From: Jonathan Herington
To: Jonathan Herington;
Subject: Biosecurity News 08
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Attachments: NCB Signing Ceremony Invite.pdf

The University of Sydney

University of Sydney Biosecurity Program

BIOSECURITY NEWS 08

8 August 2008

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The University of Sydney Biosecurity Program is coordinated by the Centre for International Security Studies.

CENTRE for INTERNATIONAL SECURITY STUDIES

If you received this email as a forward and wish to subscribe to future issues of Biosecurity News, please contact Jon Herington (j.herington@econ.usyd.edu.au)

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1. Program News

If you are based in Australia you should have received an invitation to the signing ceremony for the National Centre for Biosecurity, which will feature Dr. Michael Spence, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of The University of Sydney, and Professor Ian Chubb, Vice-Chancellor of the Australian National University. We will also be launching a book, entitled ***Ethical and Philosophical Consideration of the Dual-Use Dilemma in the Biological Sciences***, by Professor Seumas Miller and Dr Michael Selgelid. The details for the event are: **2 September 2008, 3-5pm in the Holme and Sutherland Rooms** of the **Holme Building, University of Sydney.** A PDF of the invite is attached.

I hope that you will all be able to attend this important event. Please **RSVP by Monday 25 August 2008**.

Jon

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2. Conferences, Seminars and Journal Issues

The US Department of Justice has released all of the court documents pertaining to the **American Anthrax attack investigations** (http://www.usdoj.gov/amerithrax/). The documents contain glimpses into the US Biodefense Program at Fort Detrick. Please see the Special Topic at the bottom of this email for more news related to the case.

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The US Department of State's **Biosecurity Engagement Program** has just come to my attention. Funding for travel to biosecurity-related conferences is available. More information: http://www.bepstate.net/index.html

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The latest edition of the ***Bulletin of the World Health Organisation*** is on the theme 'Ethics and Public Health'. It includes a review of work published by program members. See: http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/86/8/en/index.html

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The second issue of ***Public Health Ethics*** is a Special Issue on Access to Medicines. National Centre for Biosecurity members, Michael Selgelid and Thomas Faunce, have contributed articles. See: http://phe.oxfordjournals.org/current.dtl

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The latest issue of ***Developing World Bioethics*** has been made available. See: http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/117981440/home?CRETRY=1&SRETRY=0

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National Centre for Biosecurity members Seumas Miller and Michael Selgelid have just published a book entitled ***Ethical and Philosophical Consideration of the Dual-Use Dilemma in the Biological Sciences***. Copies of the book will be available for purchase at the National Centre for Biosecurity signing ceremony and book launch **3-5pm** on the **2 September** in the **Sutherland Room, Holme Building, University of Sydney**. More information on the book can be found at: http://www.springer.com/philosophy/ethics/book/978-1-4020-8311-2

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Previous Announcements

- Faculty of Veterinary Science, University of Sydney, is offering a **PhD scholarship** in **Economics of Animal Health Emergencies**. More details can be found at http://agile-prod.ucc.usyd.edu.au/research/opportunities/opportunities/617
- Faculty of Veterinary Science, University of Sydney. *Import risk analysis for animals and animal products*. Workshop: **23-25 September 2008**. More info: Dr Naomi Cogger (N.Cogger@massey.ac.nz)
- *Understanding and Controlling Infectious Diseases: An Agenda for the 21st Century*. Abstracts: **14 September 2008**. Conference: **11-13 November 2008** More info: http://www.pasteur.fr/infosci/conf/sb/clp7
- *BioSecure 2008*. Abstracts: **15 August 2008**. Workshop: **2 December 2008**. More info: http://ai.arizona.edu/BIO2008/

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3. News and Articles

Pandemic and Avian Influenza

'Popular and Scientific Attitudes Regarding Pandemic Influenza'
8 August 2008
http://www.cdc.gov/eid/content/14/9/pdfs/08-0647.pdf

'Knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding Avian Influenza (H5N1), Afghanistan'
8 August 2008
http://www.cdc.gov/eid/content/14/9/pdfs/07-1382.pdf

'Bacterial pneumonia and pandemic influenza planning'
1 August 2008
http://www.cdc.gov/eid/content/14/8/1187.htm
and an historical review of bacterial pneumonia in the 1918 pandemic
http://www.cdc.gov/eid/content/14/8/1193.htm

