NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

Anthrax Hits CBS

Aide to Dan Rather diagnosed with cutaneous infection

An assistant to CBS News anchorman Dan Rather tested positive for anthrax yesterday, the third case tied to a network-TV news operation in the city.

The woman, whose name was not released, sought treatment Oct. 1 after noticing a slight swelling on her cheek that she initially thought was a bug bite, Rather said in a news conference at the Manhattan broadcast center.

Three days later, the woman went to her doctor and was treated with penicillin. At that time, doctors had no reason to suspect she had come in contact with anthrax.

After learning last Friday that an assistant at NBC News had contracted cutaneous anthrax after opening a letter addressed to anchorman Tom Brokaw, the CBS aide contacted the city Department of Health and the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta. ABC employees say they do not recall any suspicious mail.

Doctors then began treating her with the antibiotic ciprofloxacin. Nasal swabs done on the woman did not detect anthrax, but a biopsy of the swollen tissue, the results of which came back yesterday, confirmed she had the disease.

Reported by staff writers Sean Gardiner, Verne Gay, Curtis L. Taylor and Joshua Robin in New York, Tom Brune in Washington and Jordan Rau in Albany. Written by Gardiner.

It's the fourth anthrax-related incident in the city in the past week. In addition to Brokaw's assistant, who had a severe rash on her chest and neck after touching anthrax sent in a letter to NBC's 30 Rockefeller Plaza building, a 7-month-old boy who on Sept. 28 had visited his mother's workplace at ABC News on West 66th Street developed a rash on his arm. No spores were found in that building.

Tests confirmed Wednesday that trace amounts of anthrax were found in Gov. George Pataki's offices at 633 Third Ave., although no one there has been found to have contracted the disease. Officials announced new precautions at other state buildings, including the Capitol in Albany. Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver (D-Manhattan) was awaiting results from a nasal swab, also a precautionary measure.

Medical authorities reported that initial tests had found no new cases of anthrax exposure on Capitol Hill in Washington, while federal agents began taking a closer look at New Jersey after a Postal Service employee at the Hamilton Township, N.J., facility tested positive for cutaneous anthrax. A second worker is awaiting test results.

Officials say 31 people in a Senate office building in Washington tested positive for exposure to anthrax after a letter sent to Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle's office was opened Monday. Two weeks ago in Florida, a photo editor for American Media, which publishes supermarket tabloids including the National Enquirer, died of inhalation anthrax.

The letters delivered to Brokaw's and Daschle's offices were both postmarked Sept. 18 and sent from the Trenton facility, which collects mail from 46 central New Jersey post offices. The FBI and Postal Service have sent "additional resources from both of our agencies," said FBI Deputy Director Thomas Pickard. "We're going where our logical leads take us."

U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft has made it clear the investigation is not close to solving who sent the letters and that little has been ruled out, from a domestic source to an international terrorist.

An emotional Daschle, in a speech on the Senate floor, praised his staff for bearing up under the strain. "This attack was meant to undercut that spir-

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Now, CBS Gets Hit

ANTHRAX from A5

it," he said. "What I have seen over the past three days has show me that the attack has missed its target."

Senate and House office buildings were closed as technicians in protective gear swept every office for anthrax. In the Capitol, the House remained closed but the Senate conducted business on the floor and senators worked out of offices there, in conference rooms and other nooks.

Meanwhile, Kenyan Health Minister Sam Ongeri said a letter sent from the United States to an unnamed businessman in Nairobi contained anthrax. Justice Department officials said they could not confirm the report.

Ongeri said the contaminated letter was posted from Atlanta on Sept. 8, three days before the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, and had passed through Miami.

In New York, officials said the CBS assistant, who is in her mid-20s and is from England, didn't miss a day of work. She's a triathlete who competes in Ironman competitions, and she continued training every day.

Dr. Steve Ostroff, who heads the CDC, said that at this point "she already has, for the most part, recovered."

Andrew Heyward, CBS News president, said it's unknown how the woman came in contact with anthrax. Neither she nor her co-workers could recall handling any suspicious letters or packages.

Dr. Neal Cohen, who heads the city's Department of Health, said officials are working on the assumption that the CBS assistant was contaminated after touching granules of anthrax delivered in an envelope. The woman works in a small anteroom near Rather's office, a level above the CBS studio.

Cohen said because no other staffers have experienced symptoms, "we see no public health concerns for CBS employees or anyone who would be coming into the building."

No other workers for CBS have been tested, including Rather.

Stating that "our biggest problem isn't anthrax, our biggest problem is fear," Rather vowed that the anthrax scare will not deter the network.

"We are resolute," Rather said. "We will not flinch. We will not bend. We will not swerve. We will get out a first-class evening news broadcast this evening."

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