

ANTHRAX TIMELINE

The media is finally beginning to question the story about Bruce Ivins (though Glenn is still schooling them). But here's a question I see no one asking, much less answering. The LAT reported that attention began to focus on Ivins in "late 2006" only after FBI Director Mueller changed the leadership team on the investigation.

Federal investigators moved away from Hatfill – for years the only publicly identified "person of interest" – and ultimately concluded that Ivins was the culprit after FBI Director Robert S. Mueller III changed leadership of the investigation in late 2006.

The FBI's new top investigators – Vincent B. Lisi and Edward W. Montooth – instructed agents to reexamine leads or potential suspects that may have received insufficient attention.

Moreover, significant progress was made in analyzing genetic properties of the anthrax powder recovered from letters addressed to two senators.

What was it, I wonder, that caused the FBI to reverse course that at that point? I wanted to put together the details we know of Ivins with those revealed in Steven Hatfill's suit to see if I could figure out what changed in 2006 (one possibility, for example, is that in the course of defending against the Hatfill suit it became obvious they had the wrong guy).

September 18, 2001: Less lethal "media" anthrax letters postmarked

October 2, 2001: Ayaad Asaad interviewed about claim he was a bioterrorist

October 5, 2001: Bob Stevens, photo editor of Sun newspaper, dies

Almost immediately after attacks: FBI works with

Ft. Detrick scientists to identify anthrax

October 2001: Ames strain at Iowa State
destroyed with consent of FBI

October 9, 2001: Daschle and Leahy letters
postmarked

October 12, 2001: Judy Miller gets fake anthrax
letter

October 14, 2001: Guardian first suggests tie
between anthrax and Iraq

October 15, 2001: Daschle letter opened; Bush
presses FBI to look into Middle Eastern links to
anthrax

October 18, 2001: Nerve attack scare in White
House situation room

October 18, 2001: John McCain links anthrax
attack to Iraq and Phase II of war on terror

October 21, 2001: First of two DC postal workers
dies of anthrax poisoning

October 22, 2001: Secret Service reports traces
of anthrax on letter opening machine in White
House

October 24, 2001: USA PATRIOT passes House

October 25, 2001: USA PATRIOT passes Senate

October 26, 2001: USA PATRIOT signed into law

October 28, 2001: ABC News cites Ft. Detrick
scientists with bentonite claim

October 29, 2001: General John Parker mis-
reports that silica found in anthrax sample

December 2001: FBI investigators start
questioning Ft. Detrick scientists

December 2001: Ivins improperly cleans worksite

December 5, 2001: Leahy letter opened at Ft.
Detrick

December 12, 2001: Reports first tie anthrax to
Dugway strain

May 2002: FBI tests mailboxes in Princeton, NJ

May 10, 2002: Ivins speaks to investigators about his efforts to clean worksite in December 2001

June 18, 2002: Barbara Hatch Rosenberg briefs Leahy and Daschle with her US scientist theory—naming Hatfill directly

June 25, 2002: FBI conducts consensual search of Hatfill's apartment—tips off media

July 2002: MZM receives White House contract for "threat mail technology insertion"

Late July 2002: FBI Special Agent Bob Roth ignores Hatfill's lawyer's offer for consensual interview

August 1, 2002: FBI conducts second search—media again tipped off; DOJ gets Hatfill fired from new job at LSU

August 6, 2002: Ashcroft names Hatfill person of interest

August 11, 2002: FBI leak of contents of Hatfill novel to ABC news pre-empting Hatfill public statement; FBI canvasses Princeton residents to see if they had seen Hatfill in Princeton

August 12, 2002: Newsweek reports on use of bloodhounds

August 13, 2002: Hatfill files formal complaint with DOJ

October 5, 2002: Richard Lambert assumes Inspector in Charge role in investigation

November 2002: Robert Mueller incorrectly announces FBI trying to reverse engineer strain

January 9, 2003: Officials at counter-terrorism conference tell ABC Hatfill most likely suspect

April 11, 2003: OPR says investigation into leaks reveals no leakers

May 5, 2003: Supervisory Special Agent Van Harp (previously in charge of investigation) retires

May 11, 2003: WaPo reports that FBI draining pond in search of clues on Hatfill

August 26, 2003: Hatfill sues DOJ

November 21, 2003: DOJ moves to stay suit

January 5, 2004: DOJ moves to dismiss suit

May 2004: Roscoe Howard, later named as source for several journalists, resigns as US Attorney

October 21, 2004: Judge Walton grants Hatfill discovery on press reports, not investigative files

February 22, 2005: DOJ demands that Hatfill have identity of leakers to pursue privacy case

Contrary to plaintiff's assertion, because his claim for damages requires him to establish that any disclosure of information protected by the Privacy Act was "intentional or willful," he cannot prevail without establishing the identity of the individual who made any such disclosure and the circumstances surrounding the disclosure.

February 23, 2005: Hatfill moves to question Van Harp (who admits contacts with many of the journalists who reported on Hatfill)

June 22, 2005: DOJ opposes Hatfill deposition of Virginia Patrick, wife of Bill Patrick

April 21, 2006: Jean Duley caught drunk driving

July 17, 2006: Hatfill files motion to compel, including material from depositions and Congressional contacts

August 2006: Douglas Beecher publishes article stating that FBI misunderstood nature of anthrax used in attack

October 13, 2006: Jean Duley pleads guilty to DUI

October 24, 2006: Grassley writes letter following up on reassignment of Lambert to

Knoxville; Lisi and Montooth would have replaced Lambert

August 13, 2007: Judge Walton orders some reporters to reveal their sources

November 1, 2007: Ivins' house searched

December 23, 2007: Duley caught driving with no headlights, DUI

March 2008: FBI Agents confront Ivins and his wife, accusing him of killing people

March 7, 2008: Judge Walton holds Toni Locy in contempt

March 19, 2008: Ivins found unconscious in his home

March 28, 2008: Fox News reports four suspects in case

April 10, 2008: Duley's DUI and driving with no headlights not prosecuted

April 24, 2008: Duley pleads guilty to DUI

May 26, 2008: Ivins finishes four weeks of rehab

June 27, 2008: DOJ settles with Hatfill

July 9, 2008: Duley alleges Ivins makes threats

July 10, 2008: Pat Leahy asks Mukasey about anthrax case; Ivins attends bubonic plague vaccine meeting, then barred from Ft. Detrick and taken for psychiatric evaluation

July 24, 2008: Duley signs complaint against Ivins

July 29, 2008: Ivins dies of apparent suicide