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June 1, 1994

THE ROCKEFELLER UNIV
JUN 1 0 1994

Joshua Lederberg, Ph.D.
Professor
Rockefeller University
1230 York Avenue
New York, NY 10021-6499

Dear Josh,

Thank you for sending me the copy of "Psychosocial Motivation for Biological Terrorism." I read it with interest. I agree with you that he does not explore very deeply the psychosocial issues involved. It is, however, a very nice summary of and set of references to literature on biological warfare. I do not personally favor using concepts from individual psychology to understand group behaviors. Concepts such as "drive" and "motivation," have little applicability at this level of analysis. In contrast, the concepts of goals, functions, and techniques are much more applicable to understanding terrorist groups. "Psychotic thought" is rarely a component of terrorist activity. I do believe the individual terrorist is often managing issues of self-esteem similar to the problems described by Jerry Post.

Recently, I was reminded of several important components of any potential biological warfare. I asked several members of our department to dispose of old items in a Revco freezer. The individuals felt "uncomfortable" handling the items. The ability of terrorists to use biological warfare will require a high level of sophistication and psychological abilities to manage tremendous fears of contamination. This is rarely found without substantial education and sophistication.

Secondly, the recent outbreak of streptococcal infection in Britain highlights two areas of concern. Firstly, the impact on communities and the experience of terror, as described in our previous papers, is substantial even when there is only minimal risk of spread and no "terrorist" involvement. I am increasingly impressed with the potential effects of the appearance of novel biological agents in communities and nations regardless of whether these are introduced by terrorists or natural means. The recent Hanta virus outbreak and the past Ebola outbreak are similar small examples of community terror derived from biological agents initially experienced as uncontrolled and uncontrollable. Since the probability of the appearance of such novel biological agents is high, I believe we can anticipate many of the psychosocial components of community exposure and fears of contamination over the next decades.

I have enclosed a copy of a number of articles which we use in our recent course on traumatic stress care at the American Psychiatric Association. You may also be interested in our recent book published by Cambridge University Press (*Individual and Community Responses to Trauma and Disaster: The Structure of Human Chaos*, R. J. Ursano, Brian G. McCaughey, and C. S. Fullerton). This volume includes a chapter by Bonnie Green on the psychological effects of toxic contamination as well as one by Lars Weisaeth examining several technological disasters including the Chernobyl exposure and its effects on the Scandinavian population.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,

Robert J. Ursano, M.D.
Professor and Chairman

RJU:mg

Attachment