

U.S. Corporations Keeping Biowarfare Work Secret

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Theme: [Militarization and WMD](#)

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A number of major pharmaceutical corporations and biotech firms are concealing the nature of the biological warfare research work they are doing for the U.S. government.

Since their funding comes from the National Institutes of Health, the recipients are obligated under NIH guidelines to make their activities public. Not disclosing their ops raises the suspicion they may be engaged in forbidden kinds of germ warfare research. According to the Sunshine Project, a nonprofit arms control watchdog operating out of Austin, Texas, among corporations holding back information about their activities are:

Abbott Laboratories, BASF Plant Science, Bristol-Myers Squibb, DuPont Central Research and Development, Eli Lilly Corp., Embrex, GlaxoSmithKline, Hoffman-LaRoche, Merck & Co., Monsanto, Pfizer Inc., Schering-Plough Research Institute, and Syngenta Corp. of Switzerland.

In case you didn't know it, the White House since 9/11 has called for spending \$44-billion on biological warfare research, a sum unprecedented in world history, and an obliging Congress has authorized it. Thus, some of the deadliest pathogens known to humankind are being rekindled in hundreds of labs in pharmaceutical houses, university biology departments, and on military bases. An international convention the U.S. signed forbids it to stockpile, manufacture or use biological weapons. But if the U.S. won't say what's going down in those laboratories other countries are going to assume the worst and a biowarfare arms race will be on, if it isn't already. Sunshine says failure to disclose operations also puts corporate employees involved in this work at risk. Only 8,500, or 16%, of the 52,000 workers employed at the top 20 U.S. biotech firms work at an NIH guidelines-compliant company, Sunshine says.

Francis Boyle, an international law authority at the University of Illinois, Champaign, says pursuant to national strategy directives adopted by Bush in 2002, the Pentagon "is now gearing up to fight and 'win' biological warfare without prior public knowledge and review." Boyle said the Pentagon's Chemical and Biological Defense Program was revised in 2003 to endorse "first-use" strike in war. Boyle said the program includes Red Teaming, which he described as "plotting, planning, and scheming how to use biowarfare."

Besides the big pharmaceutical houses, the biowarfare buildup is getting an enthusiastic response from academia, which sees new funds flowing from Washington's horn of plenty. "American universities have a long history of willingly permitting their research agenda, researchers, institutes and laboratories to be co-opted, corrupted, and perverted by the Pentagon and the CIA," Boyle says. What's more, the Bush administration is pouring billions in biowarfare research while some very real killers, such as influenza, are not being cured. In

2006, the NIH got \$120 million to combat influenza, which kills about 36,000 Americans annually but it got \$1.76 billion for biodefense, much of it spent to research anthrax. How many people has anthrax killed lately? Well, let's see, there were those five people killed in the mysterious attacks on Congress of October, 2001 — attacks that suspiciously emanated from a government laboratory at Fort Detrick, Md.

One would think the FBI might apprehend the perpetrator whose attack shut down the Congress of the United States but nearly six years have gone by and it hasn't caught anybody. Seem a bit odd to you? Some folks suspect the anthrax attack was an inside job to panic the country into a huge biowarfare buildup to "protect" America from "terrorists." That is, of course, just what happened.

Milton Leitenberg, of the University of Maryland's School of Public Policy, though, says the risk of terrorists and nonstate actors using biological agents against the U.S. "has been systematically and deliberately exaggerated" by administration scare-mongering.

And molecular biologist Jonathan King of Massachusetts Institute of Technology says, "the Bush administration launched a major program which threatens to put the health of our people at far greater risk than the hazard to which they claimed to have been responding." King added President Bush's policies "do not increase the security of the American people" but "bring new risk to our population of the most appalling kind."

In the absence of any credible foreign threat, Sunshine's Hammond said, "Our biowarfare research is defending ourselves from ourselves. It's a dog chasing its tail." Sadly, it looks more and more every day like a mad dog.

For more on this subject, see the author's article in the July/August issue of The Humanist magazine. Sherwood Ross has worked as a reporter for major dailies and wire services. Reach him at sherwoodr1@yahoo.com

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