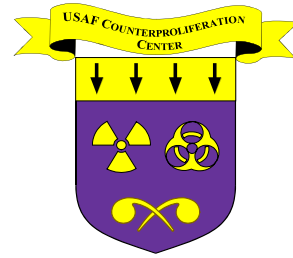


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CPC OUTREACH JOURNAL



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USA Today

January 18, 2002

Pg. 4

Canisters Not Empty, Pentagon Says; Tests Underway

By Dave Moniz and Tom Squitieri, USA Today

Two ominous canisters found in Afghanistan recently were not empty, as some U.S. officials had reported. They are being tested to see whether they might contain chemical, biological or nuclear weapons or ingredients for them, Pentagon officials said Thursday.

The canisters have skull-and-crossbones markings and Russian writing warning that they contain nuclear material. They have raised concerns that Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda terrorist network or the Taliban that previously ruled Afghanistan might have made or bought such weapons.

Wednesday, after Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld reported the canisters' discovery, officials at U.S. Central Command said they were empty.

But Thursday, Pentagon officials said that information was wrong. They said the thermos-sized canisters, found near Kabul, are now in the USA.

Also Thursday:

*Three Marines were injured in an unexplained explosion at a pit where they were burning trash at their base in Kandahar, Afghanistan, officials at U.S. Central Command said. The injuries were "non-life-threatening."

*The United Nations said two trucks carrying 20 tons each of wheat for Afghans in need were hijacked in northern Afghanistan this week. The hijackings Tuesday underscore how lawless it is in much of Afghanistan.

Jordan Dey, spokesman for the U.N. World Food Program, told reporters in the Afghan capital, Kabul, that gunmen dressed in military uniforms commandeered the trucks near Mazar-e-Sharif.

Moniz reported from the Pentagon, Squitieri from Kabul

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New York Times
January 18, 2002

Pentagon Bars Pregnant Women From Taking Anthrax Vaccine

By The Associated Press

WASHINGTON, Jan. 17 — The Pentagon may start asking women in the military to take pregnancy tests before getting anthrax shots because a study suggests vaccinations have resulted in some having babies with birth defects. Officials are worried that some of the study's data may be faulty and have ordered a review, Lt. Mike Kafka of the Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery said today.

But because the review could take months, the Defense Department's top health official is asking each military service to develop a plan in two weeks to assure that pregnant women in the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines do not get the immunizations in the meantime.

That official, Dr. William Winkenwerder Jr., assistant secretary of defense for health affairs, asked the services to devise a way to enhance the screening of women of childbearing age, "potentially including pregnancy testing," to prevent pregnant women from getting the vaccine.

The Pentagon in 1998 ordered the vaccination of all 2.4 million members of the active and reserve military to protect them against anthrax bacteria that, when inhaled, can cause death in a few days. It started with those deployed to Korea and the Middle East.

A shortage of doses last year forced a cut so only troops on "special missions," which officials declined to identify, were vaccinated.

Throughout the program, health care workers were supposed to be asking women if they were pregnant to avoid vaccinating those who were expecting. It is unclear whether pregnant women who got the shots were not asked or did not know they were pregnant at the time.

The study also seemed to indicate that some women might have been vaccinated after their first trimester, by which time they would probably have known they were pregnant. This prompted officials to question the data.

Under the program, more than 525,000 service members have received one or more shots. The six-shot regime is given over 18 months, followed by a booster each year.

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Wall Street Journal
January 18, 2002

Saddam Hussein Courts Kuwait And Saudis As Arab Nations Press For U.N. Inspections

By James M. Dorsey, Staff Reporter of The Wall Street Journal

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia -- Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, under mounting Arab pressure to allow United Nations weapons inspectors back into Iraq, is trying to improve relations with neighboring Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

Arab diplomats in Riyadh and in the Jordanian capital Amman say the Iraqi move suggests Saddam Hussein is considering complying with U.N. resolutions dictating terms for lifting sanctions imposed on Iraq after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait. The terms include allowing U.N. weapons inspectors into Iraq to ensure that the country is not amassing weapons of mass destruction. Iraq has barred the inspectors for three years, demanding instead that all sanctions be lifted immediately.

"The Gulf states will consider an improvement in relations with Iraq only if it cooperates with the United Nations," an Arab diplomat said. "The Iraqi feelers are an encouraging sign."

Saddam Hussein sent his foreign minister, Naji Sabri al Hadithi, to Bahrain this week to enlist the island-state's help in repairing Iraq's relations with Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Mr. Hadithi is the highest-ranking Iraqi official to visit Bahrain since the 1991 Gulf War.

Arab diplomats say Bahrain has agreed to convey the Iraqi message to the Saudis and Kuwaitis, but they stress that Iraq is likely to get a positive hearing only if it complies with the U.N. requirements.

Mr. Hadithi's visit to Bahrain comes two weeks after the leaders of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Oman urged Iraq at a summit in Oman to allow U.N. weapons inspectors back into the country, show goodwill toward its neighbors and respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Kuwait.

In a speech in Cairo this week, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak backed that call, saying Iraq must cooperate with the U.N. to avert U.S. military strikes against it.

Jordanian King Abdullah II said in an interview last month that Iraq is realizing that the Sept. 11 attacks on the U.S. have changed the world and that it would have to re-engage in dialogue with the U.N. if it wants to avert a renewed confrontation with the U.S. He said Iraq had a six-month window to re-engage, but would have to do so before the sanctions come up for U.N. review in May. The king said the Europeans, Russia and China are warning Iraq that it may not be able to further count on their support for its resistance to U.S. demands.

