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Biowarfare: Made in America?

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<http://educate-yourself.org/cn/2001/cnbiowarmadeinamericamcgowan6oct01.shtml>

Despite the best efforts of U.S. officials to cast the nation of Pakistan as a staunch ally in the Orwellian 'War on Terrorism,' the truth is that it is only a handful of illegitimate leaders of that nation that have pledged their support to American military goals. The vast majority of the Pakistani people support neither America's ill-defined war nor their own unelected government. Some readers will no doubt recall that the current Pakistani head of state, General Pervez Musharraf, took power nearly two years ago in a decidedly undemocratic military coup that toppled the elected government of that country, with the blessings of the United States (undoubtedly as a preliminary chess-move aimed at facilitating the long-planned assault on Afghanistan). In a move that was likely aimed at garnering the support of the Pakistani people for the illegitimate regime, Musharraf's administration, like those before it, had supported the Taliban in Afghanistan prior to September 11. As the World Socialist Web Site has noted, "Successive Pakistani governments and the military have openly backed the Taliban, providing finance, arms and training for its fighters." (1)

Nevertheless, the Afghani people have not been prone to accept the leadership of those thrust into power by undemocratic means. This has become all the more true as Musharraf has openly allied himself with the United

States, even going so far as to proclaim that the non-existent 'evidence' put forth by the British government "provides sufficient basis for indictment in a court of law." (2) That is quite a remarkable interpretation of the 'proof' supplied by Tony Blair and company, given that the drafters of the document themselves acknowledge in the very first sentence that: "This document does not purport to provide a prosecutable case against Osama bin Laden in a court of law." (3) In truth, it doesn't even come close to presenting a prosecutable case, but that's another story entirely.

Musharraf's wholehearted acceptance of the Western-supplied 'evidence' can only serve to further fan the flames of discontent among the Pakistani people. As the World Socialist Web Site noted, the General "is facing an increasingly volatile domestic situation, with protests against his support for Washington continuing to mount. On October 2, around 50,000 people took part in a protest organised by the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam (JUI) party in Quetta." (1) The Sidney Morning Herald added that: "In one of the largest demonstrations so far in support of the Taliban and the accused terrorist Osama bin Laden, Muslim extremists served notice to Pakistan not to back a United States military strike against Afghanistan. Police armed with semi-automatic weapons confined foreigners to their hotels in the city of Quetta, close to the Afghan border, as an estimated 40,000 protesters armed with sticks moved in a convoy of cars, trucks and buses, and on foot, from the airport to the city centre." (4) The WWSW report held that Quetta has been described as a "hot bed of Taliban supporters," and that according to a reporter on the scene, "Quetta is already on a war footing." (1) It also happens to be "a destination for hundreds of thousands of Afghans fleeing drought and war," (5) which could easily push the simmering tensions past the boiling point and destabilize all or part of Pakistan, creating serious problems for both the U.S. and the Pakistani ruling junta.

It is interesting then to note that there is an unusual twist to this situation that the American press, and most of the European press, have almost completely ignored. As the News Telegraph reported: "The largest outbreak in history of a highly contagious disease that causes patients to bleed to death from every orifice was confirmed yesterday on Pakistan's frontier with Afghanistan. At least 75 people have caught the disease so far and eight have died. An isolation ward screened off by barbed wire has been set up in the Pakistani city of Quetta ...

"Evidence suggests the outbreak of Crimean-Congo Haemorrhagic Fever emanates from within Afghanistan, raising fears of an epidemic if millions of refugees flee across the frontier into Pakistan. CCHF has similar effects to the ebola virus. Both viruses damage arteries, veins and other blood vessels and lead to the eventual collapse of major organs. As one doctor put it, a patient suffering from haemorrhagic fever 'literally melts in front of your eyes.'" (6)

The location and the rather curious timing of this outbreak, the largest in history, raise serious questions about its origin. As Dr. Taj Mohammad of the Fatima Jinnah Chest and General Hospital in Quetta told a reporter: "It's unheard of - very unusual. There's a real risk of an epidemic among Afghan refugees." (5)

A fact sheet distributed by the World Health Organization notes that, "Although primarily a zoonosis, sporadic cases and outbreaks of CCHF affecting humans do occur." (7) The report goes on to say that, since the virus primarily affects animals, "The majority of cases (of human infection) have occurred in those involved with the livestock industry, such as agricultural workers, slaughterhouse workers and veterinarians." (7) There is no indication that the inordinately high number of Afghani victims were employed in such professions. How then did they contract this feared disease? Experts have opined that the most likely culprit is "a species of tick, *Hyalomma marginatum*, common in the [afflicted] areas." (6) The WHO fact sheet notes that a "number of tick genera are capable of becoming infected with CCHF virus ... " (7)