Rapid diagnostics for avian influenza helped 'save Australian horse industry'
1 August 2008
http://news.theage.com.au/sport/bird-flu-saved-horse-industry-experts-20080801-3oii.html

H5N1 isolated from wild swans in Japan
30 July 2008
http://www.cdc.gov/eid/content/14/9/pdfs/08-0655.pdf

'Prevention and control of influenza: recommendations of the advisory committee on immunization practices'
17 July 2008
http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr57e717a1.htm

HIV

'AIDS conference: another dose of junket medicine'
5 August 2008
http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/337/aug05_3/a1191

'Circumcision makes economic sense in fight against HIV'
5 August 2008
http://www.nature.com/news/2008/080805/full/news.2008.1012.html

Can low viral load patients have unprotected sex safely?
5 August 2008
http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140673608611150/

'Can a Topical Microbicide Prevent Rectal HIV Transmission?'
5 August 2008
http://medicine.plosjournals.org/perlserv/?request=get-document&doi=10.1371%2Fjournal.pmed.0050167&ct=1
and the article on SIV transmission to which it refers
http://medicine.plosjournals.org/perlserv/?request=get-document&doi=10.1371%2Fjournal.pmed.0050157

'Health systems 'impede' HIV fight'
5 August 2008
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7542890.stm

TB drugs lowering efficacy of common HIV antiretrovirals
4 August 2008
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/7537730.stm

'Kyrgyz medics jailed in HIV cases'
4 August 2008
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7541445.stm

'AIDS 2008 in Mexico City: New Focus on High Risk Behaviour in all Countries'
4 August 2008
http://blogs.cgdev.org/globalhealth/2008/08/aids_2008_in_mexico.php

'Progress and setbacks in AIDS battle'
2 August 2008
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/7537830.stm

'HIV programmes reduce deaths and new infections, UNAIDS report shows'
1 August 2008
http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/337/aug01_1/a1099

'The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief — Is the Emergency Over?'
30 July 2008
http://content.nejm.org/cgi/content/short/NEJMp0803762v1

The Center for Global development continues its discussion of the PEPFAR re-authorisation:
29 July 2008
http://blogs.cgdev.org/globalhealth/2008/07/pepfar_reauthorizati_3.php
http://blogs.cgdev.org/globalhealth/2008/08/pepfar_reauthorizati_4.php
http://blogs.cgdev.org/globalhealth/2008/08/pepfar_reauthorizati_5.php

Emerging Infectious Diseases

Review of books on the history of plague
8 August 2008
http://www.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/full/321/5890/773

'Facing Extensively Drug-Resistant Tuberculosis — A Hope and a Challenge'
7 August 2008
http://content.nejm.org/cgi/content/short/359/6/636
http://content.nejm.org/cgi/content/short/359/6/657-a

'Evidence of Henipavirus Infection in West African Fruit Bats'
5 August 2008
http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0002739

The August issue of *Emerging Infectious Diseases* is online (some articles reproduced here)
1 August 2008
http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/EID/index.htm

Modelling plague using fluid dynamics
31 July 2008
http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v454/n7204/abs/nature07053.html

Underreported threat of MDR-TB in Africa
30 July 2008
http://www.cdc.gov/eid/content/14/9/pdfs/06-1524.pdf

Transmissible spongiform encephalopathy can be transmitted through urine.
30 July 2008
http://www.cdc.gov/eid/content/14/9/pdfs/08-0259.pdf

Biological Weapons
'Scientists seek answers, ponder future after anthrax case suicide'
(See also special section below for more anthrax-related news)
8 August 2008
http://www.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/full/321/5890/754

Assessment of Brucellosis vaccines
5 August 2008
http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0002760

Modest Gains Against Ever-Present Bioterrorism Threat
3 August 2008
http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/08/02/AR2008080201624.html

Florida researchers develop plague vaccine

30 July 2008
http://www.nti.org/d_newswire/issues/2008_7_31.html#23B4E698
and the full article detailing results:
http://iai.asm.org/cgi/content/abstract/76/8/3640

Anthrax vaccine maker wins biodefense grants to work on botulism and next-gen anthrax vaccines
29 July 2008
http://www.cidrap.umn.edu/cidrap/content/bt/anthrax/news/jul2908grants.html

US strike may have killed Al-Qaeda chem-bio expert
29 July 2008
http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/07/28/AR2008072800361.html

