

# What's Saddam Hiding?; Potential Of Iraq's Germ Warfare

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WHAT'S **SADDAM** HIDING?

STEVE KROFT, co-host:

After a week of military buildups and international diplomacy, UN weapons inspectors are back in Iraq looking for **Saddam** Hussein's biggest secret: a biological weapons arsenal believed to contain enough deadly germs to kill millions. **Saddam** has been so good at hiding it, that the US government believed it had been completely destroyed. It wasn't until three years after the Gulf War ended that a high-level Iraqi defector gave them the bad news: Not only had **Saddam's** most lethal capabilities survived, the UN Special Commission was being deliberately deceived.

(Footage of General Al-Sammarrai interview)

KROFT: (Voiceover) And is the man who told them: General Wafiq Al-Sammarrai, the highest ranking defector from the Iraqi regime who has not been assassinated? We tracked him down overseas a few days ago.

General WAFIQ AL-SAMMARRAI: (Through Translator) The biological weapons project was a very special project. Only a few scientists knew about it.

(Footage of **Saddam** Hussein in meeting with members of military)

KROFT: (Voiceover) General Sammarrai knew because he was **Saddam's** former chief of military intelligence, and at one point he had been asked to select targets for possible biological attacks.

Gen. AL-SAMMARRAI: (Through Translator) Iraq still these kinds of weapons. There were no less than 200 containers of biological agents. More than half were powder which can remain active for a long time.

KROFT: Do you think he plans to use these weapons?

Gen. AL-SAMMARRAI: (Through Translator) If he had to.

KROFT: Against whom would he use them?

Gen. AL-SAMMARRAI: (Through Translator) The Iranians were lucky the war ended in August, 1988. If the war had continued, they would have been a target for biological as well as chemical weapons. **Saddam** personally asked a working committee of the general's staff to prepare a plan to hit Teheran.

(Footage from inside car of traffic on Iraqi highway)

KROFT: (Voiceover) It's difficult to tell whether everything General Sammarrai says about Iraq's biological weapons capability is true simply because **Saddam** has blocked UN inspectors from verifying their worst suspicions.

(Footage from confrontation with Iraqi military and UN officials)

Unidentified Man #1: You take your hand off my inspector now!

Unidentified Man #2: But I have instructions from my boss.

Man #1: You take your hand off...

(Footage of UN inspectors inspecting barrels of chemicals; factory being blown up; barrels of germs and equipment being destroyed; missile warheads)

KROFT: (Voiceover) But much of what he's told them has since been confirmed, and there is no doubt that **Saddam** has already manufactured enough germs to kill millions of people. Take this factory at Al-Hakom. Before UN inspectors blew it up last year, they combed every inch of it, and what they discovered wasn't chicken feed. Chicken feed is what the Iraqis claim to be making here, but three

deadly biological warfare agents, anthrax, botulinum and alpha-toxin, were found on the equipment and on the ground, along with drying and milling equipment crucial to turning them into weapons. UN reports say some of it had been loaded into missile warheads and into 400-pound bombs.

Dr. MATTHEW MESELSON: Whether those weapons would have worked effectively, I do not know. It is not a simple matter to make an effective biological weapon.

(Footage of Dr. Meselson studying document; anthrax germ through view of microscope)

KROFT: (Voiceover) Dr. Matthew Meselson is a Harvard professor and one of the world's leading authorities on biological warfare. He says anthrax is the most worrisome of the biological agents **Saddam** has produced, but it requires a high degree of technical sophistication to separate and collect the microscopic spores that make it a deadly biological agent, even though the bacteria itself is relatively easy to grow.

Dr. MESELSON: A weapon requires generating a very special kind of aerosol. And that is not easy.

KROFT: A mist.

Dr. MESELSON: A very fine mist.

KROFT: Mm-hmm.

Dr. MESELSON: Because only very small particles can reach and be retained in the depths of the lungs, and that's where inhalation anthrax gets started. It is almost invariably fatal and takes exceedingly small quantity in order to initiate infection.

KROFT: I mean, how does it work?

Dr. MESELSON: It generates a toxin and causes the production of certain things called cytokines, which puts you into shock, and that essentially kills you.

KROFT: The shock kills you?

Dr. MESELSON: Yes. It's toxic shock that kills.

KROFT: How long does it take?

Dr. MESELSON: Once symptoms begin, the average time before death is between two and three days.

