

*The 2001 Anthrax Deception:
The Case for a Domestic Conspiracy*

Graeme MacQueen

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An anyone remember the American anthrax scare of 2001? I'd pretty much forgotten about it until I read author Graeme MacQueen who says that it was a key part of the 9/11 events that took the United States and its allies to war in Afghanistan and then Iraq. He claims much more, but first a reminder of the events themselves.

Within days of 9/11 a number of people received letters containing anthrax spores, the attendant publicity greatly swelling the panic following the World Trade Centre/Pentagon attacks.¹ Among them were ABC Nightly News anchor Tom Brokaw and two Democratic senators critical to rapid Congressional approval of a Patriot Bill conferring wide-ranging new powers upon the President in a situation George Bush had quickly defined as war. This trio were not directly harmed but five less prominent figures, including two postal workers, died within days. Many others, across a wide geographical area, were infected. It took months to decontaminate Congressional buildings. Americans never likely to die in collapsing skyscrapers became alarmed about the mail and worried that white powder on the kitchen floor might be deadly spores.

The sensationally reported anthrax scare pressed the panic button right across America and was picked up and spread by the media in many other countries, including the UK.

² In MacQueen's view this was an intentional strategy of

¹ The only member of Congress to vote against the resolution on the Authorisation for Use of Military Force Against Terrorists on September 14 2001 was Democratic Representative Barbara Lee from California: see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zh_sxilhyV0>.

² <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/oct/14/terrorism.afghanistan6>>

tension to push a frightened public deeper into the arms of the security state at home and into wars abroad.³

The Bush administration was quick to blame al-Qaeda for the attack and then finger Iraq – portrayed as the possessor of weapons of mass destruction and the means to deploy them – as the source of its anthrax.

The swift passage of the Patriot Bill through Congress granted extensive new powers to the president as commander in chief in the ‘war on terror’. Many will recall Secretary of State Colin Powell later waving before the United Nations a phial, apparently containing anthrax, when in 2003 he put the US on track for war against the alleged possessor of huge quantities of the bacteria, Saddam Hussein.⁴

The posted anthrax contained accompanying notes with similar capitalised text in poor English. The one sent to Brokaw read as follows:

09-11-01
THIS IS NEXT
TAKE PENACILIN NEXT
DEATH TO AMERICA
DEATH TO ISRAEL
ALLAH IS GREAT

But it quickly became clear that the sophistication of the identified Ames strain of anthrax in the letters meant it could only come from within the military and intelligence apparatus of the US itself. So with al-Qaeda and Saddam Hussein off the list of suspects, the FBI began the hunt nearer home.

MacQueen recounts the exoneration and \$5.8m legal victory against the US government of its first suspect, bio-weapons expert Stephen Hatfill. He had been repeatedly named ‘a person of interest’ by Attorney General John Ashcroft. The FBI closed its investigation after the second suspect, Fort Detrick bio-defence lab immunologist Bruce Ivins, apparently committed suicide in 2008. He had passed a polygraph test, wasn’t charged, had suffered long-running

3 <<http://www.journalof911studies.com/resources/2014GanserVol39May.pdf>>

4 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jV5Ggfn9PYM>>

harassment and been involuntarily committed to a psychiatric hospital. There was no autopsy and no evidence of his involvement in what work colleagues and many other bio-defence specialists found a highly implausible allegation.

MacQueen, a former academic who co-edits the *Journal of 9/11 Studies*, tells us that his book sets out to prove five key points.⁵

In his words these are:

- '1: The anthrax attacks were carried out by a group of perpetrators, not by a lone wolf;
- 2: The group that perpetrated this crime included deep insiders within the US executive branch;
- 3: This group of perpetrators was linked to or identical with, the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks;
- 4: The anthrax attacks were the result of a conspiracy meant to help redefine the enemy of the West, revising the global conflict framework from the Cold War to the Global War on Terror;
- 5: The establishment of the Global War on Terror, to which the anthrax attacks contributed, enabled the US executive branch to reduce the civil liberties of people in the US and to attack other nations. Domestically and externally, these events were also used to weaken the rule of law.'

The idea of a single individual – 'nutty loner', 'madcap scientist', 'clean skin' – being blamed for committing a major crime against state and public is not new: as with Lee Harvey Oswald, a death before prosecution suits those who fear trial revelations. But this 'lone wolf' explanation of the anthrax attacks requires us to believe a number of highly unlikely things.

