

THE NEW YORK TIMES, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2001

In 'Uncharted Territory,' Giuliani

Campaigns Against Fear

By JENNIFER STEINHAUER

Yesterday, soon after the United States Capitol closed, and the world learned that more than two dozen people on the Senate majority leader's staff had been exposed to a potent form of anthrax, and Gov. George

E. Pataki and other state workers began taking Cipro, and environmental testing began at City Hall, Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani held a news conference with four large puppets.

The puppets were part of an effort to publicize a cultural festival. But the message went beyond tourism.

It was part of Mr. Giuliani's studied effort

to appear calm, even relaxed, in the face of scary news and general uncertainty. At the heart of Mr. Giuliani's message, one he is increasingly alone in urging, is a conviction that panic can be as damaging, perhaps even more damaging, than germs, and that things could be worse. "So far this is all very, very psychological," he said yesterday, before making a reference to the London blitz of World War II. "We're not being bombed every day, like the people of London were bombed every day and still able to go on with their lives. So we can be just as brave as they were. This is easy, a lot easier than what they went through."

Other officials, including President Bush and Governor Pataki, have urged Ameri-

cans to live normal lives, to triumph over fear. But Mr. Bush's administration has also issued terrifyingly vague warnings of more terror to come. Mr. Pataki is evacuating state offices and is taking antibiotics after anthrax bacteria were found in his Manhattan office suite. Public health experts now say there is no need to take antibiotics before being tested.

Mr. Giuliani says that against the advice of people close to him he is taking no medicines for anthrax. At news conferences filled with questions about fear, he still talks about the Yankees, encourages people to go to restaurants and peppers the conversation with joking asides. "A little culture," he said yesterday, before he tugged at the snout of

the elephant puppet. "This is the kind of culture I like. Not like anthrax cultures."

Somebody sneezed. "Want to get checked?" the mayor said.

He wasn't serious. "Only kidding," he said. "We've got to joke about this. It's the only way we're going to all get through it."

He does not mock those who are fearful. He answers hundreds of questions, doles out information and, after a month of daily funerals and anthrax scares, acknowledges that these are frightening times.

"This is very uncharted territory that everybody is in," he said yesterday.

Like officials in Albany and Washington,

Mr. Giuliani seeks to balance the appetite for information against the potential for hysteria. But his tone is distinctive. He seems to lean harder than most against panic.

"Obviously there are two competing points of view here," said Dr. Richard Fried, a Manhattan specialist in infectious diseases who treated the woman at NBC who contracted anthrax. "There is the necessity for public officials to keep people free of a panic and to be realistic about what the threat is. And those two paths intersect along the way."

Here is what he is up against: Every day for almost a week, there has been a new anthrax scare in an office building in New York City and in other places around the nation. A vast majority have been false alarms, but two New Yorkers have been infected. Offices, including his own yesterday, have been tested for contaminants. He must convey a flurry of medical and technical information to people who have already watched two office towers fall and heard of a baby who became ill with anthrax after visiting an office building for a birthday party.

But his demeanor is calm, at times insouciant. He speaks frequently of dining out. He likes it, and wants others to do more of it. When he is questioned beyond what he thinks is reasonable during his daily briefing, he will abruptly turn the topic to sports.

On Sunday, a reporter asked: "There's a suspicion in Edison, N.J., of a Ford worker that perhaps this individual was exposed to anthrax. Could you update us on the status of that?"

Mr. Giuliani replied: "Could somebody update me on the Giants score? You have the Giants score, Steve? Giants winning? Good. And we've got a big Yankee game this afternoon. Unbelievable game last night, unbelievable. Almost got a heart attack."

The reporter tried to continue: "There was a report this morning that..." The mayor cut the reporter off. "Can you imagine what Mariano Rivera must be like?" Mr. Giuliani said. "He probably has like ice water in his veins."

He tries to draw lines, at least on the surface, to divide his many messages. Puppets are ushered out when his health commissioner comes into a room for a briefing, and he rarely updates the number of dead at a news conference for lighter matters. He can sometimes seem a bit detached, insisting that most New Yorkers are not afraid when conversations around the city suggest otherwise.

The mayor has also chosen to play down the facts of one case, without altering its essential truth, apparently to keep the lines between threat and fear starkly drawn.

For instance, while he immediately acknowledged that a baby whose mother took him to ABC News had shown symptoms of anthrax exposure, he never revealed that the baby had fallen quite ill and that his kidneys nearly failed. The child was given antibiotics and has recovered.

And while Mr. Giuliani said that

everything was being tested at ABC, behind the scenes, ABC executives revealed this week, he was holding the F.B.I.'s feet to the fire, deeply displeased with the speed at which the bureau was working. For security reasons, he and his police commissioner are loath to give out the sort of details that would provide the most comfort, such as what the city is doing to secure the subway system. The mayor's own public schedule is held under tighter wraps than usual.

"I think it is always a very difficult question, how much information you give out," said Jerome M. Hauer, the former head of the mayor's Office of

Emergency Management. "It is important that you give information out on a frequent basis, but it has to be accurate. You can't let the desire for information drive it. Because inaccurate information can be very very harmful, as we have seen that over the years with the Internet."

"The balance you have to strike is realizing that we live in an era where there are threats now, and letting people know that you can't succumb to these threats," Mr. Hauer added. "I think the mayor is right on this. We need to be cautious, but we can't crawl into holes. We need to go about living."

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