

Canada Saves the World: 11 Monkeys?

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How "Socialist" Medical Lab in Canada Saved the World from a New Flu Pandemic - {DL}

<http://images.art.com/images/products/large/10053000/10053867.jpg>

A Sickening Error

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It's enough to make you sick isn't it?

Some \$40 billion spent on "Homeland Security" in 2004 and another \$50 billion going into the same sinkhole in 2005, with billions of those dollars specifically targeting "bio terror," and a mistake (or stupid decision) by a biological lab made last fall had a deadly flu virus capable of creating a global pandemic getting mailed out to several thousand unsuspecting testing labs.

If just one of those test kits were to infect just one person who then went home on a rush-hour bus or subway, we could in no time have millions of people dying of flu-against which most people have zero immunity.

And how was this accidental terror "device" detected?

Not by the alert folks at Tom Ridge's or Mike Chertoff's Homeland Security Department, but by an alert technician working for the "socialist health care system" in Manitoba, Canada, who tested the virus in the kit and determined that it was the same strain of flu virus that caused a worldwide flu pandemic in 1957 and who immediately alerted the World Health Organization and the U.S. Center for Disease Control.

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The alert Canadian lab detected and identified the virus sample on March 25, but thousands of the samples have been shipped over the past six months.

I should note that this WHO, which so efficiently set about notifying labs in the 16 countries that had received shipments of the kits containing the deadly flu strain, is the same WHO that has been regularly criticized--and had its funding threatened--by the fundamentalist, anti-abortionist Bush White House and the Schiavo-obsessed Republican-led Congress.

If it were up to the Homeland Security folks to look out for our health and safety, the dreaded H2N2 Asian flu virus strain unleashed by Newtown, Ohio-based Meridian Bioscience Inc.'s error might be spreading around the globe already, infecting and killing millions.

Compounding the irony of this still active threat (hundreds of the shipped test kits are still unaccounted for) is the fact that years of cuts in public health spending, with the resulting shuttering of public clinics in poor neighborhoods, years of cuts in Medicaid funding for low-income families, and the ongoing trend of companies dropping health coverage of their employees (every year for the past four years, another four percent of U.S. employers terminate health benefits for employees, while many more drop coverage for dependents), are leaving millions of Americans with no access to a physician. This situation makes it all the more likely that any flu epidemic, when it strikes, will spread like wildfire in the US, as people will be less likely to get treatment early and more likely to continue working and transmitting their disease to others.

This latest accident, which makes a joke of all the worry about the continuing threat of bird flu in Asia, shows clearly how our terrorism-obsessed political leadership is missing the real issues while wasting vast amounts of money and energy focusing on terrorism instead of on society's real issues.

Dave Lindorff is the author of Killing Time: an Investigation into the Death Row Case of Mumia Abu-Jamal. His new book of CounterPunch columns titled "This Can't be Happening!" is published by Common Courage Press. Information about both books and other work by Lindorff can be found at www.thiscantbehappening.net .

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