Is this outbreak then a natural occurrence? Not necessarily. A brief review of the use of insects as carriers of biological warfare agents is in order here. According to Robert Harris and Jeremy Paxman's *A Higher Form of Killing*, that history began during World War II, when the Japanese "cultivated the plague-infected flea as a biological weapon. Pingfan [a biowarfare lab] was said to be capable of producing 500 million fleas a year." (8)

Following the war, that technology was warmly embraced by America's biowarfare engineers, who had their Japanese counterparts flown over to the States to share the tricks of the trade. Fort Detrick, the longtime home of American biological warfare research, soon became the world's premier site for developing such weapons of war as the 'flea bomb':

"Among the potential agents studied at Camp Detrick were anthrax, glanders, brucellosis, tularemia,

meliodosis, plague, typhus, psittacosis, yellow fever, encephalitis and various forms of rickettsial disease; fowl pest and rinder-pest were among the animal viruses studied; various rice, potato and cereal blights were also investigated." (8)

Evidence clearly suggests that such weapons were utilized by the United States in the war waged against North Korea. American pilots captured during the war confessed to dropping flea bombs on the people of North Korea, and Chinese officials published photographs of what they claimed to be "American biological bombs." (8) The U.S., of course, dismissed these reports as ludicrous, claiming that the pilots had been 'brainwashed' into offering the confessions. The Chinese though assembled an international committee of scientists - from the United Kingdom, Italy, France, Sweden, Brazil and the Soviet Union - which in October of 1952 released a 700-page report that concluded that "the peoples of Korea and China did actually serve as targets for bacteriological weapons." (8) The detailed report listed the techniques that had been deployed in that war, "which ranged from fountain pens filled with infectious ink, to anthrax-laden feathers, and fleas, lice and mosquitoes carrying plague and yellow fever." (8) The U.S., needless to say, continued to deny and/or ignore the evidence indicating the use of biowarfare agents, and continued to research and develop these blatantly illegal and indiscriminate killers:

"In 1956 the army began investigating the feasibility of breeding fifty million fleas a week, presumably to spread plague. By the end of the fifties the Fort Detrick laboratories were said to contain mosquitos infected with yellow fever, malaria and dengue (an acute viral disease also known as Breakbone Fever for which there is no cure); fleas infected with plague; ticks contaminated with tularemia; and flies infected with cholera, anthrax and dysentery." (8)

It would appear then that the United States has a long history of researching and developing infected insects as biological warfare agents, and hasn't been shy about deploying such weapons specifically to inflict massive civilian casualties. Just one week before the September 11 attacks, the New York Times reported that U.S. biological weapons research was still very much alive-and-well, though cloaked as always as 'defensive' research:

"Over the past several years, the United States has embarked on a program of secret research on biological weapons that, some officials say, tests the limits of the global treaty banning such weapons ... The projects, which have not been previously disclosed, were begun under President Clinton and have been embraced by the Bush administration, which intends to expand them." (9)

In light of this history, is it really merely a fluke of nature that this outbreak has occurred at this particular time and in this particular place? And is it also just a bizarre coincidence that, as The Scotsman has reported, "A spokesman for the United Nations High Commission for Refugees said many children are facing a new threat from a potentially fatal strain of malaria which has appeared in southern Afghanistan in recent months"? (10) And what are we to make of the fact that the U.S. media, busily promoting fear among the people with constant warnings of an imminent biowarfare attack upon America, have had nothing to say about this impending catastrophe in Afghanistan? And what, for that matter, are we to make of the fact that the World Health Organization quickly moved to downplay and discredit the trickle of reports that surfaced in the European press?

In a report carried by the BBC, WHO officials claimed that: "Reports warning of an outbreak of a deadly viral disease similar to Ebola on the frontier between Afghanistan and Pakistan are 'incorrect and misleading.'" (11) This report was filled with deliberate distortions of fact that were directly contradicted by experts on the scene, as well as by the WHO's own Fact Sheet on the virus. The BBC's Andrew Webb, for instance, claimed that "So far, there has been no official diagnosis." (11) The News Telegraph, however, reported that: "A number of blood samples were sent to Pakistan's national virology testing centre in Islamabad. They were then sent to South Africa's National Institute of Virology in Johannesburg for confirmation." (6) The disease was, in fact, confirmed.

The disinformational BBC report also claimed that: "WHO says the reports caught the attention of the international media because there are many journalists in the area looking for stories." (11) This flies in the face of the rather obvious fact that the Western media in general, and the American press in particular, haven't bothered to report on anything occurring in the region, especially in regards to the plight of the refugees.

