ANTHRAX SENT TO PAKISTAN'S PM BEGS QUESTION OF WHETHER FBI INVESTIGATED PRESUMED ANTHRAX SENT TO US PAK EMBASSY IN 2001

Yesterday's revelation by Pakistan that a package containing anthrax had been sent to Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani has both shocked Gilani's security staff and provoked memories that anthrax was sent to multiple targets in Pakistan in late 2001 while the US was enduring its own deadly anthrax attacks. Thinking on these issues raises the question of why the FBI had in its possession a sample of presumed anthrax sent to the US embassy in Pakistan in late 2001 but we have not seen a comparison of its DNA to the DNA of the anthrax used in the US attacks of 2001.

Although initial reports suggested that the parcel was received at the Prime Minister's residence about 20 days ago, the consensus now is that the package was received last October. Multiple reports are claiming the package was sent by a "female professor" in Jamshoro, just north of Karachi. So far, only the New York Times has provided a portion of the suspect's name. I have found a faculty listing for a female associate professor whose name includes the portion printed in the Times, but since her field of work as listed does not overlap at all with the biological and microbiological skills that would be needed to produce anthrax, I will not repeat the name, since there is a distinct possibility her name was chosen randomly.

One of the more detailed reports comes from The News:

> The Secretariat sources told The News that Deputy Secretary Abdul Hafiz, in his written complaint said: “The Secretariat received a registered envelop (Registered No 209) from Sindh University, Campus Colony, Jamshoroo, in the name of Prime Minister of Pakistan Yusuf Raza Gilani through the Post Office in the inner CR Section of this Secretariat on October 18, 2011, at 3:20pm. There was also a plastic envelop inside the outer paper envelop, containing some type of powder or chemical. On receipt of the envelop, the security officer of the Secretariat sent the envelop, along with the material, to Dr Shaukat Pervaiz, PCSIR, Islamabad, for its examination and submission of report.

We also learn from the Daily Times that the anthrax may have been weaponized:

> A senior police official, on the condition of anonymity, told Daily Times that the packet was received by a security official at the main gate of the secretariat. The security official found that the packet was filled with a suspicious powder and sent it to the PCSIR laboratories for test. “The PCSIR report confirmed that the packet was filled with anthrax, which could also contain silica or other sophisticated additives to make it float more easily in the air,” the police official maintained.

Given that the anthrax was real and possibly even weaponized accounts for the fear shown by Gilani’s security staff:

> The security staff members of Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani on Wednesday went into a state of shock over the revelation that a parcel received at

> their boss's official residence in October last year carried deadly anthrax.

It would appear that the anthrax was meant as a warning, considering that it was sealed inside plastic within the paper envelope in which it was mailed. Recall that in the US anthrax attacks, many spores escaped the paper envelopes during shipment, contaminating the mailbox from which they were sent and even killing postal service employees who came into contact with spores that escaped the envelopes. No information has been released concerning any message included in the package along with the anthrax, but considering that care was taken to prevent spore leakage in shipment, inclusion of some sort of warning that anthrax was enclosed seems likely and would fit with the concern shown by the security staff.

The timing for this shipment is very interesting. The story from The News says that the package was received on October 18. The initial column written by Mansoor Ijaz that started the Memogate controversy in which the military/ISI and civilian government were set against one another first appeared in the Financial Times on October 10 (that column is behind a paywall but reproduced by GeoTV here).

The parallel between anthrax being sent to Gilani early in the Memogate controversy and the anthrax sent to Tom Daschle and Pat Leahy while they were holding out against passage of the PATRIOT Act in the US is striking. But that is not the only parallel between anthrax events in Pakistan and the US. In its article on yesterday's revelation, the New York Times noted:

> In November 2001, suspicious letters containing anthrax spores were sent to three private businesses, including the country's largest Urdu-language daily, Jang, in the southern port city of Karachi. No motive was ever determined.

