

Public Menace-Private Profit: America's Biowarfare Alliance

By [Tom Burghardt](#)

Global Research, December 02, 2009

[Antifascist Calling](#) 2 December 2009

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Militarization and WMD](#)

In September, The New York Times [reported](#) that a University of Chicago researcher, Malcolm Casadaban, died after exposure to “a weakened and ordinarily harmless strain of the bacteria that cause plague.”

According to the Times, “Dr. Casadaban, an associate professor at the university, was studying the bacteria to create a better vaccine for plague ... in part because of concerns about its possible use in bioterrorism.” The Times averred that “infectious disease experts said researchers rarely die from being infected with an ordinarily harmless strain of the bacteria or viruses they are studying.”

Which of course, raise inevitable and troubling questions: just how “safe” was the strain of plague studied by Casadaban, and was this research part of a new round of illicit, highly compartmented experiments meant to bulk-up America's first-strike arsenals?

While there is no evidence that Casadaban ever worked on banned weapons, indeed the molecular geneticist was a leading expert into the origins of bubonic plague, the casual agent responsible for the Black Death, and an opponent of biological warfare, what of his colleagues?

One expert, Dr. Kenneth Alexander, told the Times “there might have been something unusual about the bacteria that caused it to be dangerous, a mutation, for example.” Alexander hastened to add that “it was more likely” that the researcher had a “pre-existing condition,” one that “made him more susceptible to infection.”

Perhaps. But according to Edmond Hammond, director of the now-defunct [Sunshine Project](#), records pried from the federal government through the Freedom of Information Act uncovered a disturbing pattern of criminal neglect amongst university and corporate officials.

Hammond discovered, and shared with [Congress](#) back in 2007, information that should have blown the lid off of one of America's dirtiest-and deadliest-little secrets. In excruciating detail, citing case after case, Hammond told congressional investigators that amongst the deadly pathogens that escaped containment in a series of underreported accidents were the following substances: Plague, anthrax, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, tularemia, brucellosis and Q fever.

Lab workers became sick, communities were threatened and yet, illicit work with these dangerous germs continue; just another day at the office for militarists, corporate grifters and their academic accomplices.

While Dr. Casadaban's death is a tragedy for family and friends, was a "pre-existing condition" responsible for the scientist's demise or was something more sinister taking place behind closed doors without his knowledge?

In the former Soviet Union, the Sunshine Project revealed that scientists involved in illegal offensive biowarfare research developed "plague bacteria (*Yersinia pestis*) ... that were resistant to 16 different antibiotics. Today, the genetic introduction of antibiotic resistance into bacterial pathogens is routine work in almost any microbiology laboratory."

While it is quite possible that Casadaban's death was a freak accident, nothing however can, or should, be ruled out.

Fanciful speculation? Better think again!

In June, Global Security Newswire [reported](#) that during a routine inventory at the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases (USAMRIID) at Fort Detrick, Md., safety officers "found nearly 10,000 more vials of potentially lethal pathogens than were known to be stored at the site."

Claiming that there are "multiple layers of security," Ft. Detrick's deputy commander Col. Mark Kortepeter said it was "extremely unlikely" that any of the center's samples had been smuggled out. "Unlikely," but not impossible.

Amongst the 9,200 extra samples uncovered during the inventory were "bacterial agents that cause plague, anthrax and tularemia; Venezuelan, Eastern and Western equine encephalitis viruses; Rift valley fever virus; Junin virus; Ebola virus; and botulinum neurotoxins." In other words substances which can, and probably have, been weaponized by the Pentagon.

As Antifascist Calling previously [reported](#), with "biodefense" as a cover, the U.S. National Security State has spent tens of billions of dollars (\$56.9 billion since 2001, according to the [Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation](#)) on secretive programs investigating the deadliest pathogens known to nature, or ginning up new chimeric monsters in any number of privately-run labs.

The antinuclear watchdog group Tri-Valley CAREs ([TVC](#)) obtained [documents](#) under the Freedom of Information Act that revealed how Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory ([LLNL](#)), a "limited liability corporation" overseen by the University of California, Bechtel, BWX Technologies, Washington Group International and Battelle, routinely violated federal regulations and had carried out "restricted experiments" that resulted in the inadvertent release of anthrax in 2005.

Noting that "the relevant details of the 2005 anthrax accident were kept from the public at the time, just as happened with the illegal experiments that are coming to light today," TVC learned that this work is expanding, with little in the way of effective oversight by Congress or indeed, by any regulatory agency.