One is that the second FBI 'person of interest', Dr Ivins, a senior bio-defence scientist at the US Army Medical Research Institute for Infectious Diseases (USAMRIID) at Fort Detrick in Maryland, had the motivation, time, expertise and resources to manufacture the bacteria, identify target recipients, pen the

5 <<http://www.journalof911studies.com/>>

messages implicating the 9/11 hijackers and then post them from locations as far apart as New Jersey and Florida. His Fort Detrick colleagues and bio-science peers in the field strongly reject these claims on a variety of grounds.⁶

Senator Patrick Leahy has said that whoever sent him the anthrax letter – and he doubted it was Ivins – could not have acted alone. The angry Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee told FBI Director Robert Mueller:

'If he is the one who sent the letter, I do not believe in any way, shape or manner that he is the only person involved in this attack on Congress and the American people. I do not believe that at all. I believe there are others involved, either as accessories before or accessories after the fact. I believe that there are others out there, I believe there are others who could be charged with murder. I just want you to know how I feel about it, as one of the people who was aimed at in the attack.'⁷

What the lone nut theory also requires us to believe is that Ivins was able to target Robert Stevens, the first victim of the anthrax attack to die. The US government, amid serious disagreements within the Department of Justice (DOJ), paid Stevens's widow \$2.5m to settle her negligence claim without coming to trial. In doing so, the DOJ itself produced evidence that fundamentally undermined the FBI's case against Ivins.

MacQueen tells us that newspaper picture editor Stevens was a very old friend of the Florida estate agent who found homes for some of the alleged 9/11 plane hijackers. This is one of a large series of coincidences he cites in support of his five-point thesis. A short review cannot begin to list them all, but here are a few.

Florida, the location of the first anthrax victim and home to many of the alleged 9/11 hijackers, was also key to the 'anthrax spread by crop-duster' stories much in evidence at

6 <<http://www.salon.com/2011/02/16/ivans/>>

7 <http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/topstories/2008-09-17-3495854713_x.htm>

the time. It may be recalled that Bush had grounded all the crop-dusters in the US, linking the potential danger of their use to methods employed by Saddam Hussein. (Later, and ahead of the Iraq invasion, Saddam was to be accused of possessing bacteria in 'mobile chemical labs'. None were ever found.)

MacQueen tells how Mohamed Atta, the alleged 9/11 hijack leader, theatrically attempted to obtain a US Department of Agriculture loan to convert a passenger plane into a giant crop-duster. Florida civil servant Johnelle Bryant told ABC News that shortly before 9/11 Atta spelled out his name to her, told her he was a member of al-Qaeda and how that soon everyone would be hearing of a great man called Osama Bin Laden. He offered to buy from her an office aerial photograph of Washington DC and asked her about security at the World Trade Centre.⁸

After listing many other incidents in which the cocktail-loving Muslim extremist who lived with a stripper and snorted cocaine attracted attention to himself, MacQueen says:

'Mohamed Atta was certainly no secretive al-Qaeda leader but a man laying down a trail we were supposed to follow....The man's task appears to have been to make himself unforgettable.'

Other puzzling questions come to mind.

Are we to think that the US government simulation of a domestic bioterror attack in June 2001 that blamed Saddam Hussein for sourcing the toxic bacteria was simply a coincidence? And that war game Dark Winter's leading participants – ex-CIA chief James Woolsey, *New York Times* reporter Judith Miller and New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani's director of emergency management Jerome Hauer⁹ – just

⁸ <<http://abcnews.go.com/WNT/story?id=130304&page=1&singlePage=true>>
<<http://abcnews.go.com/WNT/story?id=130305&page=1>>

⁹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerome_Hauer>
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dj0Rz9ZsDAg&index=2&list=PL5214353366442796>>
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oHPvg3BdMuk&list=PL5214353366442796&index=4>>

happened to become very prominent figures in supporting the Bush Administration's take on 9/11 later that year?

Was it also a coincidence that Miller's book on germ warfare was published – and much publicised – at the height of the anthrax scare?

Why, long before any evidence of an anthrax attack appeared, were Bush and his vice-president, Dick Cheney, prescribed its antibiotic antidote Cipro?

Which 'high government official' warned *Washington Post* columnist and Iraq War supporter Richard Cohen to take Cipro 'soon after Sept 11'? He told *Slate* magazine in 2008 he immediately acted on the tip: 'I was carrying Cipro way before most people had ever heard of it.'

Cohen is one of a whole host of people with apparent foreknowledge of the attacks listed by MacQueen. He is one of many who also had a script to hand that took us from 9/11 via the anthrax attacks and alleged WMD to war on Iraq. What he and lots of other writers seem still not to have recognised is the essential thrust of MacQueen's argument: that weapons of mass destruction developed at US taxpayers' expense were actually deployed against them and their elected representatives.

The author goes further to conclude:

'Since the Hijackers [his usage for alleged hijackers] of 9/11 fame were connected to the anthrax attacks, and since the anthrax attacks manifestly had to be planned and carried out by deep insiders in the US, there is no avoiding the implication that the 9/11 attacks were also carried out by insiders. There is, as it happens, a large body of research that supports this thesis.'

From the attacks in 2001 until the FBI closed the 'anthrax killer' case in 2008, just two individuals were the focus of suspicion. But MacQueen follows the logic of Senator Leahy to suggest a team of people with access to the highly sophisticated Ames strain being developed by the CIA and US military, and the means to distribute it, had to be involved. He doesn't name names but says:

'Certain groups and organisations, based on both ideology and personal connections, have emerged as what we might call "organisations of interest". These include now defunct and overlapping associations of neoconservatives with ties to the executive branch such as "the Wolfowitz cabal" and the Project for the New American Century. Their persistent use of deception, over many years, to link Iraq to al-Qaeda and to construct scenarios and fictions to justify the invasion and occupation of Iraq, have been well documented. The material presented in this book simply makes visible another possible aspect of their activities that is even darker.'