"Our sense is that there is different taste to Iraqi feelers now, more serious and maybe more flexible," the king said.

"I think the Iraqis are feeling from their dealings with either the Chinese or the Russians or whoever else that the game has changed. The Iraqis understand that they are going to have to change the way they do business if they are going to find a way out of this between them and the international community."

Saudi officials were not immediately available for comment on the Iraqi initiative, but the chairman of the Kuwaiti parliament's foreign-affairs committee, Mohammed Jassim al Saqer, dismissed attempts to improve his country's relations with Iraq. "We cannot trust Saddam Hussein," Mr. Saqer said in an interview. "He says one thing and then changes his position."

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UPI.com

January 17, 2002

Analysis: U.S. To Try New Approach On Iraq

By Martin Walker, UPI Chief International Correspondent

WASHINGTON -- Reckoning that they will find "no smoking gun" linking Iraq directly to the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, the Bush administration is still determined to move against Iraq by citing "a smoking gun on Weapons of Mass Destruction," according to senior sources in the State Department and Pentagon. A strategy has been agreed to apply intense pressure on Iraq this year by demanding the unconditional return of United Nations inspectors to scour the country for signs of chemical, biological or nuclear weapons research and development, with the clear threat of military action if Iraq refuses or blocks the inspections.

President George Bush gave the first public signal of the new strategy Wednesday, when welcoming Turkish Premier Bulent Ecevit to the White House.

"I expect Saddam Hussein to let inspectors back into the country. We want to know whether he's developing weapons of mass destruction. He claims he's not; let the world in to see," Bush said.

"And if he doesn't, we'll have to deal with that at the appropriate time," Bush added.

Asked what the U.S. would do if Saddam Hussein defied the inspectors, Bush replied: "If he doesn't let them in? He'll find out."

Senior State Department officials believe they will be able to get United Nations backing for the demand that the U.N. inspection teams be allowed to return, after they were expelled by Iraq in December 1998. Iraqi defiance could then trigger a graduated enforcement response, with U.N. backing providing the cover that Iraq's nervous neighbors would need to cooperate.

Senior U.S. officials describe this as "a win-win strategy." If Saddam Hussein lets the inspectors in, then they will be able to identify and publicize what the last inspection reports said was a formidable WMD arsenal, including components for 3-4 nuclear weapons, lacking only uranium fuel.

If Saddam Hussein refuses the inspections, he gives the U.S. a legitimate excuse to act, probably starting with an extension of the current no-fly zones over the whole of Iraqi airspace, along with intrusive U.S. and possibly British air patrols.

As well as putting much greater pressure on the regime, this would facilitate far more detailed aerial reconnaissance of suspect WMD sites, and movements between them. Along with satellite intelligence, intensified aerial reconnaissance could identify more possible targets for intrusive inspection if and when Iraq decides to accept the return of the UN teams.

The strategy, as Bush administration officials see it, contains anumber of important advantages. First, it brings the prospect of wide international support, even from the Arab world, where several countries have warned against unilateral U.S. military action.

Second, it is a graduated strategy, allowing the U.S. to escalate by tightening the diplomatic and military pressure at times of its own choosing.

Third, it relates to a clear, identifiable and proven danger to other states in the region. The evidence is clear from previous U.N. inspections that Iraq has maintained clandestine programs of missile and WMD development, including 50 tons of nerve gas precursors that are not accounted for.

The U.N. Special Commission's final report, after being expelled by Iraq, concluded (with specific reference to biological warfare agents): "The commission has little or no confidence in the accounting for proscribed items for which physical evidence is lacking or inconclusive, documentation is sparse or non-existent, and coherence and consistency is lacking. These include, for example: quantities and types of munitions available for BW filling; quantities and types of munitions filled with BW agents; quantities and type of bulk agents produced; quantities of bulk agents used in filling; quantities of bulk agents destroyed; quantities of growth media acquired for the program; quantities of growth media used/consumed; and when or whether the program ended. In addition the Commission has no confidence that all bulk agents have been destroyed; that no BW munitions or weapons remain in Iraq; and that a BW capability does not exist in Iraq".

"Since the U.N. inspections ended, further evidence has accumulated from Iraqi defectors, that suggest that the danger from Iraq's WMD program has increased,

"Iraq is still committed to developing weapons of mass destruction," the Wisconsin Panel on Arms Control concluded late last year after a further survey. "In biological weaponry, Iraq is now self-sufficient; it has what is necessary to build a biological arsenal. Iraq also appears to possess stocks of chemical agent and is known to have had virtually every element of a workable nuclear weapon except the fissile material needed to fuel it. Iraq's authorized program for developing short-range ballistic missiles could enable the building of longer-range missiles, and Iraq is also showing an interest in cruise missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles."

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US Believes Al-Qaida Lacks Bio-Weapons

By Matt Kelley

Associated Press Writer

Thursday, January 17, 2002; 3:21 AM

WASHINGTON — U.S. investigators are testing some suspicious-looking canisters found at former al-Qaida sites in Afghanistan, but officials have tentatively concluded the group could not make chemical, biological or radiological weapons.

Searches of more than 40 sites used by Osama bin Laden's terrorist network yielded documents, diagrams and material that showed "an appetite for weapons of mass destruction," Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld said Wednesday.

Of 50 suspected al-Qaida sites identified so far, 45 have been thoroughly examined, officials said.

