



Tuesday, October 4, 2005

SA Leslie L. Hahn
Federal Bureau of Investigation
Marquette, Michigan

Via Facsimile

Ref.: Anthrax-Letters Investigation (“Amerithrax”) — The Ignored South African Front

Dear SA Hahn:

As we discussed in passing in the course of your visit on 1 April 2005 and as indicated by my letter of 10 December 2001 to Chairman Henry Hyde of the U.S. House Committee on International Relations,¹ I have a long-standing interest in the referenced subject, originating, in part, in my inquiry into the unexplained death on 12 October 1997 of FBI cooperating witness Ronald G. Miller and the subsequent March 2000 (putative) suicide of Larry Creed Ford, M.D., involved in the South African biological weapons program (Project Coast), whose association with U.S. military and intelligence agencies is indicated by substantial evidence, while strong circumstantial evidence suggests his association with Miller antagonists and with anthrax-letters “person-of-interest” Steven J. Hatfill.

Within the past month “fourth-anniversary” reports on the FBI’s anthrax investigation have been authored by Allan Lengel (Washington Post) and Scott Shane (New York Times, formerly Baltimore Sun), with both of whom I have had recurrent contact over the past three-plus years. These reports describe an essentially moribund investigation.

Information of relevance to the anthrax investigation which I have developed over the past four years is largely in the public domain.² However, apparent restrictions on the FBI’s access to and use of “open-source” material suggested that I should bring this information formally to the Bureau’s attention.

The referenced documents present or allude to much of this information. Here I will restrict myself to specific elements of obvious relevance to the anthrax-letters investigation.

Substantial evidence suggests that the South African Defence Force’s Project Coast [PC] possessed the Ames strain of anthrax, implicated in the fall 2001 letters attacks, and may have been the source of the letters anthrax. In the fall of 2001 I identified three routes through which PC may have acquired the Ames strain: (1) Larry Ford, who provided bioweapons

1 This letter can be found at <http://cryptome.quintessenz.org/mirror/fi2-anthrax.htm>

2 In addition to the Hyde letter, referenced above, see, e.g., <http://cryptome.quintessenz.org/mirror/hatfill-spd.htm> and <http://cryptome.quintessenz.org/mirror/mandela-cbw.htm>.

materials to PC³ and whose assistant/mistress, Valerie Kesler, has reported that she accompanied Ford when he transported biomaterials to and from South Africa, or (2) U.S. or (3) U.K. bioweapons laboratories to which PC principals and personnel had recurrent access.⁴ That PC possessed the Ames strain has subsequently been confirmed by an intermediary in the aborted 2002 effort to transfer retained PC biomaterials to the FBI; this source reports that the cache of biomaterials on offer to the FBI included in excess of 80 strains of anthrax, specifically including the Ames strain.⁵

Even in the absence of any specific reason to believe that the letters anthrax may have originated in South Africa, genetic comparisons of the South African and the letters samples of the Ames strain would have been strongly indicated, simply to rule out the possibility of a South African origin. Thus, it is my understanding that the FBI's investigation has included the genetic analysis of Ames samples in the possession of U.K. and U.S. laboratories (including DSTL, USAMRIID, Battelle Memorial Laboratories, Dugway Proving Ground) despite the absence of any independent reason to believe that the letters anthrax originated from any one of these sources. In this context, the decision, in mid 2002, of the FBI's WMD chief, Barbara Martinez, to abort the virtually consummated transaction to acquire the legacy stocks of PC biomaterials is, to say the least, surprising.⁶

The failure to acquire and comparatively test the PC sample of Ames-strain anthrax is even more startling in light of plausible reasons to believe that the letters anthrax may have been of South African origin:

- That the attempt to sell to the U.S. the PC bioweapons cache, which included anthrax

3 In c. 1985 FBI informant Peter Fitzpatrick contemporaneously reported that Ford had provided a cache of biomaterials to South African trade attaché Gideon Bouwer.

4 Wouter Basson, director of PC, has testified that he and other PC participants had visited U.S. and U.K. bioweapons laboratories (specifically including Ft. Detrick [U.S. Army Medical Research Institute for Infectious Diseases] and Porton Down [Defence Science and Technology Laboratory], both of which possessed the Ames strain), and that PC received materials from these labs. It might be noted that, during this period, the late David C. Kelly served as head of microbiology at Porton Down

Daan Goosen, who had served as director of PC's Roodeplaat Research Laboratory and initiated a 2002 effort to transfer a retained cache of PC biomaterials to the U.S., has reported specific contacts with Michael A. Balady, Ph.D., Defense Threat Reduction Agency, DOD, Ft. Belvoir, VA (<http://www.asmbiodefense.org/progra.asp>), Dr. Anna Johnson-Winegar, Deputy Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Chemical and Biological Defense (http://www.defenselink.mil/bios/winegar_bio.html), and a "Dr. Day" (whom I have not been able to otherwise identify).

5 Information concerning the contents of the biomaterials cache offered to the FBI was provided by the intermediary when I visited him abroad for several days in April 2004.