(Footage of aerial view of Soviet city)

KROFT: (Voiceover) Much of what we know about the deadly properties of anthrax was learned accidentally in 1979 at a Soviet biological weapons factory in the city of Sverdlosk. It took the Russians 15 years to finally acknowledge what happened.

Dr. MESELSON: An anthrax aerosol escaped from the military laboratory and went downwind; killed sheep out to 50 k--kilometers downwind; killed people out to the end of the city limit, which was about four kilometers.

KROFT: How many people?

Dr. MESELSON: About 70 people died.

KROFT: At a news conference the other day, the secretary of defense held up a bag of sugar and said, 'This amount of--of anthrax could wipe out a major city.'

Dr. MESELSON: Yes, I'm--that's correct--if properly dispersed. W--I've calculated what might have been released at Sverdlosk, and my calculation resulted in saying that four milligrams--that's four one-thousandths of one gram--might have been the amount of anthrax aerosol that was leaked out or somehow escaped from that Soviet facility that caused 70--approximately 70 people to die downwind. Y--you couldn't even see four milligrams, it's such a small quantity.

KROFT: You couldn't?

Dr. MESELSON: No. It's just a little, tiny speck.

KROFT: One tiny drop?

Dr. MESELSON: Four milligrams of dried anthrax spores? No. It'd be much smaller than a drop. A drop would weigh a couple hundred milligrams if you mean a drop from an eyedropper. So this is an incredibly tiny amount of stuff.

(Footage of barrels being filled with substance; missiles being destroyed; land being tested for contamination; missiles being placed on the ground)

KROFT: (Voiceover) So what's happened to the 900 pounds of anthrax that **Saddam** is believed to have manufactured at facilities like this one and to the 25 missiles Iraq now admits were equipped with biological warheads? Iraq has told the UN Special Commission that it's all been destroyed, but offers no proof or documentation. The UN Special Commission believes it's just as likely that they're stashed somewhere underground in the desert, part of a shell game that has been going on since before General Sammarrai defected.

At the time you were still in Iraq. W--was the government deceiving the UN inspectors?

Gen. AL-SAMMARRAI: (Through Translator) There was a meeting in the Presidential Palace. **Saddam** said the special commission is a temporary measure and we will fool them and we will bribe them and the matter will be over in a few months.

KROFT: Did he say how he was going to fool them?

Gen. AL-SAMMARRAI: (Through Translator) He thinks that everything is possible if you have enough money.

KROFT: Was he talking about bribing the individual members of the--of the inspection team? Or was he talking about giving money or contracts to the governments that were participating in the inspections?

Gen. AL-SAMMARRAI: (Through Translator) I think both. We in the Iraqi intelligence agency gave away presents of hard currency and gold to other intelligence agencies in the world and to officials who are now ministers in different governments, but I can't name names.

KROFT: Did he say who he was going to bribe?

Gen. AL-SAMMARRAI: (Through Translator) He did not single out names, but he did not mean the Americans and the British.

KROFT: So you're saying--you're saying that the Ameri--he felt the Americans and the British were the only people that were really taking this job seriously?

Gen. AL-SAMMARRAI: (Through Translator) I don't say that only them who take the mission seriously, but they are the most serious.

(Footage of explosions on desert; men entering factories)

KROFT: (Voiceover) But **Saddam** clearly underestimated the UN inspectors' resolve. And in the months before the US contingent was ordered to leave the country, there were a number of incidents in which Iraq was caught hiding or destroying evidence of biological weapons.

On September 25th, UN inspectors were making a routine visit to an Iraqi food testing laboratory when they encountered several men with briefcases who were trying to hide from them. An American microbiologist who was leading the team opened the briefcases and found laboratory kits for testing three deadly biological organisms, along with documents and a logbook which indicated the lab had conducted tests in secret for eight months under the supervision of the special security organization, the same people the UN believes has responsibility for hiding biological weapons.

Who guards these weapons?

Gen. AL-SAMMARRAI: (Through Translator) The special security.

KROFT: The Republican Guard.

Gen. AL-SAMMARRAI: (Through Translator) They're part of the special Republican Guard.

KROFT: Were they hiding and moving these weapons when you were still in Iraq?

Gen. AL-SAMMARRAI: (Through Translator) Yes.

KROFT: And you knew about it?