Who, beyond these groups whose leading lights figure prominently before, during and after the anthrax scare, benefited from it? 'The attacks were certainly successful in causing an infusion of funds into bioweapons work in the US,' writes MacQueen.

'Already in 2008, *Scientific American* noted that the 2001 attacks "sparked a massive infusion of research funds to counter civilian bio-terrorism, \$43bn spread over several federal departments and agencies." By 2011, the 2002-2011 expenditures were estimated at \$70bn.'

We are left to ask how much of this funding 'to counter civilian bio-terrorism' is actually used to produce the weaponised bacteria – of which the Ames anthrax strain was one highly potent example – for offensive, rather than defensive, purposes.

Other thoughts occur on reading this well-documented, accessible book.

One is the telling role of the media in preparing the public to expect a second assault after 9/11 and then offering ready suspects and motives for the subsequent bio-weapon attacks. The *Guardian/Observer* titles figure importantly as MacQueen reviews the record of the English language press at the time.

Another wider conclusion to which this book adds weight

is the self-evidently paltry basis of 'the war on terror'. As a second-rate sequel to the Cold War it would be risible were its consequences not so serious. Between 1945 and 1989 the US and the Soviet Union – despite the self-serving hype and deception on both sides – were real contenders for power and influence around the world, fighting proxy wars in which millions died.

In comparison, we have the 'War on Terror' first defined by Benjamin Netanyahu at his Jonathan Institute gatherings in the final, failing years of Kremlin rule. (*Lobster 47 et seq*). In its pursuit we have gone to war on the basis of dodgy dossiers and we have watched the free fall collapse of three New York skyscrapers run by a close associate of the Israeli leader.¹⁰

We have been told of an alleged hijacker's paper passport found in the burning debris and handed to the New York Police Department whose head on 9/11 was subsequently jailed for conspiracy, fraud and lying under oath.¹¹

More recently we have seen film of President Obama and his top team apparently watching the capture of Bin Laden and then being told that his body had been dumped in the sea – all without the alleged terrorism mastermind being questioned on any aspect of his part in the 'war on terror'.

Fourteen years after the 9/11-anthrax events Guantanamo remains, drone assassinations continue, civil rights are curtailed and Muslims are demonised as we inhabit the monochrome world of The West versus the Terrorist Rest in a war without end declared in 2001.

The deception detailed here by MacQueen contains tales and coincidences of such threadbare unlikelihood, one is left wondering how they weren't drowned out by laughter and ridicule at the time. Yet they weren't. In what MacQueen sees as the induced panic of 9/11, a cowed and childlike citizenry was not listening critically to the fairy tales being told and the skin-deep lies being spread. And in that atmosphere, the Bush administration moved us quickly towards a long planned war

10 <<http://www.haaretz.com/up-in-smoke-1.75334>>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Larry_Silverstein>

11 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernard_Kerik>

against Iraq. The rest, as they say, is history.

Operation Gladio remained a well-kept secret for decades. In the UK, the 30-year rule – 70 years in the case of bio-weapons expert David Kelly – makes it difficult to make democracy accountable and much of our history intelligible. But things are changing, and not just because the internet allows us to see beyond the old blinds and blinkers imposed by opaque bureaucracies and a compliant media. A good part of MacQueen's story was made possible because lots of Americans were not onside with a deception whose inherent flaws rendered it quickly vulnerable to interrogation and exposure.

There were internal disagreements within the Department of Justice and even among Bush administration personnel. Scientists appalled at the treatment of two of their own have risked their careers by speaking out. The dogged activities of 2001 truthers have thrown light on places from which the 9/11 Commission blatantly averted its gaze – an inquiry so flawed that even its joint chairmen have since distanced themselves from its conclusions.¹²

This short but well-referenced book exposes an important part of the 9/11 deception that helped change many people's view of the world. It encourages those who reject the basis of that aberration to better equip ourselves to resist its continuing, murderous legacy.

Tom Easton

¹² <<http://www.washingtonsblog.com/2014/09/911-commission-chair-declassifyeverything.html>>

A documentary on Dr Bruce Ivins and bio-weapon research, CBC's *Anthrax War*, is here:

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PquqIX8wnT0>>.

Lawyer Barry Kissin's *Anthrax Attacks* contribution to a 2013 Washington DC conference on 9/11 is here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wc6B_n-ITL4>.

Author Graeme MacQueen is interviewed by Julian Charles here:

<<http://themindrenewed.com/interviews/2014/563-int062>> and by

James Corbett here: <<https://www.corbettreport.com/interview-944-graeme-macqueen-reveals-the-anthrax-deception/>>.