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Trends. Biopolitics and Anthrax: A United States Fiasco?

Editor

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After a concerted and well-publicized campaign to legitimize the necessity of inoculating all United States (US) military forces against anthrax, the US Secretary of Defense has decided to change the policy. The US will now inoculate only those forces most at risk to weaponized anthrax--primarily those forces in South Korea and Kuwait. The rationale for the change is that the US supply of vaccine is running out.

This denouement joins a host of problems with the original policy of mass inoculation. First, the biological warfare threat could easily be changed to another agent, even another variant of anthrax. Second, the incidence and prevalence of inoculation side effects through time has not been well-researched. Third, legitimate concerns with the first two points by capable military personnel led to some of them refusing to receive the inoculations and then being forced out of the military. And now US resolve to see a policy carried out has been derailed by a vaccine shortage--resulting from a manufacture shutdown at the only plant making the vaccine due to violations of safety, consistency, record-keeping, and sterility. Furthermore, a former US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is an unpaid board member of the corporation that owns the plant and may have an 11% interest in that corporation--raising (however, unwarranted) suspicions of special interests and dispensations.

It is quite probable that the inoculation program was significantly intended to signal US determination to confront current and future foes. This example of biopolitics, however, seems to have done the opposite. (See Anthrax vaccinations: Saddam wins again. (May 1, 1998). *IBPP*, 4(17); Derakhshan, F., & Fatehi, K. (1985). Bureaucracy as a leadership substitute: A review of history. *Leadership and Organization Development Journal*, 6, 13-16; Elliott, A. (1995). Symptoms of globalization: or, Mapping reflexivity in the postmodern age. *Political Psychology*, 16, 719-736; Klugman, J. (1986). The psychology of Soviet corruption, indiscipline, and resistance to reform. *Political Psychology*, 7, 67-82; Sciolino, E. (July 11, 2000). Shortage forces pentagon to cut anthrax inoculations. *The New York Times*, p. A14; Williams, N. M., Sjoberg, G., & Sjoberg, A. F. The bureaucratic personality: An alternate view. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 16, 389-405.) (Keywords: Anthrax, Biopolitics, Mass Inoculation, Military.)