6 At \$5 million and 20-odd green cards for former PC scientists and their dependents, the price to the FBI of the PC cache of biomaterials would appear insignificant by comparison to the cost of the FBI's Amerithrax investigation. As importantly, its acquisition by the FBI would have removed the PC cache from the international bioweapons market. In the wake of the Martinez decision to abort the transaction, the U.S. did inform the South African government of the offer, and South African authorities made nominal efforts to locate and seize the cache. However, my source indicates that these efforts failed and that the cache remains in private hands. Moreover, other foreign parties made subsequent efforts to acquire the cache. While some of these may have involved "sting operations" (by South African or other authorities), some at least appear to have been "legitimate," and it is significant that a South African intermediary in the negotiations with the FBI, Gen. Tai Minnaar, died under questionable circumstances in September 2002, only months after the collapse of the FBI negotiations and after other offers for the cache had been received.

While there is reason to believe that the location of the cache, in Fall 2002, was known to some of the parties to the proposed FBI transaction, it is not known if the cache remains in South Africa, and Minnaar's death has deprived U.S. participants in the negotiations of information concerning its possible subsequent disposition.

antitoxins, was initiated less than three months after the anthrax-letters incidents should have raised at least the possibility that the letters incidents were intended to increase the value to the U.S. of the PC biomaterials cache.⁷

- The existence of a strong “Islamist faction” within the African National Congress, with close ties to international Islamic-fundamentalist and -terrorist organizations, should have suggested to the FBI at least the possibility that the anthrax-letters incidents had been perpetrated by Islamic terrorists who may have acquired the Ames strain of anthrax from sympathetic sources within the South African governmental and political apparatus.
- By late 2001 Steven Jay Hatfill had been identified by the FBI’s anthrax investigation as a possible suspect. While Hatfill’s more recent (1995 or 1997 to 1999) association with Ft. Detrick (USAMRIID) suggested it as a possible Hatfill source of Ames-strain anthrax, the fact that Hatfill had resided, studied and worked in southern Africa (Rhodesia/Zimbabwe and South Africa) from 1978 to 1994 should have suggested at least the possibility that he had acquired the Ames strain from South African sources, especially in light of his denials, apparently supported by the evidence, of work with anthrax while at Ft. Detrick.⁸

Considering all of the facts, known not only today but also in the Spring and Summer of 2002, it is difficult to attribute to ignorance or incompetence the decision of FBI WMD chief Martinez to abort the virtually completed transaction to acquire the Project Coast biomaterials cache. This decision can certainly be anticipated to provide one focus for a future, independent, postmortem examination of the Amerithrax investigation.

In conclusion, until the FBI’s Amerithrax investigation examines seriously questions related to possible South African involvement, it will be woefully incomplete and blindered. Should it care to pursue these matters, I am prepared to assist in any appropriate manner.

7 The effort to secure a U.S. buyer for the PC cache was initiated in late 2001, when Daan Goosen approached personnel of the U.S. Department of Defense, who arranged his subsequent consultations with staff of Bioport Corporation in Lansing, Michigan. In light of the anthrax-letters incidents, Goosen’s emphasis at this stage was on the anthrax antitoxins developed by PC. Because its anthrax vaccine was essentially Bioport’s only profitably-marketable product, the usefulness of which would be greatly eroded by the availability of an effective antitoxin, Bioport, not surprisingly, exhibited no interest in Goosen’s offer of the PC biomaterials. Frustrated in his attempts to deal with the Department of Defense and Bioport, Goosen approached Gen. Tai Minnaar, a former SADF intelligence officer, who contacted colleagues in the U.S. intelligence community. While these U.S. intermediaries appear initially to have approached U.S. intelligence agencies, eventually Barbara Martinez of the FBI was given responsibility for pursuing the South African negotiations.

8 From the outset I have viewed Hatfill as an unlikely suspect as perpetrator of the anthrax-letters incidents. Rather, Hatfill was an obvious fall-guy, a red herring distracting the subsequent investigation. In fact, this is so obvious that it is surprising that the FBI does not appear to have considered the possibility. While details of Hatfill’s résumé (military affiliations, academic degrees and subsequent training, research accomplishments), especially for his prolonged period of residency in southern Africa, are open to question, an “embellished” career, especially conjoined with rather bizarre claims and reports concerning his personal life (e.g., service as a “weapons trainer” for Eugene Terre’blanche’s Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging [AWB]), could only enhance Hatfill’s appeal as a prospective fall-guy for the anthrax-letters incidents. Also of note here is circumstantial evidence of Hatfill’s involvement with Larry Creed Ford (both presented papers, on subsequent days, at an international congress on space and aviation medicine in Cape Town in October 1987, and Hatfill’s otherwise surprisingly extensive claimed obstetrical experience is plausibly explained by an association with Ford’s amniotic-fluid collection project, conducted in South African military hospitals) and his UNMOVIC training at Porton Down in the Fall of 2001 (where David Kelly served as an instructor).

I recognize that the foregoing is well beyond the scope of your primary responsibilities but trust that you will forward it to appropriate persons within the Bureau. I would also note that I reserve the right to provide copies to other prospectively interested parties within and outside the U.S. government.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen P. Dresch". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial 'S'.

Stephen P. Dresch, Ph.D.

ec: Allan Lengel
Scott Shane
Joby Warrick
Sam Sole
et al.