"In terms of having hard evidence of actual possession of weapons of mass destruction, I do not have that at this stage," Rumsfeld told a Pentagon news conference.

Rumsfeld added that he had been shown photographs of canisters recently found at a former al-Qaida site which could contain chemical agents. Their contents have yet to be examined, he said.

"Externally they appear to be weapons of mass destruction," he said. Asked to explain, he said, "They've got stuff on them that make reasonable people think there's something not good in there, and we're going to check them out."

Other officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the canisters are no more than six inches high and bear Cyrillic markings indicating they might be of Russian origin.

These officials said the canisters were probably harmless. They said al-Qaida is known to have made a number of transactions in the past for useless items dressed up as chemical or other terror weapons.

Rumsfeld did not offer his own assessment of how far al-Qaida had progressed toward developing weapons of mass destruction. Other officials with access to intelligence information on the subject said the terrorists had great ambitions but were in the earliest stage of pursuing them.

One official said the materials and equipment found in Afghanistan were so basic as to resemble items an ordinary American high school chemistry class would use.

Rumsfeld has said that while the Sept. 11 airplane hijackings that killed thousands was a stunning tragedy, terrorist groups with access to chemical, biological or nuclear weapons could wreak far greater havoc unless global terrorism is extinguished.

That is one reason the Pentagon has placed a high priority on searching former al-Qaida camps and hide-outs in Afghanistan and interrogating captured al-Qaida members for indications of other planned attacks and the group's links to countries that possess chemical, biological or nuclear weapons.

The searches also are designed to find clues to the whereabouts of bin Laden and deposed Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar. Rumsfeld disputed the notion that both have vanished.

"We still believe they're in the country," he said. "We're still working on that basis, although we are looking some other places as well, from time to time."

The prisoner interrogations in Afghanistan are continuing. Gen. Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said 90 Pakistanis among them will be sent back to their home country.

"We've screened these individuals and determined that they should be returned to their own government for disposition," he said.

Thirty al-Qaida and Taliban prisoners arrived Wednesday at the U.S. naval base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, from Afghanistan. They were the third group of prisoners to be flown to Guantanamo, where they will be detained and interrogated.

Eighty prisoners are now at the base in Cuba. Rumsfeld said interrogations there had not yet begun.

John Walker Lindh, the American Taliban fighter captured in Afghanistan in November, was still aboard the USS Bataan in the Arabian Sea on Wednesday. Rumsfeld said he would be transferred soon to Justice Department custody. On Tuesday Lindh was charged in federal court with conspiracy to kill U.S. citizens and providing support to terrorist organizations.

Asked about the expanding commitment of U.S. troops around the world – most recently the arrival of troops in the Philippines to train anti-terror forces – Rumsfeld said it was a challenge that must be met.

"If we have to go into 15 more countries we ought to do it to deal with the problem of terrorism, so we don't allow this proering clear of committing military forces to the British-led international stabilization force now present in Kabul.

President Bush told reporters at the White House that there are plenty of other countries willing to perform that mission.

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Thursday January 17 3:12 PM ET

WHO Executive Body Backs Retaining Smallpox Stocks

GENEVA (Reuters) - The World Health Organization ([news](#) - [web sites](#)) said Thursday its executive board backed delaying a 2002 deadline for destroying the world's remaining stocks of the smallpox virus to allow more research into vaccines.

Amid fears that extremist groups or rogue states could use disease as a weapon, the body supported a recent recommendation by health experts that will be sent to the WHO's annual assembly of 191 member states in May for a decision.

The assembly, the top policy-making body of the U.N. health agency, set the 2002 deadline two years ago amid growing hopes that the killer disease -- which the WHO proclaimed eradicated in 1977 -- would never reappear. But the deaths of five people in the United States late last year after handling mail contaminated with anthrax showed how easily toxic agents could be turned into biological weapons.

Senior health officials from Russia and the United States, officially the only two states with variola virus stocks, took the floor to say more time was needed to develop better defensive vaccines.

"The recent terrorist events in the U.S. have regrettably confirmed that we cannot assume that the intentional release of smallpox is too remote a circumstance. A case of smallpox anywhere is a case everywhere," Dr. Kenneth Bernard, assistant U.S. surgeon general who headed his delegation, told the talks.

"Only developing and deploying both anti-viral drugs and modern vaccines will protect all of our countries from the risk of unreported virus stores being released by terrorists," he added.

The currently available vaccine can be fatal in a small number of cases and cannot be given to people with weakened immune systems, including HIV ([news](#) - [web sites](#))/AIDS ([news](#) - [web sites](#)) sufferers and transplant recipients.

Yuri Fedorov, chief of the center of emerging infectious diseases and emergency relief operations unit at Russia's Health Ministry, also spoke in favor of extending the deadline.

The U.S. stocks are kept at the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, while the Russian stocks are at the Center for Research on Virology and Biotechnology in the Urals town of Koltsovo.

The two repositories are collaborating centers of the Geneva-based WHO, which conducts regular biosafety inspections on the strict containment of existing stocks.

Neither Russia nor the United States is currently on the 32-member board, appointed on a rotating basis.

http://dailynews.yahoo.com/h/nm/20020117/sc/health_smallpox_dc_1.html

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Officials: Bioterror would challenge health facilities

January 16, 2002 Posted: 10:09 p.m. EST (0309 GMT)

By Mike Fish

CNN.com

ATLANTA, Georgia (CNN) -- Ask how public health care in the United States would perform in a bioterrorist attack and Dr. Tara O'Toole flails away at the system.

