of missiles in war-game maneuvers, including at least one that the government in Tehran described as having the range to reach Israel and another that it said was a relatively new torpedo called a Hoot missile (the name means whale in Persian).

Western military analysts said that those war games featured more bluff than real displays of new power and that the statements about the range of the largest missile were misleading.

General Jafari's comments were the latest sign of tensions between Iran and the United States over Iran's civilian nuclear program, which Washington and other Western governments have warned could be used to cloak the development of a nuclear weapon, a charge Tehran has repeatedly denied.

The Bush administration has refused to rule out a military option, and in June Israel's air force carried out what American intelligence officials described as a rehearsal for a possible strike on Iranian nuclear facilities.

Representatives of the six nations met with Iranian officials in Geneva on July 19, with a senior American official taking part for the first time. The talks seemed to produce no progress on the chief demand — that Iran stop uranium enrichment — but the nations gave Iran two weeks to respond to their latest proposal before it would be withdrawn. Specifically, the nations wanted Iran to accept a formula known as freeze-for-freeze. Under the plan, Iran would not expand its nuclear program, and the United States and the other powers would not seek new international sanctions for six weeks to pave the way for formal negotiations. The proposal, first offered last year, is intended to give Iran incentives to stop enriching uranium.

Iran dismissed the deadline; on Saturday, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad vowed that Iran would not move “one iota” on its nuclear rights, although he said it welcomed talks.

At the United Nations, diplomats said Monday that they were assessing their options. “We are in the process of consulting with our partners, but the sense is that there is not much by way of a positive reaction from Iran at the moment,” said Jean-Pierre Lacroix, France’s deputy permanent representative to the United Nations.

The State Department official, Gonzalo Gallegos, said the United States was disappointed that Iran had not responded. “The pressure on Iran to comply with the demands of the international community and its obligations will only grow,” he said.

Iran’s chief nuclear negotiator, Saeed Jalili, spoke by telephone on Monday with the European Union’s foreign policy chief, Javier Solana. The French Foreign Ministry said Mr. Solana was expecting a further written response from Iran on Tuesday.

Graham Bowley and Neil MacFarquhar contributed reporting from New York, and Helene Cooper from Washington.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/05/world/middleeast/05iran.html?ref=world>

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Washington Post

August 5, 2008

Pg. 8

Iran Set To Respond To Offer Of Incentives In Nuclear Dispute

By Karen DeYoung and Colum Lynch, Washington Post Staff Writers

Iran will present a formal response today to an offer of incentives by world powers in exchange for suspending its nuclear enrichment program, U.S. and European officials said. But they expressed little expectation of a positive reply.

Chief Iranian negotiator Saeed Jalili told European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana in a telephone conversation yesterday that he will provide a written explanation of Iran's position on the two-week-old offer to freeze efforts to impose further economic sanctions and begin substantive talks with Tehran, officials said.

The United States, Britain and France issued statements expressing disappointment that Iran had not met the initial deadline for response on Saturday. "Unless tomorrow's answer is unambiguous and positive, we will have no choice but to proceed with further sanctions," a British Foreign Ministry statement said.

Tehran countered with an announcement that it had tested a long-range naval weapon that it could use to close oil-shipping routes in the Strait of Hormuz, at the entry to the Persian Gulf, if Iran came under attack. The announcement was reported by a semi-official Iranian news agency that attributed it to Mohammad Ali Jafari, head of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps.

The U.N. Security Council has been pressing Iran to suspend uranium enrichment since March 2006 and has passed three resolutions sanctioning Tehran for refusing to do so. Iran has refused to comply, saying that it is not developing nuclear weapons and that the United Nations has no legal authority to restrict its right to generate nuclear power.

In June, a coalition made up of the council's five permanent members -- the United States, Britain, France, Russia and China -- plus Germany offered sweeteners to an existing offer of economic, political and security incentives in exchange for enrichment suspension and negotiations over constraints on Iran's nuclear program. The coalition said it would pursue further sanctions if Iran declined.

With no clear Iranian response, the coalition met with Jalili on July 19. Solana, heading the team that included U.S. Undersecretary of State William J. Burns, made it clear that Tehran had two weeks to answer.

In a weekend telephone conference as the deadline passed, the six agreed to extend it for several days. But "in the absence of a clear, positive response from Iran, we have no choice but to pursue further measures," State Department spokesman Gonzalo Gallegos said yesterday.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said Sunday that Tehran's nuclear program is in clear compliance with international law, and that his government did not plan to move "one iota" in response to U.N. demand.

Western officials acknowledged yesterday that it may take months for the Security Council to approve a new sanctions resolution, and that there is little sense of urgency at the United Nations. Security Council President Jan K.F. Grauls of Belgium said he has not scheduled any discussion of Iran during August.

One European diplomat said it is unlikely that the council will seriously discuss additional sanctions on Iran before the annual meeting of the General Assembly in New York in late September.

Russia and China, while agreeing to previous resolutions, have been lukewarm about stricter sanctions. A European official described Germany as "wobbly," but, in an interview published yesterday in the magazine *Der Spiegel*, the country's foreign minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, urged Iran "to no longer play for time, but give us a usable answer to our offers -- stop dallying."

