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## Iraq's Germ Warfare Threat

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When half a million American service men and women were committed to the Persian Gulf War, there was little fear that **Iraq's** aggressive **Saddam** Hussein would hit them with nuclear weapons. That's because -- despite misguided and hypocritical criticism -- Israel had destroyed **Iraq's** nuclear facilities in a 1981 F-16 raid.

But there was concern that **Saddam** might use chemical and/or biological warfare against our forces. There still is controversy about whether some of our people were purposely or accidentally exposed to chemical agents.

Only a few weeks ago, the United States seemed poised to take some limited acts of war against **Iraq**, perhaps firing cruise missiles and sending bombers. It was because **Saddam** was blocking U.N. inspection of potential chemical, biological and nuclear development sites, and was threatening to shoot down U.S. U-2 reconnaissance aircraft.

When it comes to biological weapons -- "germ warfare" -- special mention has been made of infection by "**anthrax**." That's a disease usually occurring in sheep and cattle, not humans. But **anthrax** spores can be used in artillery shells and in other ways, with a very small amount being able to cause human hemorrhaging and death.

That's scary. **Saddam** is reported to have 2,100 gallons of **anthrax** toxin plus missiles. If you had thought the danger was remote, that idea should have been dispelled by the order yesterday by Defense Secretary William Cohen that all 1.5 million men and women in U.S. military uniforms be inoculated against **anthrax**.

That may seem rather extreme, since it includes personnel who have no prospect of ever being exposed to **Saddam's** actions. It also raises another question: What if **Saddam** does not limit his bacteriological threat to **anthrax** -- but chooses any number of other diseases he also might cultivate? Our troops won't be inoculated against them all.

It is wise to take defensive action. **Saddam** is still defying inspection and prohibiting checks at many suspect locations. The only full solution will be the removal of **Saddam** from power. We are not prepared to accomplish that now. It's something we should have done at the time of our Persian Gulf War victory. But now we are not even threatening the military actions that seemed close to "go" just a few weeks ago. No solution is in sight.

Editor & Publisher

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