"The hospitals do not have the capacity to deal with a sudden surge in patient demand," said O'Toole, deputy director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Civilian Biodefense Studies. "And the big problem is not beds as everyone seems to suppose -- it is staff. And there is no way to fix that in the short term."

O'Toole, an assistant energy secretary in the Clinton administration, testified in October before the House Intelligence Committee that the U.S. health system is unprepared to respond to a mass casualty situation. Even the 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, which killed 168 people, resulted in the admission of less than 100 patients to local hospitals, she said.

In addition to staffing shortfalls, O'Toole cites other problems: the challenge of handling large numbers of patients; medical staffs inadequately trained to deal with infectious diseases and other illnesses related to bioterror attacks; the difficulty of transferring information between government agencies and clinics.

O'Toole isn't alone. Dr. Mohammad N. Akhter, executive director of the Washington, D.C.-based American Public Health Association, also warned a Senate committee that a bioterrorist attack would overwhelm an already stressed public health system, emphasizing the need for better intelligence in detecting bioterrorism threats.

"I think the cities are under prepared, and I could just start here in Washington, D.C.," Akhter told CNN.com.

"There were 80 or so people who had to come from the CDC to help the city cope with half-a-teaspoon of anthrax -- two grams. That contaminated all of these buildings, resulting in two deaths and 7,000 people taking (the antibiotic) Cipro. And it was quite a difficult situation for the nation's capital to deal with. If it was a smaller city I don't know what they could have done."

Bioterror attack won't be obvious

A bioterror attack won't be obvious, officials warn. It could take days, or even weeks, for the symptoms of biological agents to begin to manifest. And the first responder isn't likely to be a police officer or a firefighter -- but a primary care physician, health care provider, epidemiologist or perhaps a veterinarian. It would fall upon the public health and medical communities to detect the attack, contain it, and treat the victims.

It is the ability of germs to spread before telltale symptoms appear that makes bioterror agents fundamentally different from other weapons of mass destruction.

Six days before the September 11 attack, former Sen. Sam Nunn (D-Georgia) testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on the "Dark Winter" exercise, in which he was a leading figure in a simulation of a smallpox attack that demonstrated America "was vulnerable to biological terrorism."

Nunn, co-author of the Nunn-Lugar-Domenici measure, which nearly six years ago established the country's first defenses against bioterrorism, warned of the need for significantly more training of medical personnel -- not just doctors and nurses, but pharmacists and veterinarians, too. He expressed concern about the vulnerability of the animal-plant food chain, calling for a sophisticated communications system linked to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Officials say it is imperative that the public health infrastructure be strengthened so that local doctors and medical personnel are in place to recognize and identify the deadly agents in the early stages when they are treatable. It's equally important that the federal, state and local health departments address the issue of reliable and timely reporting of dangerous diseases. In a biological incident, experts say that time is of the essence.

Under the current staffing profile of most health departments, Akhter told Congress that if a bioterrorist attack occurred on a Friday afternoon, there would be no report of it until Monday morning.

Surge capabilities critical

The threat of bioterrorism has reached new levels of concern since September 11, and officials acknowledge the system is playing catch-up.

If a contagious agent such as smallpox were to be used, for example, officials say it is unlikely there would be enough isolation facilities to quarantine people.

As of January 2002, a CNN.com survey found 22 states did not have a CDC-sponsored epidemic intelligence service officer ("disease detective") assigned. Another nine states did not employ a designated public health veterinarian, which is a concern, experts say, because 17 of the 20 designated bioterrorism agents are either transmitted from animals to man, fairly common diseases of animals, or are food-borne illnesses.

"You wouldn't have a police department without a police detective to really do the groundwork on the street and identify who the criminal is and bring him to justice," said Akhter, head of the nation's largest public health association. "Similarly, to detect a disease you need to have these trained, qualified people work with the community."

Sen. Bill Frist (R-Tennessee), the only senator who is a medical doctor, has expressed concern that only one in five hospitals have developed plans for dealing with the calamity resulting from a potential bioterrorism attack. The hospitals' ability to deal with the dramatic surge of patients on short notice - not only the medical staff available to treat the ill and stricken, but also the number of ventilators and intensive care unit beds that would be in demand -- is of particular concern.

Surge capabilities are critical, officials say, whether it's medical laboratories, hospitals or the Emergency Medical Service (EMS) system. And yet, most of the time taxpayers are questioning whether they should pay for simply day-to-day public health activities.

"It's real important that a municipality have a city-wide hospital or health care disaster plan," said Dr. Lew Stringer, medical director of the Special Operations Response Team, which serves as a national medical response team for the U.S. Public Health Service.

Crucial to such a plan, Stringer said, is that hospitals not only have adequate medical supplies, but are able to work together and share resources.

Bleak finances confront many health systems

Asked to identify some of the better prepared medical communities, health officials mention New York, Philadelphia, San Diego, the San Francisco-San Jose corridor and Chicago -- in large part, because of the collaborative effort of the local government and the hospital community. But in general, they paint a bleak fiscal picture of public health care.

"Half of the academic medical centers and one-third of all hospitals in the country are losing money, which people don't understand," said O'Toole, the former Clinton administration official.

According to the American Hospital Association, 64 hospitals closed last year. The reasons most often cited are financial problems, reorganization and mergers.

