

BOOK REVIEW

In *American Anthrax*, Jeanne Guillemin provides a page-turning account of the investigation into the 2001 anthrax attacks. This remarkable book combines history, politics, and science.

By MONICA A. AMARELO



American Anthrax - Fear, Crime, and the Investigation of the Nation's Deadliest Bioterror Attack by Jeanne Guillemin, a senior advisor to the Security Studies Program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, opens with an ambulance siren piercing the quiet of a residential neighborhood in Frederick, Maryland. Bruce Ivins, a microbiologist at the Army's Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases (USAMRIID) at Ft. Detrick, Md., was carried unconscious and taken to Frederick Memorial Hospital where he died two days later. Ivins was the prime suspect of the FBI's seven-year investigation into the deadly anthrax attacks of October 2001.

Guillemin's comprehensive story shows how it took the FBI hundreds of thousands of hours, coordinating with military and science experts, to trace and match the anthrax sample to a flask in Ivins's lab.

She revisits the case from the first anonymous letter containing anthrax to the ensuing public panic and the conspiracy theories that emerged after Ivins's suicide.

Her meticulous research illustrates how little was known about anthrax. Law enforcement and scientists were developing procedures and forensics techniques as the investigation unfolded.

While focusing on the criminal investigation, she also touches on U.S. policy towards biothreats - especially the prevalent idea of foreign bioterrorism. Guillemin

recommends a long overdue evaluation of the entire U.S. biodefense industry. If nothing else, her review of the FBI's scientific evidence reveals the approach to biosecurity used by professionals at USAMRIID was stuck in the Cold War and that the Army's lack of vigilance regarding laboratory security was nothing short of dangerous.

This is a thoughtful examination of America's fight against biological warfare. While she details the often confusing chain of events, Guillemin never forgets the five innocent people who died from the anthrax spores floating in post offices, news media mail rooms, and the senate offices on Capitol Hill. ■

American Anthrax - Fear, Crime, and the Investigation of the Nation's Deadliest Bioterror Attack (Henry Holt and Company MIT Press, 2011).

Monica A. Amarelo is the director of communications for the Federation of American Scientists. She is also the managing editor of the Public Interest Report (PIR).

Jeanne Guillemin is a senior advisor in the security studies program at the Massachusetts Institute of technology. She is the author of Anthrax: The Investigation of a Deadly Outbreak and Biological Weapons: From the Invention of State-Sponsored Programs to Contemporary Bioterrorism.