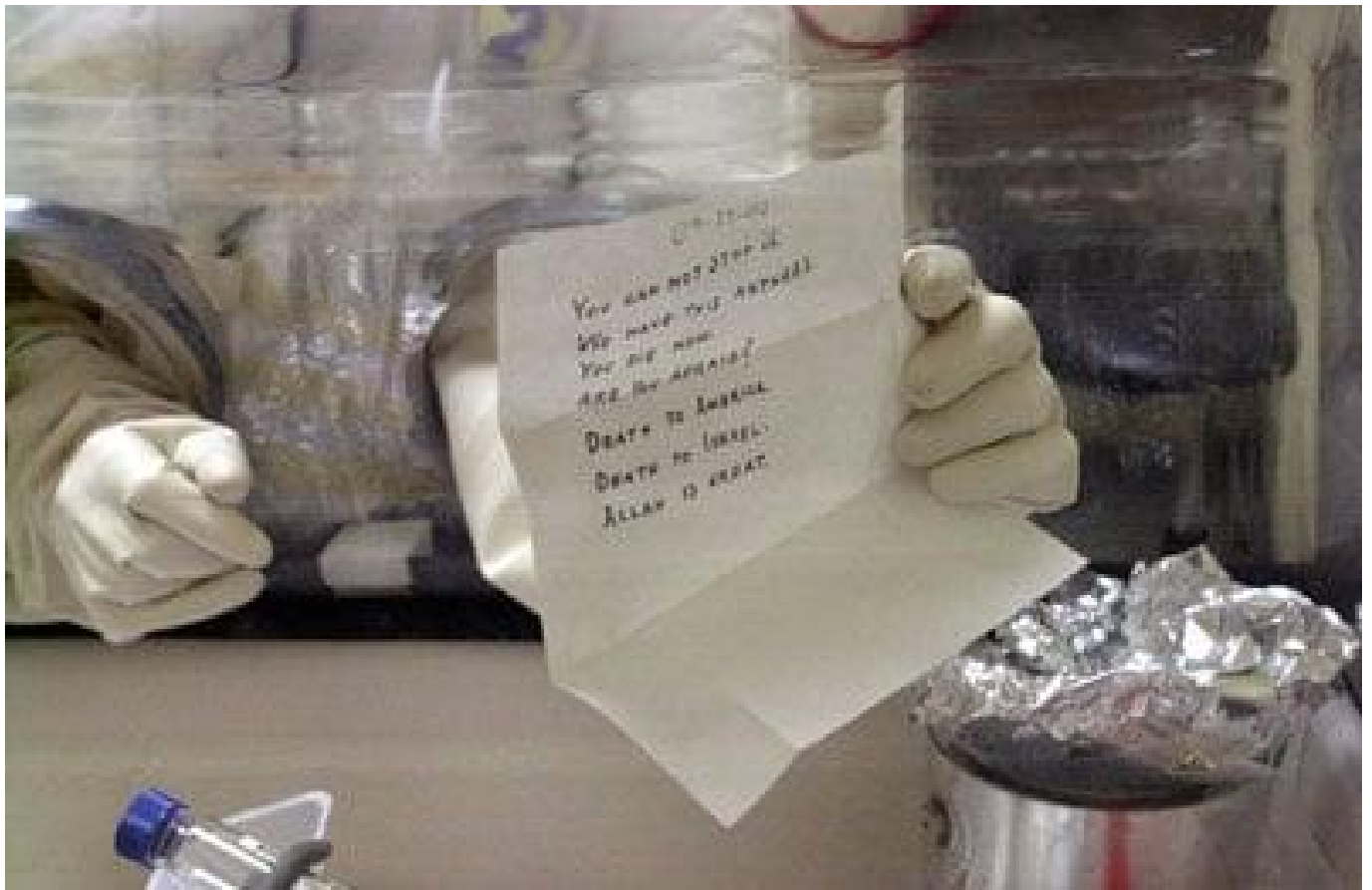




The British School in the Netherlands Model United Nations

XI Annual Session

Forum	Historical Security Council
Issue:	Responding to the 2001 anthrax attacks and preventing future biological warfare
Student Officer:	Harmonie Michelle Louboutin
Position:	Deputy President

Introduction

The 2001 anthrax attacks were marked as one of the most significant, alarming biological incidents in modern history and they occurred shortly after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the USA. The timing intensified global fears of unconventional warfare. The letters containing the anthrax spores were sent to several different media offices and U.S officials which resulted in five deaths, widespread panic and many infections. The attacks revealed significant weaknesses in international and regional preparation for biological threats and highlighted the struggle of detecting, containing and responding to biological attacks effectively.