Lynch reported from the United Nations.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/08/04/AR2008080401927.html>

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Washington Post

Anthrax Dryer a Key To Probe

Suspect Borrowed Device From Lab

By Carrie Johnson, Joby Warrick and Marilyn W. Thompson

Washington Post Staff Writers

Tuesday, August 5, 2008; Page A01

Bruce E. Ivins, the government's leading suspect in the 2001 anthrax killings, borrowed from a bioweapons lab that fall freeze-drying equipment that allows scientists to quickly convert wet germ cultures into dry spores, according to sources briefed on the case.

Ivins's possession of the drying device, known as a lyophilizer, could help investigators explain how he might have been able to send letters containing deadly anthrax spores to U.S. senators and news organizations.

The device was not commonly used by researchers at the Army's sprawling biodefense complex at Fort Detrick, Md., where Ivins worked as a scientist, employees at the base said. Instead, sources said, Ivins had to go through a formal process to check out the lyophilizer, creating a record on which authorities are now relying. He did at least one project for the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency that would have given him reason to use the drying equipment, according to a former colleague in his lab.

Ivins committed suicide last week. As authorities in Washington debated yesterday how to close the long investigation of him -- a step that would signal they think no one else is culpable in the anthrax attacks -- more details began to emerge about the nature of the case they developed against him.

In recent months, investigators have collected circumstantial building blocks in an effort to establish Ivins's alleged role in the attacks, which traumatized the nation and prompted stringent mail-handling policies. Letters containing the anthrax spores killed five people, including two D.C. area postal workers, and sickened 17 others.

Scientific analysis helped researchers pinpoint the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases as the likely source of the powder, which was the Ames strain of anthrax bacteria used in various projects at Fort Detrick. Further testing allowed them to narrow down the age of the substance, concluding that it had been cultivated no more than two years before the attacks.

Eventually, through more elaborate DNA testing of the power and tissue cultures from the victims, they determined that the powder probably came from supplies made by Ivins, to which about 10 other people had access. Authorities last week cited "new and sophisticated scientific tools" that helped advance the investigation.

Ivins was not charged before his death July 29. Paul F. Kemp, his attorney, has repeatedly asserted Ivins's innocence, and colleagues and friends say government officials fixed on the wrong man in a race to close a seven-year investigation rife with dead ends and missteps. They also note that other U.S. scientists had access to some of the same material and equipment that authorities apparently used to focus on Ivins.

The lyophilizer Ivins used in the fall of 2001 is commonly employed by pharmaceutical companies and laboratories, as well as food processors, to freeze a liquid broth of bacteria and quickly transform it into a dry solid without a thawing stage.

Scientists and biodefense experts familiar with USAMRIID's procedures say that Ivins's department rarely used such freeze-dryers, because the researchers there worked with anthrax bacteria in a liquid form.

"Dry anthrax is much harder to work with," said one scientist familiar with Ivins's lab. A lyophilizer would fit inside the ventilated "biosafety cabinet" at the lab and could have been used without drawing notice, the scientist said. The machine could have processed a few small batches of anthrax liquid in less than a day, he said.

Other biodefense experts noted that the drying step could have been carried out with equipment no more complicated than a kitchen oven. "It is the simplest . . . but it is the least reproducible," said Sergei Popov, a former

Soviet bioweapons scientist who now specializes in biodefense at George Mason University. "If you go too fast you get 'sand,' " he said, referring to the coarser anthrax powder used in the first attacks, in September 2001. The second batch of letters contained a much finer powder. "To me, it all indicates that the person experimented with the ways to dry the spores and produced small batches -- some of them not so successfully -- he later used to fill up different envelopes," Popov said. "The spores are naturally clumpy. As I understand, he just overbaked the first batches."

Many of the key documents that would have supported the prosecution of Ivins could be unveiled this week after Justice Department and FBI officials meet with families of the anthrax victims. Authorities were contacting relatives yesterday and seeking a time to meet.

Investigators have been wrong before about who may have perpetrated the attacks. In June, the Justice Department agreed to pay Steven J. Hatfill, a former Fort Detrick researcher once labeled a "person of interest" in the case, a \$5.8 million settlement to forgo a privacy lawsuit.

Significant mysteries remain, including whether the attacks that involved letters mailed from Florida and Princeton, N.J., could have been carried out by one person. And many questions remain about Ivins.

Safety officials and lawmakers have wondered how the scientist was able to maintain his security clearance despite emotional problems that led Jean C. Duley, a therapist, to seek a protective order against him last month.

The Army issued final rules last week that would cover workers who act in an aggressive or threatening manner. Those employees would be denied access to toxic or lethal biological agents under the revised regulations. Other potentially disqualifying personality traits include "arrogance, inflexibility, suspiciousness, hostility . . . and extreme moods or mood swings," according to the document.

A spokeswoman for USAMRIID said Fort Detrick had been operating under interim rules covering the same behavior for some time.

Staff writers Del Quentin Wilber, Michael S. Rosenwald and Mary Beth Sheridan and staff researcher Julie Tate contributed to this report.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/08/04/AR2008080402322.html>

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