Many county and city public hospitals have been taken over and slimmed down or closed by for-profit chains. Of the country's 4,915 hospitals, less than a quarter are government-owned facilities.

The problem with for-profit hospitals, officials say, is they're bottom-line driven and until recently, haven't participated with much vigor in preparedness for mass casualty terrorism incidents. And because they're not part of the city or county medical system, local officials have less immediate control over them.

Stringer recalled a government-sponsored training exercise for a chemical attack before September 11, in which none of the hospitals in a city he refused to identify participated in the drill. The exercise concluded with the patients treated on the sidewalk, but not transferred to a hospital.

Since then, Stringer said, hospital officials have been more eager to learn how to participate.

"Now, since 9/11, you bet everybody is talking. You bet everybody is interested in me teaching them and everybody else teaching them," Stringer said.

"That is good, but it is going to take time to fix the problem."

<http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2002/prepared.cities/stories/public.health.preparedness.html>

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Washington Post
January 22, 2002
Pg. 1

Missing Army Microbes Called Non-Infectious

Scientist Says Samples Had No Role in Anthrax Attacks

By Joby Warrick, Washington Post Staff Writer

The anthrax spores that went missing from the Army's top biological warfare laboratory in 1991 had been sterilized and could not have played a role in last fall's terrorism attacks, a former senior officer at the research facility said yesterday.

But the apparent loss of more than two dozen biological specimens from the military research complex here reflected what numerous officials described as a deeply dysfunctional working environment in the early 1990s. They said these conditions contributed to multiple security lapses as well as acrimony among scientists working with some of the world's deadliest bacteria, viruses and chemicals.

"It was a very bad situation," said C. J. Peters, former deputy commander for the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute for Infectious Diseases (USAMRIID) at Fort Detrick, Md. "But the important question is how many of these missing samples were infectious, and the answer is none."

Internal Army documents released as part of a former scientist's discrimination lawsuit against the Army describe a hunt for 27 laboratory specimens -- including samples of the bacteria that causes anthrax and the virus that causes ebola -- that turned up missing during a 1992 inventory.

The documents also describe numerous other breaches of lab protocol, including unauthorized anthrax research in February 1992 by unknown individuals late at night and on weekends.

Sources familiar with the incidents said many of the missing items were never accounted for. Peters, who is now director of the Center for Biodefense at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston said that while the loss of control of lab stocks was serious, the threat to the public was likely minuscule.

"The bacteria in these samples had been inactivated," sterilized by chemicals to allow viewing under a microscope, Peters said. He said live bacteria cultures were kept in a separate facility where access was more tightly controlled. Still, Peters said he could not rule out the possibility that the anthrax bacteria in letters mailed to U.S. Senate offices and media companies last fall were produced at USAMRIID. Five people died and 13 others fell ill in the anthrax attacks.

Officials have previously acknowledged that USAMRIID distributed live anthrax spores to other government facilities and contractors. FBI agents are still investigating the possibility that a bioterrorist obtained anthrax spores from one of those facilities.

Previous laboratory analyses have confirmed a genetic match between the anthrax bacteria used in the attacks and a strain possessed by USAMRIID and other military labs. A more sophisticated analysis of the anthrax spores mailed to Sen. Patrick J. Leahy (D-Vt.) is nearly complete and is expected to yield additional clues about how and where the deadly material was prepared.

"If someone wanted to steal something, could they have done it? The answer is yes," Peters said. "There's no 100 percent guarantee, short of putting the scientists under guard 24 hours a day."

Although USAMRIID controls access to the most secure labs, stealing a potentially deadly specimen could be as easy as "putting something in your pocket and walking away," Peters said.

The documents released by the Army describe one incident in which a scientist who had lost his security clearance was allowed into a locked, secure lab by a colleague. Details of that incident, including any follow-up action by Army officials, were not immediately available. Many USAMRIID administrative offices were closed yesterday because of the federal holiday.

An FBI official said yesterday that the bureau's investigators "have had the benefit" of the information revealed as a result of the lawsuit, and "it is part of the ongoing investigation."

The security lapses in the early 1990s came at a particularly chaotic time in the history of the Fort Detrick lab, which has been the center of U.S. biological weapons research since the 1940s.

Internal documents released as part of the discrimination lawsuit allege serious misconduct by senior officials at USAMRIID, ranging from security lapses to reported episodes of sexual and racial harassment that were carried to bizarre extremes.

A victim of particularly severe harassment, Army investigators concluded, was Ayaad Assaad, a physiologist and Egyptian American who began work at USAMRIID in 1988. In a mocking reference to Assaad's Arab descent, two top USAMRIID officers established a "Camel Club" and awarded a stuffed toy camel each week to a scientist who had not performed to their expectations, an investigation by the Army shows.

The elaborate weekly ceremony included the recitation of a sexually explicit poem about Assaad, according to the documents.

The senior USAMRIID officers took photographs of themselves cavorting with the stuffed camel -- photos that were developed in an Army photo lab, the investigators found. The two officers implicated in the incidents left the Army in the mid-1990s, and USAMRIID's commander issued a formal apology to Assaad.

Assaad filed suit against the Army in 1998 after losing his job in a round of staff cuts a year earlier.

Assaad was among several former USAMRIID workers who have contended in interviews that control of biological hazards was lax, at least until the mid-1990s.

In an interview yesterday, Assaad repeated his assertion that anthrax spores in dry, powdered form were produced as a byproduct of research at USAMRIID and said he strongly suspects, based on his nearly 10 years there, that the anthrax letters will eventually be connected to the lab.