LLNL has now opened a Biosafety Level 3 (BSL-3) facility and is planning to experiment with pathogens exquisitely suited for use as offensive weapons. Activities contemplated include, "aerosolizing (spraying) pathogens such as plague, tularemia and Q fever, in addition to anthrax. Moreover, government documents disclose that planned experiments in the BSL-3 include genetic modification and potentially novel manipulation of viruses, prions and other

agents.”

In October, TVC filed a [motion](#) for summary judgement in Federal Court in the Northern District of California “aiming to stop the operation of a bio-warfare agent research facility at the Lawrence Livermore National Lab (LLNL) main site in Livermore, California.”

According to TVC, “the large inventory of multiple bio-weapon agents, the presence of genetically modified variants, and the fact that some of the pathogens have been put into just the right form to be effectively spread via an airborne release, all serve to make the Livermore BSL-3 a potential magnet for terrorism from either an internal or external source.”

Currently, some 400 research facilities and more than 15,000 individuals are cleared “to have access to select agents, which include anthrax, smallpox and the Ebola virus,” according to a September [report](#) by the National Research Council.

The NRC averred that lax security at laboratories that work with select agents “pose a severe risk to human or animal health,” risks that “have grown as the amount of research has increased in recent years.”

And if one or more of these researchers should “go rogue,” for money or as a plausibly deniable component of a Pentagon or CIA operation, doesn’t the public have the right to expect the civilian side of government would weed out such miscreants from work with these deadly toxins?

A History of Illicit Research

The close proximity of U.S. biological warfare programs and the pharmaceutical industry is hardly an historical accident. From its inception, American research drew from a rich pool of biomedical researchers backed by the formidable technological resources of Big Pharma.

As Leonard Cole revealed in his 1988 exposé, *Clouds of Secrecy: The Army’s Germ Warfare Tests over Populated Areas*, biowarfare research during World War II and the Cold War period was a public/private affair in which the government provided funds to state agencies and private corporations alike in the hope that such solicitous relationships would lead to breakthroughs in the area of offensive weapons or what is now euphemistically called “biodefense.”

Indeed, none other than George W. Merck, the president of the Merck Pharmaceutical Company, was a top-flight consultant to the Secretary of War. In that capacity, Merck and his company provided expertise and technological know-how for work on America’s nascent biowar programs. In a 1946 report to the Secretary of War penned by Merck, Cole revealed that the program “included research, testing, development, and production of biological agents,” all carried out as Merck wrote, in the “strictest secrecy.”

While wartime fears of biological attacks by the Axis powers represented a clear and present danger to the United States and their allies as revelations of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan’s active programs attest, this information was scrupulously covered-up and suppressed for decades. Indeed after the war, the United States actively recruited these sociopaths into their biological, chemical and nuclear weapons programs.

As is now known, America's military establishment struck a devil's bargain with the same war criminals who, in the name of science, visited death upon millions. While the doctors and biologists who filled the ranks of Japan's Unit 731 hadn't achieved a "breakthrough" in terms of delivery systems' development, as researcher Sheldon H. Harris revealed in *Factories of Death*, they possessed an invaluable resource sought by U.S. bioweaponers: detailed records of the Japanese Army's obscene human experiments.

After the war with a new official enemy looming on the horizon—the Soviet Union—Merck admonished the state to maintain a strong biological warfare program, writing: "Work in this field, born of the necessity of war, cannot be ignored in time of peace; it must be continued on a sufficient scale to provide an adequate defense."

By 1948, the newly-emerging national security state stood-up a Committee on Biological Warfare within the Department of Defense to do just that. Shortly thereafter, the Central Intelligence Agency, particularly the Company's Technical Services Division (TSD), so-called "wizards of Langley," ran a series of illicit programs that sought to "secure the realm" through the application of the latest advances in the biological and psychological sciences.

Over decades, projects such as Bluebird, Artichoke, MKDELTA, MKNAOMI and MKULTRA, variously identified by researchers as "mind control" projects—which they were—garnered outrage when it was revealed during the 1970s that the Agency conspired with leading psychiatrists, psychologists, medical doctors, biologists and academic institutions in funding obscene human experiments employing psychoactive drugs such as LSD, mescaline and BZ on unwitting test subjects.

