

# The US Secret Bioweapons Program

The Anthrax attacks were used to build a justification for extending the "war on terrorism" to Iraq

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## Editorial note

*The following article, first published in November 2001, focusses on the early stages of the WMD propaganda campaign directed against Iraq. The PR campaign launched shortly after 9/11 consisted in establishing links between Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden.*

Alongside the so-called "links" between Osama and Saddam Hussein, the Anthrax attacks were also being used to build a justification for extending the "campaign against international terrorism" to Iraq.

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## The US Secret Bioweapons Program

by **Michel Chossudovsky**

**Centre for Research on Globalisation (CRG), Montréal, 28 November 2001**

**The Bush Administration has embarked upon a carefully worded public relations campaign. The objective is to eventually justify an extension of "the campaign against international terrorism" to Iraq and other "rogue states".**

**Part of this PR campaign consists in fabricating reports linking Saddam Hussein to Osama bin Laden, -i.e. by leaking selected "intelligence" designed "to soften up the American people for a new war in Iraq":**

**US intelligence is looking into - but can't substantiate - reports Saddam Hussein has offered bin Laden and Taliban leaders sanctuary in his country, said a US official, speaking on condition of anonymity. While Saddam rarely passes up a chance to anger the US and its allies, taking these leaders in would have "grave consequences", the official said. 1**

**The Anthrax Attacks are also being used: Washington has warned President Saddam Hussein that if he does not allow United Nations bioweapons inspectors into Iraq, "he would face consequences". When asked what those might be,**

## **President Bush responded: "He'll find out." 2**

**While the Alliance is building up an impressive military arsenal of aircraft carriers and gun-boats in the Persian Gulf, the exact timing of a major bombing operation directed against Iraq has not yet been determined. Moreover, there are significant divisions within the Bush Administration pertaining to scope and focus of the war. There is also reluctance on the part of Alliance partners on extending the war into the Persian Gulf:**

**"Where to go next and how big it should be is what's being argued right now-and Baghdad is what's being debated at the moment," said a senior Pentagon official. "This is both an internal discussion at the Pentagon, and one between departments. Our policy guys are thinking Iraq. Our question is, do we make a move earlier than anyone expects?" 3**

## **The Anthrax Attacks**

Alongside the so-called "links" between Osama and Saddam Hussein, the Anthrax attacks are also being used to build a justification for extending the "campaign against international terrorism" to Iraq. While contributing to rumours on the Anthrax attacks, Washington has singled out Iraq, North Korea, Iran, Syria and Libya of violating the international treaty banning weapons of germ warfare:

"Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security John R. Bolton, ... said the existence of a germ warfare program in Iraq is "beyond dispute" and added that the United States strongly suspects North Korea, Libya, Syria, Iran and Sudan of pursuing such weapons. "The United States strongly suspects that Iraq has taken advantage of three years of no U.N. inspections to improve all phases of its offensive biological weapons program," Bolton said. "The existence of Iraq's program is beyond dispute." 4

Responding to the Administration's new assumptions, the US media is also involved in moulding public opinion in favour of a military operation directed against the so-called "State sponsors of international terrorism", implying the complicity of one or more foreign governments in the Middle East:

"With the frightening appearance of anthrax, however, it's useful to know now what Saddam Hussein can bring to the germ-war table." 5

The Administration has nonetheless clarified it does not require "any proof of links between Baghdad and the 9-11 terrorists" to initiate a major bombing campaign directed against Iraq. National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice "agreed at the weekend that no such link was needed":

"We didn't need September 11 to tell us Saddam Hussein is a very dangerous man," Dr Rice said. "The world would clearly be better and the Iraqi people would clearly be better off if Saddam Hussein was not in power in Iraq." Yet at the same time, the US media is building a new consensus: Saddam is the missing link to the terrorists." 6

## **US Secret Weapons Research**

Ironically, while Washington points its finger at Iraq, the evidence amply confirms that the US has built an extensive arsenal of biological weapons which blatantly violates international laws and covenants. While accusing Iraq and North Korea of treaty violations, the US has circumvented international conventions and has failed to sign the Biological and Toxic Weapons Convention.

