

ANTHRAX: NOBODY BUYS THE FBI STORY

During the DNCC, I asked Pat Leahy whether he believed the FBI's claim that Bruce Ivins was the one and only anthrax attack culprit. Today, Lichtblau and Shane have an article showing that Pat Leahy isn't the only one who doesn't believe the FBI's tale.

A month after the F.B.I. declared that an Army scientist was the anthrax killer, leading members of Congress are demanding more information about the seven-year investigation, saying they do not think the bureau has proved its case.

In a letter sent Friday to Robert S. Mueller III, the director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, **Democratic leaders of the House Judiciary Committee** said that "important and lingering questions remain that are crucial for you to address, especially since there will never be a trial to examine the facts of the case."

[snip]

"My conclusion at this point is that it's very much an open matter," Senator **Arlen Specter** of Pennsylvania, the top Republican on the Senate committee, said of the strength of the case against Dr. Ivins, a microbiologist at the Army's biodefense laboratory who worked on anthrax vaccines. "There are some very serious questions that have yet to be answered and need to be made public."

[snip]

But in interviews last week, **two dozen bioterrorism experts, veteran investigators and members of Congress** expressed doubts about the bureau's

conclusions. Some called for an independent review of the case to reassure the public and assess policies on the handling of dangerous pathogens like anthrax.

[snip]

Senator **Charles E. Grassley**, an Iowa Republican and frequent critic of the bureau, said he was frustrated by the delay in closing the case and answering questions.

“If the case is solved, why isn’t it solved?” Mr. Grassley asked. “It’s all very suspicious, and you wonder whether or not the F.B.I. doesn’t have something to cover up and that they don’t want to come clean.”

[snip]

“They took their shot,” said Representative **Rush D. Holt**, a Democrat who holds a doctorate in physics and has followed the case closely because the letters were mailed in his New Jersey district. “They hoped and maybe believed that the case they laid out would persuade everyone. I think they’re probably surprised by the level of skepticism.”

Many scientists who have tracked the case, too, have found the evidence less than decisive. [my emphasis]

So let’s see: the Democratic leaders of HJC, the Congressman representing Princeton, Pat Leahy, Chuck Grassley, Arlen Specter, and a bunch of scientists. I’d say Mueller’s going to have an interesting time on September 16 and 17.

Meanwhile, the article reveals even more reason why we shouldn’t buy the FBI’s story:

- After the FBI claimed to

have linked the anthrax to Ivins' lab and after they questioned him about his late night work coinciding with the anthrax production in April 2007, they told him he was not a target

- The FBI has delayed closing the case for another 3 to 6 months
- The FBI still hasn't determined whether the anthrax had to have been prepared in a lab like Detricks

And the kicker: the supposed "single flask" of anthrax they've blamed in the attacks was stored for periods outside of rooms Ivins accessed:

Laboratory records obtained by The New York Times show that the anthrax supply labeled RMR-1029, which the F.B.I. linked to the attacks, was stored in 1997 not in Dr. Ivins's laboratory, in Building 1425, but in the adjacent Building 1412. Former colleagues said that its storage in both buildings at different times from 1997 to 2001 might mean that the bureau's estimate of 100 people with physical access to it was two or three times too low.

No wonder nobody believes the FBI's story.