

Chem-Bio News

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CB Daily Report

Chem-Bio News

GROWING PUBLIC INTEREST IN GENETIC SCIENCE SPARKS SOME BIO-SECURITY CONCERNS

By Stew Magnuson
National Defense Magazine
June, 2010

"The know-how, the equipment and the laboratories needed to genetically manipulate DNA is "out there," and the building blocks that could be used to make these potentially devastating diseases occur in nature. There is no need to enrich uranium or stockpile tightly regulated chemicals. Anthrax, for example, could be found in a cow pasture.

Now, a growing movement of hobbyists who are carrying out biology experiments in garages, basements and community labs has drawn some interest from the FBI. There have not been any cases of these amateur scientists doing anything illegal, but the potential is there, said one agent.

“We’re looking at advances in technologies,” said Edward H. You, supervisory special agent at the FBI’s weapons of mass destruction directorate. “That barrier to do various acts — and even just cause mischief — is getting lower and lower and lower, so that risk is growing.”

The so-called “do-it-yourself” biology movement has taken off during the past two years, said Jason Bobe, director of community at the Harvard Medical School’s personal genome project. Just as missile technology and the space program sparked a movement of amateurs who wanted to try their hand at model rocketry in the 1960s, rapid advances in DNA sequencing and lower costs for the equipment needed to carry out experiments are giving rise to the DIY-Bio community, he added.”

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“These are not yet consumer toys, but they will be soon. I fully expect devices like these to be in people’s garages,” Bobe said. “The ability for individuals to access these technologies is really a novel and exciting development.”

The DIY biologists are a mix of educators, artists, bio-entrepreneurs looking to start a business and, in some cases, trained biologists who are moonlighting, and pursuing experiments that they don’t have the time or funding to do at their day jobs.

“They are strong contributors to online communities,” Bobe said of the trained scientists.

Tips exchanged on message boards at diybio.com include how to create a microscope from a webcam or a centrifuge from an electric screwdriver. There are amateurs with grand ideas of curing diseases, creating bio-sensors or discovering new species in their backyards, Bobe said.

“We’re starting to see people do more complicated and complex stuff,” he added.

Further, just as groups of potters share kilns to save money, there is now at least one community lab in the San Francisco Bay area. In these cases, DIY-biologists are pooling their resources to share equipment and space. Bobe foresees this possibly turning into a business.

The TechShop franchise, which provides space, training and tools for inventors, machinists, sculptors, woodworkers and robot makers provides one example. Like a gym membership, customers pay a monthly fee to carry out their mechanical engineering projects.”

The full article can be found at:

<http://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/archive/2010/June/Pages/GrowingPublicInterestInGeneticScience.aspx>

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[CA] COMPLEX BUILDING PROJECT

By Bruce Johnstone

The Leader-Post

May 18, 2010

“The \$55.5-million Saskatchewan Disease Control Laboratory, which officially opens today, not only boasts the single-largest building permit ever issued by the City of Regina, but is probably the most complex building of its kind in the province.”

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“The Containment Level 3 lab, which handles severe transmissible diseases, like pandemic influenza, anthrax and SARS, has a vestibule equipped with three safety doors and a shower for staff. “In

Containment Level 3, you have to shower out, that's so you don't take anything you've been working on outside (the lab)," Horsman explained.

The CL3 lab also has its own air handling system. "Everything here is on HEPA (high-efficiency particulate air) filters," Eckert said. "The containment units for the HEPA filters are built so that if there are any spills, it can't penetrate the floors, which are also sealed."

Besides the banks of HEPA filters, which prevent any airborne contaminants from leaving the lab, solid and fluid waste is handled by the EDS (effluent decontamination system).

"All of the fluid effluent waste from this lab all goes to the basement through stainless piping to an effluent cooker -- essentially a big autoclave -- that boils everything that comes out of the CL3 lab," Youck added.

"Nothing leaves the lab and gets into the general airstream or water system or anything like that, without going through a sterilization process or a HEPA filter," Youck said.

In fact, the Saskatchewan lab is closely based on one in Richmond, Va., which combines a public health lab and the bio-terrorism unit for the U.S. Eastern seaboard.

"This lab is equivalent to anything at the CDC (Centre for Disease Control in Atlanta). This is comparable to any public health lab anywhere in the world, if not better."

The full article can be found at: <http://www.leaderpost.com/entertainment/Complex%20building%20project/3041479/story.html>

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NEW DOE PANEL TO FOCUS ON VIT PLANT

By Annette Cary
The TriCity Herald
May 21, 2010

"The Department of Energy is forming a new technical review panel to make sure that high-level radioactive waste stored in tanks is cleaned up on time and on schedule, including treating Hanford's tank waste at the vitrification plant.

The new panel's first assignment will be to look at Hanford's \$12.2 billion Waste Treatment Plant, or vitrification plant, which is being built to treat up to 53 million gallons of waste held in underground tanks since as early as World War II."

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"The panel is needed to look at environmental cleanup at all three DOE sites with high-level radioactive waste and share information and lessons learned across sites, she said."

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"A large portion of the nation's DOE environmental cleanup costs are for tank waste programs, and tank waste cleanup will take the most time to finish, she said. In addition to Hanford, the Savannah River site in South Carolina and the Idaho National Laboratory also have high-level tank waste.

The panel will be organized as a new subcommittee to the Environmental Management Advisory Board, which provides advice to Triay, and will report through the full board to her. The new subcommittee will work closely with the Hanford Advisory Board, which provides DOE with advice on Hanford, Triay said."