Gen. AL-SAMMARRAI: (Through Translator) Yes. Once I saw a number of Scud missiles being transported. The weapons are there, but your problem is not the weapons. Your problem is **Saddam**.

(Footage of dead Kurds)

KROFT: (Voiceover) What he means is **Saddam** has already demonstrated that he's not afraid to use

weapons of mass destruction. General Sammarrai was there when **Saddam** decided to use chemical weapons on the Kurds.

Gen. AL-SAMMARRAI: (Through Translator) **Saddam** decided to send an aerial strike of 50 aircraft, each of which was loaded with four bombs totaling 200 bombs. The casualties were around 5,000. It was revenge for the Kurds taking part in the Iranian offensive.

(Footage of Hussein in meeting with military)

KROFT: (Voiceover) General Sammarrai says **Saddam's** inner circle talked about the possibility of using agents to carry out a biological **terrorist** attack on the US. But he says it was not a high priority and he knew of no serious plans to do so. But the US government takes the potential threats seriously.

Colonel DAVID FRANZ: Through this combination airlock shower...

(Footage of Colonel Franz giving tour of research center)

KROFT: (Voiceover) Colonel David Franz is commander of the US Army Medical Research Center of Infectious Diseases at Ft. Detrick, Maryland, which has one of the largest biocontainment laboratories in the world. His job is to protect US troops from weapons like anthrax. He has also served as chief inspector on three UN missions to Iraq.

Col. FRANZ: I think technically the Iraqis have--have the capability to produce these weapons in--in an effective manner.

KROFT: So you believe he has done field tests?

Col. FRANZ: Yes.

KROFT: On humans or on animals?

Col. FRANZ: On animals.

(Footage of missiles being fired; spray from helicopter; close-up of airplane)

KROFT: (Voiceover) Colonel Franz says Iraq has experimented extensively with delivery systems, primarily bombs and artillery rounds, which is not particularly an efficient way to deliver biological weapons because the heat can destroy much of the biological agent. He is also experimenting with aerial sprays from planes and helicopters, but biological agents work best when dispersed at ground level.

Can somebody in--drive through New York City spraying a very fine mist--an aerosol?

Col. FRANZ: In theory, yes. An aerosol generator could be placed on--on really any kind of a vehicle.

KROFT: They noisy?

Col. FRANZ: The efficient ones are quite noisy, yes.

KROFT: Can you see the mist?

Col. FRANZ: You might be able to see a--a fine mist right near where it's released. But a--a few meters away you would not be able to see it.

KROFT: Any smell, taste?

Col. FRANZ: Not necessarily a smell or a taste.

KROFT: That's pretty scary.

Col. FRANZ: It is.

(Footage of work inside research laboratory; Dr. Meselson studying documents)

KROFT: (Voiceover) There is some good news. Anthrax inhalation can be effectively treated with antibiotics if caught in time. And Colonel Franz says the US government is much better prepared to deal with a biological **terrorist** attack than it was just a few years ago. And Professor Meselson says it's not nearly as easy to carry one out or as likely to happen as some might think. In fact, he says, it's already been tried.

Dr. MESELSON: The Aum cult in Japan, we are told, tried to release an anthrax aerosol across the street from the American embassy. Nothing happened. They didn't know how to do it.

KROFT: So it's trickier than most people think?

Col. FRANZ: It is. It's--it's not something that you're going to do in your bathtub and put in a perfume bottle and go out and attack your neighbors.

(Footage of airplane landing; UN inspectors getting off plane; Presidential Palace in Iraq; portrait of **Saddam** Hussein)

KROFT: (Voiceover) As UN inspectors return to the field, they're returning to the old status quo. There are no guarantees they will have any more access or any more success locating **Saddam's** weapons or the documents that may hold the secrets of his biological arsenal.

Gen. AL-SAMMARRAI: (Through Translator) It's impossible for **Saddam** to allow the inspectors to enter the Presidential Palace. I emphasize and I am sure that these documents are there in the Presidential Palace, but I am sure that the inspectors will never be allowed inside.

(Footage of Al-Sammarrai)

KROFT: (Voiceover) And there's one more thing the general is sure of.

Gen. AL-SAMMARRAI: (Through Translator) If you think that **Saddam** will give you the weapons, you are mistaken.

KROFT: Never?

Gen. AL-SAMMARRAI: (Foreign language spoken) Never.

(Announcements)

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