According to the Swiss International Relations and Security Network (ISN) (which is linked to NATO's "Partnership for Peace" Programme)

"the United States has embarked on a program of secret research on biological weapons that, some officials say, tests the limits of the global treaty banning such weapons...The 1972 treaty forbids nations from developing or acquiring weapons that spread disease, but it allows work on vaccines and other protective measures."7

US officials have defended this "secret research" on the grounds that it is strictly "defensive", developed as a means of "mimicking the major steps a state or terrorist group would take to create a biological arsenal." In other words, it is largely "aimed at understanding the threat better." 8

According to ISN, the US secret bioweapons programs started under the Clinton Administration, has "been embraced by the Bush Administration, which intends to expand them".

Earlier this year, Administration officials said, the Pentagon drew up plans to engineer genetically a potentially more potent variant of the bacterium that causes anthrax, a deadly disease ideal for germ warfare... Two other projects completed during the Clinton administration focused on the mechanics of making germ weapons. In a program codenamed Clear Vision, the CIA built and tested a model of a Soviet-designed germ bomb that agency officials feared was being sold on the international market. The CIA device lacked a fuse and other parts that would make it a working bomb, intelligence officials said. 9 (Ibid)

Bear in mind that these US bioweapons initiatives are "with the best of intents". According to official statements, they purport to curb the use of germ warfare by "rogue states":

"Pentagon officials said the project demonstrated the ease with which a terrorist or rogue nation could build a plant that could produce kilograms of deadly germs.. All the projects were "fully consistent" with the treaty banning biological weapons and were needed to protect Americans against a growing danger, a Bush Administration official said". The treaty, another official said, allowed the US to conduct research on both microbes and germ munitions for "protective or defensive purposes". 10

## **US Assault on the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention**

According to [The Sunshine Project](#), an NGO committed to banning biological weapons, the US has been promoting "a plan to undermine international controls on biological weapons".

The US proposal was announced barely a few days after the bombing of Afghanistan:

“It is a direct attack on the core article of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, proposing a shift in the focus of arms control that will remove barriers on the development, acquisition, and stockpiling of biological weapons. If governments, including indecisive Europe, do not move to counter these proposals, a green light will be given to potential developers of offensive biological weapons... : The proposals were first unveiled on October 10th in a UN speech by Assistant Secretary of State Avis Bohlen, a US arms control chief. Other US officials are currently on a round of shuttle diplomacy, trying to sell their ideas to allies. What the US wants is to redesign Article I of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, a unique achievement of international law that prohibits an entire class of weapons, all biological agents and toxins used for hostile purposes...

The United States purpose in destroying this valuable cornerstone is to permit a stratification of biological weapons into “good” and “bad” ones. This would permit the United States... to continue work on a number of biological weapons under development, including anti-crop fungi (“Agent Green”), Pentagon work on so-called “non-lethal weapons” to control (in the US military’s words) “potentially hostile civilians”, and the US Navy’s genetically-modified superbugs that consume materials, such as plastics, jet fuel, rubber, and asphalt. 11

### **Replacing International Law by US “Anti-Terrorism” Legislation**

The US initiative to shunt international bioweapons control is consistent with the Bush Administration’s proposed “anti-terrorist” legislation:

In addition to the dismantling Article I of the BTWC, the US attack on bioweapons control includes another dangerous proposal to shift the arms control focus away from prevention of biological weapons development. Instead of stopping development of these weapons in the first place, the United States is promoting a perverted form of extraterritorial jurisdiction that focuses international efforts on criminal punishment of use of some kinds of biological weapons. The result would be abrogation of domestic jurisprudence in favor of application of America’s law abroad, with attendant extradition conflicts (or kidnapping), and possible show trials as the US seeks to avenge terrorist attacks 12

### **Endnotes**

1. Sunday Mail, 25 November 2001.
2. New York Times, 27 November 2001.
3. Village Voice, 27 November 2001.
4. Washington Post, 19 November 2001.
5. Washington Times, 25 October 2001.
6. Ibid.

7. ISN at <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/infoservice/index.cfm?service=cwn&parent=special138>
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. <http://www.sunshine-project.org/>
12. Ibid.

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