The full article can be found at: <http://www.tri-cityherald.com/2010/05/21/1023593/new-doe-panel-to-focus-on-vit.html>

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ISRAEL 'OFFERED TO SELL SOUTH AFRICA NUCLEAR WEAPONS'

By Adrian Blomfield
The Telegraph (UK)
May 24, 2010

“Shimon Peres, the Israeli president and Nobel Peace Prize recipient, was facing deep embarrassment yesterday after it emerged that he allegedly offered to sell Apartheid South Africa nuclear weapons.”

“According to secret South African documents, Mr Peres, then Israel's defence minister, responded to a request in 1975 from the white minority government for Jericho Missiles by offering to fit them "in three different sizes", The Guardian reported.

The "three sizes" refer to conventional, chemical and nuclear weapons according to Sasha Polakow-Suransky, the American academic who uncovered a series of classified memos detailing South Africa's clandestine nuclear negotiations with Israel.”

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“The deal collapsed on cost issues. South Africa later developed six nuclear weapons, an arsenal long rumoured to have been built with Israeli help. According to academics, Israel gave South Africa 30g of tritium, a gas used to enhance the explosive power of nuclear weapons, in exchange for a large quantity of uranium.”

The full article can be found at:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/israel/7757687/Israel-offered-to-sell-South-Africa-nuclear-weapons.html>

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FORMER SECRETARY OF STATE CONCERNED BY KEY ELEMENT OF OBAMA'S NUCLEAR POLICY

By Justin Duckham
Talk Radio News Service
May 19, 2010

“Former Secretary of State James Baker III expressed hesitancy Wednesday over the Obama administration's pledge to not use nuclear force against countries that have signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty, even if they launch a biological or chemical attack against the U.S.

“I question the wisdom of that position,” Baker said during an appearance before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Baker, who served under President George Bush Sr., said his opinion stemmed from an interaction with the Iraqi Foreign Minister on the eve of the Gulf War, wherein Baker cautioned that the U.S. could use nuclear arms if the Iraqis attacked American forces with biological or chemical weapons.

“It is entirely possible, and even likely in my opinion, that Iraq did not use its chemical weapons against our forces because of that warning,” Baker said. “Years later when Saddam Hussein was captured, debriefed and asked why he did not use his chemical weapons, he recalled the substance of my statement.”

The restraint on nuclear force was included in the administration's Nuclear Posture Review unveiled in

April. Iran and North Korea, who have not signed the nonproliferation treaty, are still considered legitimate targets for a nuclear attack.”

The full article can be found at: <http://talkradionews.com/2010/05/former-secretary-of-state-concerned-by-key-element-of-obama%E2%80%99s-nuclear-policy/>
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Chem-Demil News

ANNISTON ARMY DEPOT - WILL LOCAL POLICE LOSE THEIR TOP-OF-THE-LINE RADIOS?

By Rebecca Walker
The Anniston Star
May 21, 2010

“Local officials are trying to figure out how to maintain an emergency radio system — currently costing nearly \$1 million a year to operate — once federal funding runs out.”

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“Jerry Jackson, director of Calhoun County’s 911, said the county has a “Cadillac” system. The 800-MHz radio system allows all emergency responders in the county to communicate with each other countywide. Older systems had “dead zones” in which police and firefighters couldn’t get a signal.

The 800-Mhz system is paid for through funding from the Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program. The county receives the funding because of the Anniston Chemical Disposal Facility at the Anniston Army Depot. Once the incinerator completes operations, scheduled for 2012, the funding will cease, leaving the radio system’s operating cost up to local agencies.”

The full article can be found at: http://www.annistonstar.com/view/full_story/7572177/article-Will-local-police-lose-their-top-of-the-line-radios-?instance=news_secondary
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MAJ. GEN. ROBERT DELL ORTON

Ruebel Funeral Home News Release
May, 2010

“Maj. Gen. Robert Dell Orton, of Little Rock, who managed America’s chemical and biological weapons and then supervised their destruction, died Wednesday morning [May 05, 2010] at his home in Little Rock. He was 70.”

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“During the Vietnam War he was chemical adviser to the Third Vietnamese Corps. Among his assignments were a stint with the Third Armored Division in Germany, professor of chemistry at the U. S. Military Academy at West Point, commander of the Indiana Army Depot, commander of Army chemical activity on Johnston Island in the North Pacific where chemical weapons were tested and stored and later destroyed, program manager for the production of binary chemical munitions, chief of chemical for the Army, and deputy commanding general and then commanding general at the Fort McClellan, Ala., Army Chemical School.

In his final role as program manager for chemical demilitarization, he structured an acquisition program

for the Defense Department to rapidly and safely destroy the world's most lethal non-nuclear weapons. Under his direction, the Pentagon obtained health and environmental permits and contracted for the design, constructing and operating chemical-destruction facilities and he advised eastern-block nations on the implementation of new arms controls."

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"A memorial service will be held Wednesday, May 19, 2010 at 10:00 a.m. at Pulaski Heights United Methodist Church to give soldier friends who are in Afghanistan a chance to attend. Burial will be at Arlington Cemetery in Arlington, VA on Thursday, August 19, 2010 at 1:00 p.m. In Lieu of flowers memorials should be made to the Walter Reed Society; P.O. Box 59611 Washington DC 20012-9611, the U.S.O.; P.O. Box 96860 Washington DC 20077-7677, the Chemical Corp Regimental Assoc.; P.O. Box 437 Fort Lindenwood MO 65473, the Methodist Children's Home of Little Rock, or The Methodist Church.

Arrangements are under the direction of Ruebel Funeral Home, www.ruebelfuneralhome.com"

The full article can be found at: <http://www.ruebelfuneralhome.com/obituaryindividual.php?id=813>
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