The report goes on to state that: "WHO says there have been only 35 reported cases of the virus in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region this year and only four people are currently being treated." (11) In truth though, "Dr. Taj Mohammad of the Fatima Jinnah Chest and General Hospital in Quetta said his facility had received a total of almost 70 cases this year," (5) all of which are documented in the hospital's case files. Ian Simpson of the WHO is quoted as saying that "Nothing suggests it will get worse," (11) when in fact many observers have noted that there are clear indications that the situation will almost certainly get worse. David Horrocks, the Afghanistan project manager for Christian Aid, was merely stating the obvious when he said: "The condition of the refugees makes the risk of disease and epidemics rife. They are suffering severe malnutrition and dehydration which has reduced their immune system, and they are a very concentrated group." (10)

Stratfor has noted that: "Pakistan has a serious biohazard problem on its hands given the ease of transmission factored in with the limited sanitation facilities in refugee camps. Unfortunately the situation may grow much worse." (12) And the BBC itself had reported that "The horrendous sanitary conditions provide an ideal breeding ground for the virus." (5)

Simpson also attempts in the second BBC report to downplay the considerable health risk posed by CCHF, claiming that comparisons to the Ebola virus are unwarranted: "It doesn't spread as quickly, and there is a significantly higher recovery rate." (11) The WHO's own Fact Sheet though acknowledges that "CCHF is a severe disease in humans, with a high mortality." (7) The report in *The Scotsman* described the rapid onset of the disease: "Within three days of infection, victims develop a rash and, after five, they start to bleed from orifices." (10) Stratfor added that "About half of those who contract the virus die within two weeks." (12) The WHO handout concurred that death usually occurs "in the second week of illness." (7)

As for the ease with which the disease can spread, the WHO's Fact Sheet notes that "When patients with CCHF are admitted to the hospital, there is a risk of nosocomial [hospital-acquired] spread of infection. In the past, serious outbreaks have occurred in this way and it is imperative that adequate infection control measures be observed to prevent this disastrous outcome." (7)

If there is a serious risk of the disease being rapidly spread in a sterile, controlled hospital environment, it should be fairly obvious that that risk is greatly multiplied in the crowded, unsanitary conditions in which the refugees now find themselves. The BBC report ends rather remarkably by stressing that the "WHO says that rumours of CCHF being spread as biological warfare are nonsense," (11) though the plea of innocence is made to a charge that hadn't even been made, or at least not reported. The closest anyone had come was when Stratfor mentioned a "concern that the United States might be accused of engaging in biological weapons attacks." (12) Why then issue a preemptive denial through the WHO?

The first confirmed case in the current outbreak was in June of this year, which would seem initially to rule out the possibility of a biological warfare operation, since officially - as we all know - this military action wasn't planned until after September 11. However, there is little doubt that this war was planned long before the events took place that provided the pretext for launching it. The BBC has reported that: "Niaz Naik, a former Pakistani Foreign Secretary, was told by senior American officials in mid-July that military action against Afghanistan would go ahead by the middle of October." (13) Similarly, Indiareacts.com, a self-described public affairs portal, reported on June 26 that "India and Iran will 'facilitate' US and Russian plans for 'limited military action' against the Taliban if the contemplated tough new economic sanctions don't bend Afghanistan's fundamentalist regime ...

"Indian officials say that India and Iran will only play the role of 'facilitator' while the US and Russia will combat the Taliban from the front with the help of two Central Asian countries, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan ... Military action will be the last option though it now seems scarcely avoidable with the UN banned from Taliban-controlled areas." (14)

Assuming then that planning for the current military campaign was already well advanced by June of this year, there is little question that covert operations would have been ongoing at that time. Interestingly enough, Stratfor off-handedly mentioned that there was another outbreak of the disease at about that same time - in another part of the world where U.S. covert operations run rampant: "Earlier this summer more than 30 cases surfaced in Kosovo." (12)

As for the situation along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, it is not difficult to see how this scenario could play out. Pakistan has been provided with a convenient excuse to strictly enforce an indefinite closing of its border with Afghanistan. The Afghans fleeing the destruction of their homeland will be trapped between falling bombs and a closed border. Forced to set up makeshift refugee camps on the Afghan side of the border, an enormous mass of humanity will be ravaged by starvation and disease. The potential loss of human life could be unimaginable. The weakest and most vulnerable of the refugees - which is to say, the children - will make up the majority of the victims.

Their blood will be on the hands of all the politicians, pundits and media flacks who cheerlead the illegal war being waged against the people of Afghanistan. Their legacy will be a new generation of 'terrorists' with a fully-earned hatred of American foreign policy.

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