The timing of the attacks led to speculation about links to international terrorism due to it being so soon after 9/11 and prompted an extensive federal investigation. Immediately afterwards, the United States government launched a response to the threat including decontamination of infected areas and improved coordination between health and security agencies. The investigation became known as Amerithrax and was one of the most complex in the history of the FBI. After years of inquiry, the primary suspect was identified as Dr Bruce Ivins, a microbiologist for the government who has access to the anthrax spores in a U.S Army research facility. He killed himself in 2008 after formal charges were introduced and this left lingering controversy over the conclusion of the case.

By the mid-2000s there was a shift in attention towards prevention through international cooperation, transparency and scientific responsibility. It emphasized the intersection between public health and international peace. It was understood that biological threats, no matter their origin, required the utmost attention and defense.

Definition of Key Terms



Biological Warfare

The use of pathogens (bacteria, viruses, or toxins) as weapons to cause illness or death in humans, animals, or plants.

Biological Terrorism

The deliberate release of biological agents by non-state actors (such as terrorist groups or individuals) to cause fear, disruption, or harm.

Anthrax (*Bacillus anthracis*)

A spore-forming bacterium used in the 2001 attacks; it can be lethal when inhaled and is resistant to harsh conditions.

Dual Use Research

Scientific research that can be used for both beneficial and harmful purposes, such as vaccine development or bioweapon creation.

Biological Weapons Convention (BWC, 1972)

The main international treaty prohibiting the development, production, and stockpiling of biological and toxin weapons.

United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1540 (2004)

Requires states to prevent non-state actors from acquiring weapons of mass destruction, including biological weapons.

World Health Organization (WHO)

Plays a key role in disease surveillance and coordinating responses to biological threats.

Early Detection Systems

Mechanisms for identifying and responding quickly to biological outbreaks or attacks

General Overview



The 2001 incidences of anthrax, also known as Amerithrax, were a series of bioterrorism attacks, which occurred in the United States right after the 9/11. From September 18, 2001, letters containing powdered anthrax spores were sent to various media houses and two senators of the United States, causing widespread fear in the country. The first group of letters were postmarked in Trenton, New Jersey and sent to the offices of the ABC News, the CBS News, the NBC News, the New York Post and the National Enquirer. The fine powder was later found to be *Bacillus anthracis*, the etiologic agent of anthrax. Some of the journalists and postal clerks were exposed to it including Robert Stevens, a photographic editor at The Sun, who was the first case confirmed, and later died, on October 4, 2001. This was the first fatality that can be identified as a result of anthrax in the United States in twenty-five years. Another wave of envelopes was received on October 9 to address the Senators Tom Dashingle and Patrick Leahy.

The material consisted of a more sophisticated deadlier kind of anthrax spores implying high technical capabilities. When the envelope was opened, which was to be received by Daschle on October 15, spores were aerosolized and it contaminated several areas within the Hart Senate Office Building and led to the expansion of the building to remain closed. The Capitol and many postal centres in America also shut down to implement the decontamination process. Twenty-two people were infected with anthrax cumulatively, balanced in both inhalation and cutaneous forms. Five of the patients ended up dying. These occurrences caused mass panic, a significant rise in the use of antibiotics and general security changes within the postal service, in particular, the introduction of mail irradiation procedures. It was one of the largest investigations undertaken to date by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The agency started out with suspicions of foreign terrorist attackers, and then shifted to domestic ones. Bruce Ivins, a microbiologist, who served in the biodefense laboratories of Fort Detrick, Maryland at the time, became the main suspect in 2008. Formal charges had not been filed before Ivins took his own life. The FBI later found that he had worked alone but this fact was disputed by some scientists and government officials. The anthrax events of 2001 highlighted terrible weaknesses in biosecurity and national preparedness that have a lasting impact on the policy of the country on population health and the strategic position of the US in relation to bioterrorism.



Major Parties Involved

Robert Stevens

Robert Stevens is a photographer editor who was working in the Sun and is the first-established casualty of the 2001 anthrax bioterrorism attacks. He had inhaled anthrax after touching contaminated postal mails and died on 5 October 2001. His killing was met with a shock by the whole nation and marked the first-ever anthrax-linked death in the United States in 25 years. The Stevens case highlighted the dangers of biological agents inappropriately disseminated, which sparked a greater awareness among the media organisations, postal facilities, and even the infrastructures of the public health about the bioterrorism and contamination containment.