'Terror Group Hints at Biological Attack at Olympics'
27 July 2008
http://www.nti.org/d_newswire/issues/2008_7_28.html#2FF58B52

Biosecurity Policy and Ethics

'Human Dignity and Bioethics: Essays Commissioned by the President's Council on Bioethics' (perhaps notable for the lack of any public health ethics being mentioned)
7 August 2008
http://content.nejm.org/cgi/content/short/359/6/660

'European biosecurity efforts fall short'
7 August 2008
http://www.thebulletin.org/web-edition/columnists/malcolm-dando/european-biosecurity-efforts-fall-short

Opposition to large biohazard lab in Virginia
30 July 2008
http://www.thetimesnews.com/news/lab_16134___article.html/opponents_security.html

'Polio eradication: The road to global pathogen security?'
30 July 2008
http://www.thebulletin.org/web-edition/features/polio-eradication-the-road-to-global-pathogen-security

Global Health Governance

'Men gone wild? The politics of population control'
5 August 20008
http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140673608611423/

Comment on the UK House of Lord's report into the WHO
5 August 2008
http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140673608611356/

'Obligations to report outbreaks of foodborne illness under the International Health Regulations (2005)'
4 August 2008
http://www.cdc.gov/eid/content/14/9/pdfs/08-0468.pdf

Forum on 'Population, Health and Environment in East Africa'
8 May 2008
http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1413&fuseaction=topics.event_summary&event_id=404579

Special Topic: The American Anthrax Attacks

The investigation into the Anthrax attacks which occurred shortly after 11 September, 2001 has had a number of new developments. On 29 July, the FBI's prime suspect at the USAMRIID biodefense facility, Dr Bruce Ivins, committed suicide just a week before investigators were to indict Ivins for the murder of the anthrax victims (and allegedly offer him a plea bargain).

Media interest in this story has been very strong and following on from this, the FBI has released nearly 200 pages of affidavits, warrants and other documents which outline the case against Ivins. The most complete and up-to-date document outlining the case can be found here (relevant information regarding the case starts on Page 2).

The documents themselves present a number of facts, some of which are at times contradictory, and there have been sceptical reactions from some quarters. Such scepticism is partially because of the potentially shaky science surrounding the key piece of genetic evidence, and partly because of suspicions that this is a way to deflect criticism away from the FBI's 7-year long investigation. Because the case relies heavily on genetic evidence, which was used to narrow down the strain of mailed-anthrax to one which was held by only a small number of labs, its specificity has critical implications for biosecurity science and policy.

The documents also indirectly reveal some interesting information about the work at the US Army Medical Research Institute

for Infectious Disease (USAMRIID). From the discussion of Ivins's work:

"Dr. Ivins was adept at manipulating anthrax production and purification variables to maximize sporulation and improve the quality of anthrax spore preparations. He also understood anthrax aerosolization dosage rates and the importance of purity, consistency, and spore particle size due to ***his responsibility for providing liquid anthrax spore preparations for animal aerosol challenges****. Dr. Ivins* ***produced large batches of Bacillus anthracis*** *which were required for such challenges - tests in which vaccinated animals inhale pre-defined doses of anthrax spores to assess the efficacy of the anthrax vaccine"*

Whilst biodefense research necessarily involves some level of dual-use research on biowarfare agents, it seems more accurate to suggest that the USAMRIID researchers were engaged in the production of usable biological weapons (weaponised, aerosol-ready variants of the Ames strain), which were then used to test vaccine efficacy in live animal tests. That these weapons were then used in an attack by a 'trusted insider' has raised questions in the US media about the wisdom of producing such weapons, even if they are never intended for use in warfare.

Additional resources:
National Public Radio in the US has a special section on the investigation: http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=93203213
The FBI's court documents: http://www.usdoj.gov/amerithrax
Speculation on the role that the anthrax investigations had in public support for the invasion of Iraq: http://www.theage.com.au/opinion/did-anthrax-push-the-us-into-iraq-20080806-3r4f.html
Some commentary from the public health blog-o-sphere:
http://scienceblogs.com/aetiology/2008/08/anthrax_still_a_mess.php
http://scienceblogs.com/effectmeasure/2008/08/anthrax_investigation_whats_th.php
http://blog.foreignpolicy.com/node/9454

Best wishes and happy researching,

Jon

If you received this email as a forward and wish to subscribe to future issues of Biosecurity News, please contact Jon Herington (j.herington@econ.usyd.edu.au)

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