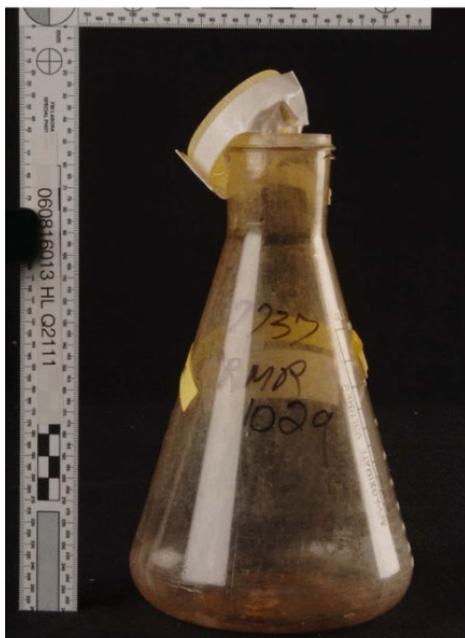




Eight years later, February 19, 2010, the FBI and US Postal Inspection Service announced a [conclusion](#) of the investigation. The report claims that Bruce Ivins PhD., a vaccine researcher at Ft Detrick's USAMRID laboratory, was responsible. He died of an acetaminophen overdose July 29, 2008. His death is described as a suicide.

That investigation linked the spores found in recovered letters to material contained in a flask labeled "RMR-1029" that was under Dr. Ivins' control.



RMR-1029 flask

{Was this the culprit?}

There you go, all neat and tidy.

Only the story isn't nearly that simple.

In 2011, three groups (PBS Frontline, McClatchy, and Pro Publica) came out with reporting that reveal discrepancies, holes, falsifications, omissions, and inadequacies in the investigation.

One critical finding, a 2011 National Academy of Sciences report, concluded that the specialized machinery required to purify the culture Ivins possessed was never available at USAMRID, and "it is not possible to reach a definitive conclusion about the origin of the *B. anthracis* in the mailings based on the available scientific evidence alone." The NAS study had been ordered by Robert Mueller in 2008 at the suggestion of Congress but the FBI closed the case before the outcome was reported (while Congress was still taking testimony).

Then, in 2014, the Government Accounting Office (GAO) issued [GAO-15-80](#) for Congress. This essentially blew apart the FBI testing that was used. The effort to trace the attack by matching genetic mutations of the anthrax samples lacked precision, consistency, and standardization.



Another angle that rarely gets attention is in our backyard; Dugway Proving Ground. Consider:

- Dugway used the same Ames strain as USAMRID.
- Dugway weaponized anthrax in the same formulations that were discovered in the Senate letters.
- The concentration found was 100x the RMR-1029 flask but comparable to Dugway protocol.
- USAMRID deals only with “wet” anthrax. Dugway? Their process makes a dry form good for aerosol weapons (just like the Senate letters).
- Dugway shipped anthrax hundreds of times to dozens of labs and had a record of poor inactivation, even up until 2015. CDC identifies 183 labs that received Dugway anthrax.
- As late as 2008, Ivins had emailed Dugway about the lack of inactivation in their shipments.
- Later genetic analyses showed the same mutations in Dugway samples as seen in the attack specimens.
- The FBI did not contact any Dugway SMEs that had anthrax experience.

The motive given for this atrocity is that Ivins was worried that his funding for researching a vaccine for anthrax was in jeopardy.

Ivins had worked on anthrax vaccines for over two decades. He was a respected and dedicated Microbiologist. The idea behind this motive is that by creating a need for more study the funding stream would continue. So, he used anthrax from his own stock??

Only circumstantial evidence has ever been given for Ivins guilt. No DNA (his or anthrax) can be linked. It's very unlikely that he had the means to create the substances found. He worked for years after the attack at USAMRID in the same capacity without controversy. That Ivins had problems is known. His secrets have been explored and scrutinized but don't particularly support the motive given.

The FRONTLINE story that explores this crazy tale and raises questions about the findings can be found [here](#). The challenges to the official findings are disturbing. The FBI has closed the Amerithrax case, but, like a lot of what we do, there are still questions to be answered.

All in all, the Amerithrax saga is a strange and convoluted story that supports the need for good protocols and good science. Anthrax was used in a way that killed and harmed innocent people, and that's because anthrax can cause a deadly infection. The FSAP provides a dependable and proficient system for the laboratory science needed to identify these agents that can be so hazardous. We segregate these agents from our clinical testing for a couple reasons, they are dangerous to manipulate on any bench and they are potential weapons of bioterrorism.

Have a great week and be safe,

Bryan

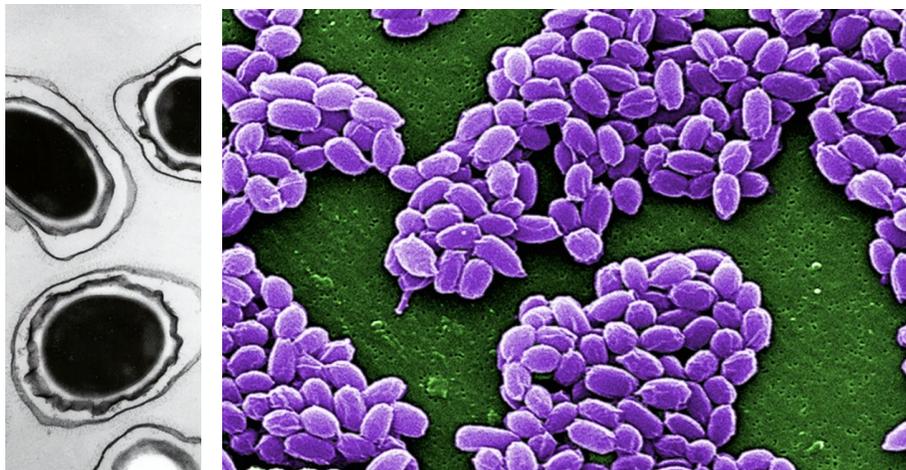




{*Ba.* Classic ground glass, white colonies}



{Anthrax: large gram (+) rods}



{Anthrax spores are extremely hardy.}