As the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Activities, popularly known as the Church Committee, [revealed](#) during hearings to examine the Watergate scandals of the 1970s, the Pentagon's own programs ran simultaneously with those of the CIA. The Committee discovered:

In many respects, the Army's testing programs duplicated research which had already been conducted by the CIA. They certainly involved the risks inherent in the early phases of drug testing. In the Army's tests, as with those of the CIA, individual rights were also subordinated to national security considerations; informed consent and followup examinations of subjects were neglected in efforts to maintain the secrecy of the tests. Finally, the command and control problems which were apparent in the CIA's programs are paralleled by a lack of clear authorization and supervision in the Army's programs. (Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Activities, Project MKULTRA, The CIA's Program of Research in Behavioral Modification, United States Senate, August 3, 1977, Appendix A, p. 92)

While these projects may only have achieved modest success in standing up programmable assassins, as evidence on Lee Harvey Oswald and Sirhan Sirhan may [suggest](#), MKULTRA and its spin-offs were primarily behavioral modification programs subsequently useful for what are now euphemistically termed "enhanced interrogation techniques," e.g., torture and as a formidable bioweapons project.

Indeed, Ft. Detrick's Special Operations Division (SOD), chock-a-block with CIA officers and assets, was, by the early 1950s experimenting with, and assembling biologically-based assassination weapons that were easily concealed and could be deployed by "wet work" specialists to murder foreign leaders such as the multiple failed plots against Fidel Castro, or

Patrice Lumumba attest. As researcher Ed Regis documented, Congolese Prime Minister Lumumba was a thorn in the secret state's side.

Refusing to play ball with Washington so as to facilitate the extraction of that nation's vast mineral wealth by American multinational corporations, Lumumba sealed his fate when he sought military assistance from the Soviet Union. At that point, the national liberation leader became an object for Agency "executive action."

It was around this time that the CIA's Deputy Director for Plans, Richard Bissell, had a couple of informal talks with his scientific adviser, Sid Gottlieb, concerning the subject of the covert assassination of foreign leaders. Gottlieb suggested that biological agents were perfect for the task: they were invisible, untraceable, and, if intelligently selected and delivered, not even liable to create a suspicion of foul play. The target would get sick and die exactly as if he'd been attacked by a natural outbreak of an endemic disease. Plenty of lethal or incapacitating germs were out there and available, Gottlieb told Bissell, and they were easily accessible to the CIA. (Ed Regis, *The Biology of Doom*, New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1999, pp. 182-183)

While proponents of continued research with nature's deadliest pathogens argue that the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) allows for purely "defensive" work to protect the public against potential bioattacks, this mendacious logic studiously avoids the issue of the dual-use nature of this work.

Cole unearthed documents, including a 1968 official history of Ft. Detrick penned by a Pentagon bioweaponer who asserted forthrightly that "research and development in the offensive aspects of BW proceeded hand in hand with defensive developments for, in truth, the two are almost inseparable."

But MKULTRA and its grisly spin-offs are a thing of the past, right? Not by a long shot!

Jeffrey Kaye, a psychologist and critic of the torture-enabling American Psychological Association (APA), [revealed](#) November 23, that the group had organized a workshop in 2007 at the Arlington, Virginia headquarters of the dodgy RAND Corporation.

That conference, entitled "[Science of Deception: Integration of Practice and Theory](#)," discussed new and novel ways "to utilize drugs and sensory bombardment techniques to break down interrogatees. Those are signal techniques of psychological torture long utilized by the CIA and other intelligence agencies and military around the world."

Citing APA documents, Kaye discovered that APA and their friends at CIA were actively looking for "pharmacological agents ... known to affect apparent truth-telling behavior." Kaye learned that amongst the probative questions driving the spooks and contractors was this revealing sentence: "What are sensory overloads on the maintenance of deceptive behaviors? How might we overload the system or overwhelm the senses and see how it affects deceptive behaviors?"

According to numerous researchers, the CIA, and the psychologists and psychiatrists they contracted to work with them, including many of the top behavioral scientists of their day, experimented with many drugs in their quest to find a "truth" drug that would open up the recalcitrant and expose the liar and the dissembler. The CIA has declassified a paper from its in-house intelligence journal from the early 1960s, "[Truth' Drugs in Interrogation](#)," where

they discuss research on drugs for interrogation ranging from scopolamine, amphetamines, and barbiturates to cannabis, LSD, and mescaline. The CIA authors discuss the limitations of using drugs, based on research, and conclude that a special use for drugs may be found in detection of deception. (Jeffrey Kaye, "Who Will Investigate CIA/RAND/APA Torture 'Workshop'?", The Public Record, November 21, 2009)

What was true throughout the Cold War period is just as true today and remains a pressing public health issue. As Global Security Newswire [reported](#) in August, the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases (USAMRIID) began construction on a new facility at Ft. Detrick in Frederick, Maryland. The brief report states that "new site will allow for more study of lethal diseases and should have space for 952 staffers, compared to the 800 now using facilities that date back four to five decades."

