

US anthrax samples shipped to dozens of labs in past decade: report

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The US military shipped live anthrax samples to dozens of facilities in the country and to seven other nations over the past decade, a government report found Thursday, blaming faulty specimen killing and poor testing.

In all, 86 labs have received live [anthrax](#) specimens since 2005, the report said, following up on an embarrassing mistake for the military.

The facilities were located in Australia, Britain, Canada, Germany, Italy, Japan and South Korea, as well as 20 American states and the US capital Washington.

Although no illnesses have been linked to the samples, 21 people who came into direct contact with the specimens were given antibiotics as a precautionary measure.

The military revealed its mistakes in handling the samples at the end of May, saying a specimen used in a training exercise may not have been inert.

The US Army's Dugway Proving Ground in Utah is the largest producer of inactivated anthrax, but it conducted much less testing than other military facilities, the report found.

"The development and implementation of ineffective irradiation and viability testing procedures took place over the last decade," said the

report by a Defense Department committee tasked with reviewing the incidents.

"This represents an institutional problem at DPG and does not necessarily reflect on any one individual."

All of the live anthrax samples, used for research and testing, received by the labs were sent by DPG.

The review was ordered by Deputy Defense Secretary Robert Work on May 29 to try to determine why anthrax specimens were not killed before shipment after the military admitted the mistake.

In the report, the Pentagon stresses that anthrax is "an exceptionally resilient organism."

The committee found that a critical problem was a lack of technical information in the scientific community to help create protocols around anthrax inactivation.

"This has contributed to the creation of protocols that do not completely or permanently sterilize BA with gamma irradiation," it added.

The report called for irradiation standards and viability testing procedures to address this "scientific community-wide problem."

In the meantime, the Pentagon has issued a moratorium on the shipping of inactivated anthrax from its facilities.

Officials have insisted there is no threat to public health and that the small concentrations of live anthrax had been shipped in several layers of air-tight packaging.

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