Those suspicions were strengthened, he said, when he learned that someone had anonymously written the FBI in late September -- days before the first anthrax cases were reported -- warning that Assaad was a "potential bioterrorist."

Rosemary McDermott, Assaad's lawyer, said she met with FBI agents on Oct. 3. They told her the letter was a hoax, she said. McDermott and Assaad noted however, that the public was not aware of the anthrax attacks until officials disclosed in early October that a photo editor for a Florida tabloid newspaper was suffering from the disease and had been admitted to a hospital Oct. 2.

"Whoever sent the anthrax letters did this to divert attention," Assaad said. "They knew the attacks would be eventually traced back to USAMRIID, and they used me as a scapegoat. Who better than an Arab American scientist who used to work there?"

Staff writer Susan Schmidt contributed to this report.

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Washington Times
January 22, 2002
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Seaports Seen As Terrorism Target

By August Gribbin, The Washington Times

The United States is trying to plug potentially disastrous security gaps in the nation's seaports, but analysts say current proposals are likely to hurt global trade and frustrate friends and foes alike.

Each year, the United States receives some \$750 billion worth of cargo — representing one-fifth of the U.S. economy — at 360 seaports along its coasts and on the shores of the Great Lakes.

Most of the freight arrives on container ships that carry some 6 million cargo containers annually. The contents of those steel containers are rarely inspected.

The containers weigh up to 20 tons and could conceal a tremendous range of goods, including explosives, guns, noxious chemicals and other weapons of mass destruction. Yet because there is so much cargo and the information about it is so vague, security specialists agree there is no practical way to ensure the imports aren't terrorist tools.

To solve the dilemma, Adm. James Loy, commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard, prominent members of Congress and others are pushing efforts to require cargo destined for the United States to be inspected, sealed in tamper-proof containers and certified as safe before shipment. Otherwise, the United States would refuse delivery and turn away freighters bearing suspicious cargo.

Sen. Ernest Hollings, South Carolina Democrat, and Sen. Bob Graham, Florida Democrat, have presented a bill that would impose such requirements.

But rejecting imports and turning back ships hauling between 4,000 and 6,000 containers each could create financial havoc here and elsewhere. It would almost certainly rankle governments already stung by the added costs of meeting new U.S. security demands.

"What is at stake is not just the opportunity for a terrorist who wants to launch another catastrophic terrorist attack on U.S. soil. But, to a considerable extent, the fate of global trade also rests in the balance," says Stephen Flynn, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations.

"If U.S. authorities find themselves having to turn off the maritime-container-trade spigot, we will have effectively self-imposed a blockade on our own economy," Mr. Flynn testified last month to the Senate Government Affairs Committee.

For at least two years, federal officials and private security specialists have been examining seaport security to spot problems and find solutions. Among other things, they have found:

- U.S. seaports typically allow free access to docks and often to container storage areas.
- Firearms are generally permitted at dockside.
- The federal government has no unified plan for monitoring seaport security, although the ports are international gateways similar to the land portals at San Diego, Detroit or Niagara Falls.
- The ports receive no federal funding for creating or maintaining basic security systems. And at many ports, even such basic equipment as small boats, cameras and vessel-tracking devices are lacking.
- The agencies involved in port operations fail to share information, and they lack the kind of computer communication needed to adequately track vessels and cargo.
- Lack of information about incoming vessels and their cargo, plus the freedom to enter ports, would allow ships loaded with explosives, jet fuel or noxious chemicals to ram docks, devastating ports and surrounding areas.

The relaxed policies around U.S. ports help explain the high incidence of cargo theft and other dockside crime. Free access to docks makes it possible for terrorists to retrieve illicit arms and explosives undetected — or even to hijack ships.

It's known, for instance, that al Qaeda has shipped arms and bomb-making materials via Osama bin Laden's covertly owned freighters. The materials used to blow up the U.S. embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, in August 1998 were delivered by one of his ships to the dock of Mombasa, Kenya.

Some urban seaports are surrounded by petroleum and chemical storage facilities. A ship ramming the docks could set off gigantic explosions and wreck whole portions of some cities.

"A terrorist act involving chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear weapons at one of these seaports could result in extensive loss of lives, property and business, affect the operations of harbors and the transportation

infrastructure, including bridges, railroads and highways, and cause extensive environmental damage," F. Amanda DeBusk, former Commissioner of the Interagency Commission on Crime and Security in U.S. Seaports, told the Senate Government Affairs Committee in December.

Beyond that, security specialists warn there's nothing to stop attackers from shipping a "weaponized container" directly to almost any targeted U.S. metropolitan area.

It's widely believed that the vulnerabilities of U.S. seaports and those of other nations are well known to terrorists. But the acknowledged absence of security at foreign seaports works in America's favor, security analysts say. Their reasoning: The United States can make the case that meeting U.S. security requirements would increase their own security and reduce their susceptibility to terrorist attack.

Capt. Michael Lipinski, Adm. Loy's spokesman, says the admiral refers to that as "balance."

The Hollings-Graham bill makes clear what happens when one or another party acts irresponsibly.

For instance, the bill requires the secretary of transportation to bar any vessel from "providing transportation" to a port visited by ships serving another port that does not "maintain and carry out effective security measures."

The measure empowers the president to abort without warning the trading rights and seafaring license of any U.S. ship or any person trading with the United States if he finds "a condition" that threatens the ship or its passengers and crew. A vessel carrying terrorists, explosives, or chemical or biological weapons would likely create such a condition.