While the National Academy of Sciences "plans to assess health and safety issues raised by observers who believe there has been insufficient consideration regarding the potential release of an infectious agent from the facility," the same can also be said for the BSL-3 and BSL-4 facilities in private hands, under contract to the U.S. government.

As I [reported](#) in "Bringing the (Bio) War Home," the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists [revealed](#) that "massive U.S. biodefense spending and a buildup of high-containment laboratories throughout the country might have created an internal security risk that no outside terrorist group could ever duplicate. Nearly two dozen new federal and many more new private biosafety level 3 and 4 laboratories have been built in recent years, meaning a large cadre of scientists has access to extraordinarily lethal material."

And if today's bioweaponeers have their way, such risks will increase exponentially with untold consequences for us all.

Building Banned Weapons

[Leading experts](#), as I [reported](#) in August, have derided the possibility that terrorist groups have the know-how to fabricate smallpox or other pathogens into biological weapons as a massive "fraud ... and a substantial one" perpetrated on the American people.

Hysterical claims by securocrats that "bioterrorism is one of the most pressing problems we have on the planet today," an assertion made by Dr. Tara O'Toole, the Undersecretary of Science and Technology at the Department of Homeland Security, is not borne out by the facts.

Indeed, such claims not only distort available evidence that terrorist groups have such capabilities but conceal the more salient fact that Pentagon weaponeers continue to build banned weapons.

According to Jeanne Guillemin, author of *Biological Weapons: From the Invention of State-Sponsored Programs to Contemporary Bioterrorism*, the Pentagon and CIA made and tested a model of a Soviet anthrax bomb and created an antibiotic-resistant strain of anthrax.

After consulting with scientists who strongly suggested that the CIA anthrax bomb project would violate the BWC, "CIA lawyers decided the project was within the allowed realm of defensive research," Guillemin revealed.

Project Clear Vision, a joint investigation by the CIA and the Battelle Memorial Institute,

under contract to the Agency, reconstructed and tested a Soviet-era anthrax bomblet in order to test its dissemination characteristics. The Agency “decided the same” for the small, fully functional bioweapons facility built under the rubric of Project Bacchus.

The third initiative, Project Jefferson, led to the development of an antibiotic-resistant strain of anthrax based on a Soviet model. After the outgoing Clinton administration hesitated to give the CIA the go-ahead for the project, the Bush regime’s National Security Council gave the Pentagon permission. “They believed” Guillemin wrote, “the Pentagon had the right to investigate genetically altered pathogens in the name of biodefense, ‘to save American lives’.”

Shortly thereafter, the Pentagon authorized the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), one of the most secretive and heavily-outsourced Defense Department branches, to re-create the deadly anthrax strain.

Commenting on the close proximity of the 2001 anthrax provocation and the rush towards the invasion and occupation of Iraq, constitutional law expert Glenn Greenwald [writes](#) that the anthrax attack “played at least as large of a role as the 9/11 attack itself, if not larger, in creating the general climate of fear that prevailed for years in the U.S. and specifically how the anthrax episode was exploited by leading media and political figures to gin up intense hostility towards Iraq.”

Which is why, according to Greenwald, “it’s so striking how we’ve collectively flushed this terrorist attack down the memory hole as though it doesn’t exist.” Indeed, “what makes this particularly significant is that the anthrax attack is unresolved and uninvestigated.”

Here we have one of the most consequential political events of the last decade at least—a lethal biological terrorist attack aimed at key U.S. Senators and media figures, which even the FBI claims originated from a U.S. military lab. The then-British Ambassador to the U.S. is now testifying what has long been clear: that this episode played a huge role in enabling the attack on Iraq. Even our leading mainstream, establishment-serving media outlets—and countless bio-weapons experts—believe that we do not have real answers about who perpetrated this attack and how. And there is little apparent interest in investigating in order to find out. Evidently, this is just another one of those things that we’ll relegate to “the irrelevant past,” and therefore deem it unworthy of attention from our future-gazing, always-distracted minds. (Glenn Greenwald, “A key British official reminds us of the forgotten anthrax attack,” Salon, November 27, 2009)

On and on it goes, America’s headlong rush into the abyss.

While the American people believed the election of Barack Obama signaled a change in direction from decades’ long policies that have brought the planet to the brink of disaster, those hopes are little more than cynical illusions manufactured by media specialists and spin-doctors, the ubiquitous army of “message force multipliers” who do the bidding of their corporatist masters.

After all, \$57 billion buys much in the way of silence.

The original source of this article is [Antifascist Calling](#)
Copyright © [Tom Burghardt](#), [Antifascist Calling](#), 2009

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: **[Tom Burghardt](#)**
<http://antifascist-calling.blogspot.com/>

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca