

69-2

# The SUNDAY Times

Papers may vary outside  
metropolitan Washington area

The Washington Times

OCTOBER 21, 2001 www.washingtontimes.com ★

## Anthrax found in House building

■ Mail bundling machine  
tests positive, and a D.C.  
postal worker is watched.

By Joyce Howard Price  
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Traces of anthrax were found yesterday in a House office building that processes mail for lawmakers, the first evidence of anthrax contamination on the House side of the Capitol.

The anthrax was found in a bundling machine inside the Ford Office Building, three blocks from the Capitol. The machine processes mail for the Longworth Office Building, according to a joint statement from House Speaker J. Dennis Hastert, Illinois Republican, and House Minority Leader Richard A. Gephardt, Missouri Democrat.

The Longworth Building is where Mr. Gephardt and more than a hundred other House members have their offices.

"All other bundling machine tests are negative. Because of the suspension of mail delivery, it is not known whether any affected mail was delivered," the House leaders said in their joint statement.

The anthrax sample in the Ford Office Building mailroom turned up during a precautionary "environmental sampling" of the entire Capitol complex, ordered last week after an anthrax-laced letter, postmarked Trenton, N.J., was opened in the offices of Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle, South Dakota Democrat.

So far, 28 Capitol Hill employees — most of them Daschle staffers — have tested positive for exposure to

see ANTHRAX, page A4

# ANTHRAX

From page A1

the anthrax bacteria in what's being called a case of bioterrorism. Initially, 31 persons were said to be exposed, but three were removed from the list following more complete testing, officials said yesterday.

The latest anthrax discovery on the Hill came as Mayor Anthony A. Williams announced at a press conference that a D.C. postal worker has been hospitalized, possibly due to exposure to anthrax. However, a federal health official, who also took part in the press conference, said initial tests on the man had proved negative for anthrax.

"A gentleman out at Fairfax Hospital is now being treated. There is a possible situation. The Centers for Disease Control [and Prevention] is now out there monitoring the situation and tests are being done," Mr. Williams said.

"There's reason to believe . . . there's a threat there that has to be managed," Mr. Williams said. He said the man worked at the Brentwood facility, which handled mail that went to the Capitol.

D.C. Health Director Ivan Walks declined to identify the patient. "But his clinical picture makes us suspicious," he said. The man checked into the Virginia hospital Friday night and is reported to be suffering from flu-like symptoms.

However, Dr. Rita Khabbaz of the CDC told reporters: "I can't tell you this is going to be a case of anthrax at this point." She said the man is "clinically stable."

Also yesterday, about 150 FBI agents and postal inspectors swarmed a New Jersey postal route in search of the mailbox where someone may have deposited letters containing anthrax that were sent to

Mr. Daschle and to NBC anchorman Tom Brokaw. A Trenton letter carrier has contracted anthrax, and investigators are searching homes, apartments and businesses along her route for clues.

The FBI has traced two anthrax-tainted letters to a single mail sorting box in a postal facility in New Jersey, Special Agent Sandra Carroll told Associated Press. FBI agents also removed at least one mailbox along the ailing mail carrier's route, but they would not discuss its location or type.

Nationally, eight persons have contracted anthrax, including a Florida man who died, and 37 others have tested positive for exposure to the bacteria. Yet, all those who have been exposed or ill are receiving antibiotics and are expected to recover.

As for the discovery of anthrax in the Ford Office Building, hazardous waste specialists doing environmental sampling took swabs in the facility Wednesday but did not get results until yesterday.

At this point, said Lt. Dan Nichols, Capitol Police spokesman, "it's too early for anyone to draw any conclusions. We don't know if there is another letter [tainted with anthrax that's been sent to Congress] or if this is cross-contamination" from the letter to Mr. Daschle.

At a news conference yesterday, Mr. Nichols explained that all mail to Congress initially goes to an off-site center, located several miles away, where it's separated for the House and the Senate.

Dr. John Eisold, the Capitol physician, who also spoke at the news conference, said employees who work in the Ford Office Building mailroom will be tested for exposure to the bacteria and will be put on antibiotics.