Senators Tom Daschle and Patrick Leahy

One of the greatest political targets in the anthrax letter campaign is senators Tom Daschle and Patrick Leahy as the political leaders. The letters were sent to both the individuals in early October 2001 with anthrax letters and closed down the Hart Senate Office Building temporarily and it underwent the procedures of decontamination as well. The planned attack of these officials was an attack on the leadership of the U.S. government and the process of legislation. Anthrax spores used were very sophisticated and refined taking place in the correspondence lab. These happenings added additional fears of domestic terror in the country and triggered long-lasting changes in mail screening policies and congressional security measures.

ABC, CBS, NBC, New York Post, National Enquirer

Anthrax-laden letters were consciously mailed out to the major U.S. media outlets: ABC, CBS, NBC, The New York Post and the National Enquirer. The attacks led to evacuations, halting of news activities and exposed the journalists and staff to the deadly spores. Their aims seemed to instil fear in the masses, and interfere with the flow of information. This media contamination brought about the need to note the cracks in mail handling systems and gave organisations reason to implement security biosecurity. In addition, the events required the close working relationship of the media and federal authorities in the course of investigation.



Bruce Ivins

The key suspect of the anthrax attacks in 2001 was declared to be Dr. Bruce Ivins, a microbiologist who was working at the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases in Fort Detrick. He had access to the strain of anthrax which was used in the letters distribution and researched on the topic of the *Bacillus anthracis*. The Federal Bureau of investigations concluded that Ivins was acting in his own interest though he took his life in 2008 before formal charges were brought against him. The Ivins case remains a controversial issue with different authorities questioning the evidence grounds on which the charges were brought. A lack of effective laboratory monitoring and biosecurity practices were brought to the limelight through his alleged engagement.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

The Amerithrax case under the management of the Federal Bureau of Investigation was one of the largest and complex cases in the history of the United States. The agency staff examined tens of thousands of letters, questioned hundreds of people suspected of having any connexion, and eventually found the anthrax spores to be connected with the United States Army Research Laboratory in Fort Detrick. Cooperation with the Centres of Disease Control and Prevention, the postal inspectors, and the law enforcement agencies on a national level helped in tracing the source of contamination and victimising victims. This size of the investigation led to the reconstruction of federal procedures on bio terrorist attacks and highlighted the challenges of attributing scientific proof of criminal responsibility in domestic bioattack.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

CDC contributed significantly to surveillance and treatment of affected people, ascertaining anthrax cases, and developing containment measures. Their prompt action saved more lives and informed the country on its health. The CDC teams helped with the decontamination of the affected offices, postal offices, and government buildings. They offered public advice on antibiotic and exposure risky regimes. It was their participation that created the need of scientific knowledge and coordination to deal with bioterrorism threats as a prototype of future disaster preparedness of bioterrorism in the United States.



The United States Postal Service

The postal attacks of 2001 had a significant impact on the United States Postal Service since other facility processing mails were contaminated in several operations. Following murders of postal workers and the necessary closure and decontamination of multiple sorting facilities uncovered structural failures in the protocols of dealing with mails. The accident provoked nationwide changes including improved screening process, supplying protective equipment to staff and, finally, irradiation of individual packages. The effective integration of the work of USPS, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Centres of Disease Control and Prevention became an indispensable means of monitoring mailed ornaments with anthrax and preventing the further spread of the pathogen.

Timeline of Key Events

- September 18th, 2001 – First anthrax letters mailed to media outlets (ABC, CBS, NBC, *New York Post*, National Enquirer) from Trenton, New Jersey
- October 4th, 2001 – Robert Stevens, a photo editor at *The Sun*, hospitalized with inhalation anthrax
- October 5th, 2001 – Robert Stevens dies, the first confirmed fatality of the attacks
- October 9th, 2001 – Second wave of anthrax letters mailed to Senators Tom Daschle and Patrick Leahy
- October 15th, 2001 – Letter to Senator Daschle opened, contaminating the Hart Senate Office Building
- October–November 2001 – Widespread postal facility closures and decontamination across the U.S.
- 2008 – Bruce Ivins, a Fort Detrick microbiologist and prime suspect, identified; he dies by suicide before charges are filed

UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events



- **Security Council Resolution 1373, 28 September 2001 (S/RES/1373)** – Adopted shortly after 9/11, addressing threats from terrorism and enhancing international cooperation, indirectly relevant to bioterrorism concerns including anthrax attacks.
- **General Assembly Resolution 55/82, 4 December 2000 (A/RES/55/82)** – Declaration on the prevention and suppression of terrorism which set frameworks that influenced responses to domestic and international threats.
- **World Health Organization (WHO) International Health Regulations, 2005** – It was formalized later but these regulations were influenced by incidents like the 2001 anthrax attacks and emphasize reporting and containment of biological hazards.

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