But the list of targets noted by the Times is not complete. Fresh off hosting the Firedoglake Book Salon for Nada Prouty's book "Uncompromised" Marcy has provided me with excerpts from Prouty's book. First, from the Book Salon post itself is the quick bio of Prouty:

> The book describes how she escaped the Lebanese civil war by enrolling in college in the US. To gain the ability to work her way through school, she entered into a "Green Card marriage." A number of years, several accounting degrees, and a "real" marriage later, she joined the FBI as one of its rare recruits with native Arab fluency and the sangfroid acquired from surviving a civil war. While at the FBI—and, later, at the CIA—she investigated a range of al Qaeda and Hezbollah attacks, including the Cole bombing and 9/11.
>
> Yet none of her efforts in the war on terror put her, an Arab-American (though not a Muslim), beyond the suspicions of Detroit-based FBI agents investigating her Lebanese-American brother-in-law. When they failed to make a tax evasion investigation against him into a terrorism charge, they turned to trumping up a case against Prouty, ultimately using her "Green Card marriage"—which she had disclosed to the FBI—to get her to plea to a charge of unauthorized computer access and immigration fraud, which DOJ then spun publicly as a terrorism charge.
>
> This book is Prouty's attempt to tell what really happened—partly in hopes to regain her American citizenship.

The book describes one assignment Prouty was given: she was to courier a package from Pakistan to the US, using commercial flights. The package was believed to be anthrax that had

been sent to the US embassy in Pakistan. The timing for this event is intentionally nebulous to prevent disclosing classified information, but is clearly in late 2001, fitting well with the November, 2001 dates for the other anthrax packages in Pakistan reported in the New York Times. From the book:

> The task was not complicated, but it had a potential for being fatal. As a diplomatic courier, I was to transport the white powder on a commercial airline flight from Pakistan to the United States, with a plane change in Europe. The powder, I was told, might be anthrax. It would be “secured” inside a medical box placed in a bright-orange diplomatic pouch. In the post-September 11 environment, where all packages were searched, the diplomatic pouch would provide high assurance that its contents would not be disturbed.
>
> /snip/
>
> The new courier seemed hesitant and appeared anxious to transport the package to its next location, a relatively short distance compared to its journey from Paksitan. Perhaps agitated by the contents of the package and in a rush to deliver the pouch to the next team, the receiving courier got into a spectacular accident and flipped his car. He was unconscious when the police arrived on the scene, and officers very nearly opened the pouch before realizing they were in possession of something they had to be cautious with. They called in the FBI and the unconscious courier was transported to a local hospital. The pouch then disappeared into the maze of evidence and international accusations swirling about everywhere in those weeks immediately after the AQ attack on our homeland.

> /snip/
>
> The powder in the pouch, touted to me as "suspected anthrax" had first been discovered in a letter addressed to the US embassy in Islamabad. The letter had been opened by a secretary, and a white powder had fallen on her hands and on her desk. She was immediately sent to a local hospital for treatment.

Remarkably, despite Prouty documenting that this presumed anthrax sample was given to the FBI, I can find no discussion of it in the volumes of information released by the FBI in its Amerithrax investigation. It is possible that the powder sent to the embassy was not really anthrax, but considering that other targets in Pakistan were sent real anthrax around the same time, it seems more likely the powder was real. The only foreign samples discussed in the Amerithrax investigation appear in the National Academy of Sciences report, where we learn of analysis in 2004 a number of environmental samples "from an undisclosed site outside the continental United States" that was searched "because of information about efforts by Al Qaeda to develop an 'anthrax program'". Why has the FBI not discussed analysis of DNA from the anthrax sent to the US embassy in Pakistan? Has that DNA been compared to the anthrax in the US attacks?

And while we are asking such questions, will the FBI request a sample of the spores sent to Gilani in order to analyze their DNA? Does the FBI fear a result that would tell them Bruce Ivins sent the package to Gilani from the grave?