

DON'T DRILL BABY, DON'T DRILL

Ken Salazar just reversed Bush's plan to drill offshore.

IS GEITHNER PLANNING ON A PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP WITH THE SOVEREIGN WEALTH FUNDS?

Tim Geithner used the gimmick of a public-private partnership to avoid nationalizing the banks today. But that gimmick may well depend on the continued investment from Sovereign Wealth Funds—the investment arms of nations like China, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Kuwait, South Korea, and UAE. That seems to present many more potential problems down the road.

MARY BETH BUCHANAN'S GOING AWAY PRESENT: JACK MURTHA?

Is Mary Beth Buchanan refusing to step down as US Attorney because she intends to take down Jack Murtha before she leaves?

BOY, THAT ANTHRAX ATTACK SURE LED TO AN EXPANSION OF OUR ANTHRAX PROGRAM, HUH

At the still-unsolved anthrax attacks in 2001, people were raising concerns that we were breaking our treaty obligations not to do such research. But the attack led directly to a ten-fold expansion of our program.

USAMRIID CAN'T KEEP TRACK OF ITS MICROBES

Now, what do you make of the fact that USAMRIID, the lab at which Bruce Ivins was alleged to have made the anthrax used in the 2001 attacks, is having problems cataloging and tracking their high-risk microbes and biomaterials (h/t Danger Room)?

The U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases (USAMRIID) has suspended research activities involving biological select agents and toxins. Army officials took the step on Friday **after discovering apparent problems with the system of accounting for high-risk microbes and biomaterials at the Fort Detrick, Maryland, facility.**

The lab has been under intense scrutiny since August, when the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) **named** former

USAMRIID researcher Bruce Ivins as the perpetrator of the 2001 anthrax letter attacks. Although the case never went to trial because of Ivins's suicide on 29 July 2008, FBI officials have claimed that the evidence against him is indisputable and that he carried out the mailings using anthrax stolen from a flask at USAMRIID.

Officials have begun a complete inventory of all select agents and toxins at the facility. All experiments using select agents will remain suspended until the accounting is finished, which could take several weeks. Several USAMRIID researchers have been grumbling about the decision, which seems to have caught them by surprise, according to a government official not connected to the lab.

The decision was announced by institute commander Col. John Skvorak in a 4 February memo to employees. The memo, which *ScienceInsider* has obtained, says the standard of accountability that USAMRIID had been applying to its select agents and toxins was not in line with the standard required by the Army and the Department of Defense. [my emphasis]

One key to the FBI case against Ivins, after all, is that he had complete control over the sole flask that contained the strain of anthrax used in the attack. But now we come to find out that, more than six months after his death, they still don't have a sound inventory of what they have where?

I'd say that FBI case is looking weaker and weaker.

PAT LEAHY CALLS FOR TRUTH COMMISSION

I want prosecutions for Bush era wrong-doing. But barring that, we need to have some accounting for what was done. Today, Pat Leahy joined others in calling for such an investigation.

JAMES JONES ON THE NSC UNDER OBAMA

James Jones addressed some of the upcoming changes at the National Security Council.

BREAKING: OBAMA CONTINUES BUSH POLICY ON STATE SECRETS

Earlier this morning, Looseheadprop wrote about the case of Binyam Mohamed, the British subject tortured at the hands of the United States at Gitmo, including having his genitals carved selectively with a scalpel. The Mohamed case is of critical significance for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is the fact that there was an oral argument in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco this morning in which the Obama Administration has shown its true colors and continued the assertion of state secrets to conceal US torture policy.

USAMRIID CAN'T KEEP TRACK OF ITS MICROBES

Remember how one key to the FBI case against Bruce Ivins is their claim that only he had access to the flask that contained the anthrax strain used in the attack—and that they're sure that there were no other flasks of the strain? Well, it turns out that Ivins' lab, USAMRIID, shut down all research on Friday because they don't have a good inventory of all their high-risk microbes.

COMINGS AND GOINGS AND DEALINGS AT THE SEC

One of the contemptuous SEC officials who pretty much blew off Congress last week will be resigning today. And, all of a sudden, the SEC is going after Madoff for financial penalties, perhaps reflecting the elimination of Chris Cox-era rules that made it hard to do so.