

Is Avian Flu another Pentagon Hoax?

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No sooner are indictments being handed down to Scooter Libby, the Chief of Staff of the Vice President of the United States for lies and coverup of information used deliberately to suppress the fact the Bush Administration had no 'smoking gun' to prove Saddam Hussein was building a nuclear arsenal, but a new scandal is surfacing every bit as outrageous and ultimately, likely also criminal.

Against all scientific prudence and normal public health procedure, the world population is being whipped up into a fear frenzy by irresponsible public health officials from the US Administration to WHO to the United States Centers for Disease Control. They all warn about the imminent danger that a malicious viral strain might spread from infected birds, primarily in Vietnam and other Asian centers, to contaminate the entire human species in pandemic proportions. Often the flu pandemic of 1918 which is said to have killed 18 million worldwide, is cited as an example of what 'might' lie in store for us.

On November 1, appropriately enough the day after Halloween, President Bush is scheduled to visit the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda Maryland to announce his Administration's strategy of how it will prepare for the next flu epidemic, whether from Bird Flu or some other strain. The plan has been a year in the making. On October 28 the Senate passed an \$8 billion emergency funding bill to address the growing Avian Flu panic. Health and Human Services Secretary Mike Leavitt, in a moment of candor during the debate on the Senate bill told the press, 'If it isn't the current H5N1 virus that leads to an influenza pandemic, at some point in our nation's future, another virus will.' In the meantime taxpayer billions will have gone to a handful of pharmaceutical giants positioned to profit. None stands to reap more lucre than the Swiss-US pharmaceutical giant Roche Holdings of Basle.

The only medicine we are told which reduce the symptoms of general or seasonal influenza and 'possibly' might reduce symptoms also of Avian Flu, is a drug called Tamiflu. Today the giant Swiss pharmaceutical firm, Roche, holds the sole license to manufacture Tamiflu. Due to the media panic, the order books at Roche today are filled to overflowing. Roche recently refused a request from the US Congress to lift its exclusive patent rights to allow other drug manuf'acturers to produce Tamiflu with the improbable excuse that it was in effect, too complex for others to rapidly produce.

However, the real point of interest is the company in California who developed Tamiflu and gave the marketing rights to its patented discovery to Roche.

'Rummy Flu'

Tamiflu was developed and patented in 1996 by a California biotech firm, Gilead Sciences Inc. Gilead is a NASDAQ (GILD) listed stock company which prefers to maintain a low profile

in the current rush to Tamiflu. That might be because of who is tied to Gilead. In 1997, before he became US Secretary of Defense, Donald H. Rumsfeld was named Chairman of the Board of Gilead Sciences, where he remained until early 2001 when he became Defense Secretary. Rumsfeld had been on the board of Gilead since 1988 according to a January 3 1997 company press release.

An as-yet-unconfirmed report is that Rumsfeld while Secretary of Defense also purchased an additional stock in his former company, Gilead Sciences Inc., worth \$18 million, making him one of its largest if not the largest stock owners today.

The Secretary of Defense, the man who allegedly supported the use of contrived intelligence to justify the war on Iraq, is now poised to reap huge gains for a flu panic his Administration has done everything it can to promote. It would be useful to know whether the Pentagon's successor to Douglas Feith's Office of Special Plans developed the strategy of biowarfare behind the current Avian Flu panic. Perhaps some enterprising Congressional committee might look into the entire subject of plausible conflicts of interest regarding Secretary Rumsfeld.

Rumsfeld stands to make a fortune on royalties as a panicked world population scrambles to buy a drug worthless in curing effects of alleged Avian Flu. The model suggests the parallel to the brazen corruption of Halliburton Corporation whose former CEO is Vice President Dick Cheney. Cheney's company has so far gotten billions worth of US construction contracts in Iraq and elsewhere. Coincidence that Cheney's closest political friend is Defense Secretary and Avian Flu beneficiary Don Rumsfeld? It is another example of what someone has called the principle of modern US corrupt special interest politics: 'Concentrate the benefits; diffuse the costs' President Bush has ordered the US Government to buy \$2 billion worth of Gilead Science's Tamiflu.

GMO Chickens come home to roost

But Tamiflu conflicts are perhaps just the tip of the iceberg of the Avian Flu story. There is high-level biological research underway in Britain and presumably also the United States to develop a genetic engineering method to make chickens and other birds 'resistant' to Avian Flu viruses.

British scientists are reportedly genetically engineering chickens to produce birds resistant to the lethal strains of the H5N1 virus devastating poultry in the Far East. Laurence Tiley, Professor of Microbial Virology at Cambridge University and Helen Sang of the Roslin Institute in Scotland are involved in developing 'transgenic chickens' which would have small pieces of genetic material inserted into chicken eggs to allegedly make the chickens H5N1 resistant.

Tiley told the Times of London on October 29, 'Once we have regulatory approval, we believe it will only take between four and five years to breed enough chickens to replace the entire world (chicken) population.' The real question in this dubious undertaking is which GMO giants are underwriting the research and development of GMO chickens and who will control their products. It is increasingly clear that the entire saga of Avian Flu is one whose dimensions are only slowly coming to light. What we can see so far is not at all pretty.

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