Among its other provisions, the bill would allow U.S. marine terminal operators to search and seize any cargo that is not properly documented and that has stayed in the terminal for 48 hours. The measure also:

- Requires ships to transmit to U.S. officials "pre-arrival messages" containing whatever security information the transportation secretary thinks necessary and to do so well before reaching U.S. destinations. Authorities must "deny port entry to any vessel that fails to comply."

- Establishes "maritime safety and security teams" trained and equipped to "conduct high-speed intercepts" and to board, search and seize any "article or thing on a vessel or waterfront facility found to present a risk to the vessel, facility or port."

The rapid-deployment teams would be able to supplement U.S. forces at home or overseas, to respond to criminal or terrorist acts and to "assist with port vulnerability assessments required under this act."

Many security analysts familiar with the bill have praised its provisions. "The critical issue will be to obtain voluntary — not mandatory — commercial compliance with all of the parties in the commercial transaction," Rob Quartel, former U.S. Federal Maritime Commission member, told the Senate Government Affairs Committee.

"We can't make foreign suppliers abide by all of these rules, but we can certainly tell their U.S. customers that they may face delays unless they know their sources and can validate cargo and process integrity," said Mr. Quartel, who currently heads FreightDesk Technologies, a McLean-based freight-management software company.

"We can't tell a foreign port that it has to purchase millions of dollars' worth of screening devices for the cargoes destined for the United States which our screening picks out as suspect, but we can certainly negotiate procedural agreements [and] provide incentives for those that work with us."

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Jane's Defence Weekly
January 23, 2002

US Breakthrough In Detecting Bio Agents

By Darren Lake & Kim Burger, JDW Staff Reporters, London & Washington DC

A US Army research institute has received field-ready DNA test kits from US company Cepheid that will rapidly detect four major biological agents and a prototype system that automates the process.

Cepheid and the US Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases (USAMRIID) have been working on ways to simplify and expedite the process for detecting biological threats. According to the company and the army, its kits are unlike most other such DNA tests because they do not degrade and become ineffective once taken out of refrigerated storage. They remain stable stored at room temperature. Kits for detecting *Bacillus anthracis* (anthrax), *Yersinia pestis* (plague), *Francisella tularensis* (tularemia) and *Clostridium botulinum* (botulism) were delivered this month. The army will conduct evaluation trials later this year.

The prototype testing system, delivered to USAMRIID in December, simplifies the process further by allowing the sample preparation and analysis to be done in one cartridge. The cartridge fits in the palm of a hand and can deliver a result within 30 minutes.

Until recently the complexity of polymerase chain reaction (PCR)-based DNA tests, including Cepheid's, meant their use in the field was impractical. In the test kits recently delivered to the army, the company's proprietary reagents and the other chemicals needed to perform the test are pre-measured and freeze-dried in one tube. A prepared sample is then added to the tube and placed on the detection system.

The PCR-based testing currently available requires that samples be prepared manually, a procedure that takes time and that requires soldiers to be trained.

In the prototype detector developed by Cepheid, known as GeneXpert, raw samples can be added directly to the pre-loaded test cartridge. According to Thomas Gutshall, Cepheid chief executive officer and chairman, soldiers with minimal training can conduct the test without performing the complicated preparation process.

PCR-based DNA tests have advantages over other testing systems, such as 'test tickets'. They are quick and can quantify the hazard. However, a scientific source at the UK's Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL) warns that they will not detect 'purified' biological agents.

Currently 'ticket tests' are simpler, more robust and cheaper. In the UK, DSTL is engaged in a three-year project to examine technologies for testing biological hazards. The UK armed forces use US-supplied ticket-type hand-held tests, but the DSTL source said that differing UK and US needs have meant the tickets do not do everything the UK Ministry of Defence would like.

According to the source, DSTL has developed its own ticket test and is also looking into other techniques, such as PCR-based DNA testing. He said prototypes of the equipment are ready, "the kit works and the chemistry works", and that DSTL is looking into the right mix of techniques to cover UK requirements.

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Tuesday January 22 1:37 PM ET

Anthrax Vaccine Lab Nears Approval

By KATHY BARKS HOFFMAN, Associated Press Writer

LANSING, Mich. (AP) - In 1998, the buyers of the only U.S. laboratory making the anthrax vaccine thought they had a can't-miss deal.

The aging state-owned lab in Michigan needed millions in renovations on top of the \$24 million purchase price. But the Pentagon ([news](#) - [web sites](#)) already had announced it would require all 2.4 million American military personnel to take a series of six shots of the vaccine, and turning the lab into a profitable enterprise seemed childishly easy.

Four years later, Lansing-based BioPort Corp. has yet to ship a single dose of the vaccine to the Pentagon.

Unable to pass inspections by the Food and Drug Administration ([news](#) - [web sites](#)), BioPort has intermittently produced the vaccine but has not been able to release it.

Now, the company appears to be on the verge of finally winning FDA approval to begin shipments, possibly as early as this month.

"It's clearly a very positive story for the company," said BioPort spokeswoman Kim Brennen Root.

A laboratory in Washington state that puts the vaccine into vials still needs FDA approval, and the vaccine still must be tested for purity, potency and sterility before batches will be released by the FDA.

The vaccine was held up by contamination, inadequate record-keeping and unapproved procedures at the laboratory.

"I'm glad it took four years. That stuff needed to be done right," said Rep. Mike Rogers, R-Mich., whose district includes BioPort.

BioPort is under contract to the Pentagon to supply 4.6 million doses for \$53.5 million.

Pressure to get the lab approved has grown since U.S. troops began heading overseas in the war on terrorism and since last fall's anthrax outbreak killed five people on the East Coast. Because of the standstill at Bioport, the Pentagon stockpile of the vaccine is dwindling.

Over the past four years, BioPort has received at least \$16.8 million from the Pentagon to renovate and expand the lab. The Pentagon also agreed in 1999 to more than double the per-dose payment, from \$4.36 to \$10.36.

Considering who owns BioPort, it was something of a surprise that the project did not turn out to be as easy as the new owners expected.

BioPort's chief executive and major investor, Fuad El-Hibri, is a former director of a British maker of an anthrax vaccine. A major shareholder in BioPort is retired Adm. William J. Crowe, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who brought his experience dealing with the Pentagon to the fledgling company. Also, the former director of the state-owned lab is BioPort's chief operating officer.

Even so, BioPort continued to fail FDA inspections. It contracted with Hollister-Stier Laboratories in Spokane, Wash., to put the vaccine into vials when its own packaging procedures could not make the grade.

BioPort also was cited for not following approved manufacturing procedures, for contamination problems and for inaccurate or incomplete testing documentation. Several lots of the vaccine failed sterility tests.

The company also was criticized for not investigating reactions to the vaccine that were different from those listed on the package insert. Among other things, an Army cook died in 2000 from a form of anemia and other complications. BioPort denies the vaccine caused the death.

Amid the anthrax scare and the war on terrorism, some have questioned whether the FDA is being pushed to overlook problems at BioPort.

"The FDA is under tremendous pressure to cave on this," Lingg Brewer, a former state lawmaker, said last fall.

Health and Human Services ([news - web sites](#)) Secretary Tommy Thompson said in October that the FDA would give the laboratory close scrutiny and that science, not politics, would decide when it got the OK.

"I can assure you nobody is pressuring FDA to approve this," he said.

Even if the FDA gives BioPort the green light, more problems lie ahead.

Some military personnel say the vaccine they were given in the late 1990s made them ill, leading to congressional inquiries and lawsuits. Opponents to the vaccine have asked the FDA to declare all stockpiles adulterated and to revoke BioPort's license.

BioPort officials have said the vaccine is safe, and the Pentagon said severe side effects happen only about once per 200,000 doses.

Also, questions remain over the vaccine's effectiveness against the inhaled form of anthrax, which has killed five people in the recent outbreak. BioPort and the Pentagon said the vaccine protects against the inhaled form.

But even the Pentagon says a better vaccine is needed, one that does not require a series of six shots over 18 months and has fewer side effects. BioPort wants to work on such a vaccine, but so do others.

http://dailynews.yahoo.com/h/ap/20020122/us/anthrax_vaccine_lab_1.html

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Tuesday January 22 2:02 PM ET

Senators Return to Hart Offices

By JOHN HEILPRIN, Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) - Senators and staff returned Tuesday to an office building shut for three months by anthrax contamination. "I go in with confidence and a prayer," said Sen. Joseph Lieberman ([news](#)).

That mix of caution and optimism was typical for the politicians and employees reclaiming the nine-story Hart building, home to offices of half of the 100 senators.

"I feel completely safe," Sen. Majority Leader Tom Daschle, whose Hart office received the anthrax-laden letter that spurred the building's shutdown Oct. 17, said after re-entering the building Tuesday.

Speaking to reporters after visiting staff in his new, temporary office, Daschle said: "It's good to be back. It's good to be confident that we can return to normalcy."

Daschle, D-S.D., won't be able to return to his real office - where the letter was opened Oct. 15 - until the carpeting and furniture are replaced, which is expected to take until mid-March.

The reopening promised something Sharon Davis, a cashier at Hart Sundry, hasn't seen for a while: a steady flow of customers into her store located only about 50 feet from the plywood barrier separating her corridor from the Hart building.

"I was a little antsy about coming in here - you didn't know what the situation was and you still don't," said Davis. She felt the same in late October when the store reopened after a few weeks of being closed.

"It had the smell of wet mildew, so I was scared to come back," she said.

Added Lieberman, D-Conn., "Life has its risks, and I think they've tried to reduce them as much as humanly possible."

Nearby, Rep. Mike Pence ([news](#)) greeted employees Tuesday who assisted in the cleanup of his office in the Longworth House Office Building, where four members had offices closed since October because of anthrax contamination.

Stacks of notepads, binders and boxes were strewn about the office, which received new furniture and carpeting during the cleanup. ``It's now just down to unpacking," said Pence, R-Ind.

Following repeated delays, the 1-million-square-foot Hart building was declared safe last week after several attempts to decontaminate it with chlorine dioxide, a toxic gas.

The building's reopening marked a major step in Congress' return to normalcy following a tumultuous autumn.

The Capitol was evacuated Sept. 11 during the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington and two days later because of a bomb scare. In addition, all six of the major House and Senate office buildings were closed for at least short periods while investigators searched for - and sometimes found - more anthrax.

Officials estimated the anthrax cleanup in Hart and other congressional buildings cost \$14 million through December.

After the Daschle letter was opened, thousands of workers were treated with antibiotics as a precaution. No one has been reported to have taken ill.

No one has been arrested in the case.

http://dailynews.yahoo.com/h/ap/20020122/pl/anthrax_congress_16.html

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