In a telephone conversation with CDC officials just before the press

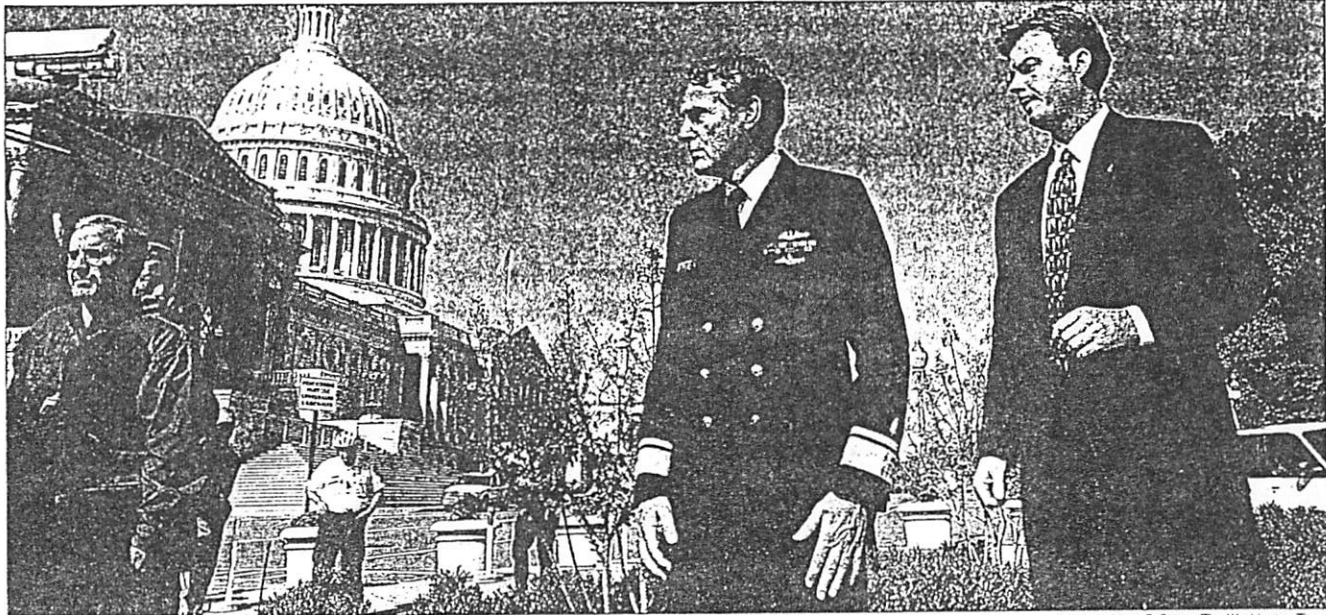


Photo by Mary F. Calvert/The Washington Times

Dr. John Eisold (right), attending physician for the Capitol, and Capitol Police spokesman Lt. Dan Nichols spoke about the discovery of anthrax yesterday.

conference, Dr. Eisold said it was decided there would be no screening beyond those people who work in that particular mailroom.

He was unable to say how many employees would be affected, nor did he know if the bacillus detected in the bundling machine is the same as that found in the letter to Mr. Daschle.

"We have tested over 4,000 people [on Capitol Hill] and have found no further positive findings, other than what we have reported. At this point, none of the people who demonstrated exposure have become symptomatic . . . all 28 are very healthy," the Capitol physician said.

Dr. Eisold added it's been a "great asset" for those searching for anthrax in Capitol Hill buildings that the House and Senate office buildings were shut down Thursday and Friday.

The House received some criticism when it decided to close down operations last Wednesday to allow for anthrax testing.

"The goal now is for the Senate to come back Monday and the House on Tuesday," Lt. Nichols said.

John Feehery, spokesman for Mr. Hastert, said later the House does intend to convene Tuesday. The meeting place could be somewhere other than the House chamber, he said, but added that he believes relo-

cation is unlikely.

The Ford building is the third Capitol Hill site where anthrax has been discovered. Mr. Daschle's office, where it was first confirmed, is located in the Hart Senate Office Building. The bacteria were subsequently identified in a mail center across the street from the Hart building.

In an interview yesterday on CNN, Rep. Maxine Waters, California Democrat, said she was not surprised to learn that anthrax was also found in a House office building. "I expected anthrax to show up on the House side . . . we will probably find more," she said.

But Mrs. Waters said it would be "foolish" for the House to return to

work Tuesday if more anthrax is found in House offices.

Rep. Peter T. King, New York Republican, also interviewed on CNN, took a swipe at the Senate, which has been boastful of its decision to stay in business a few extra days, despite the anthrax scare. Mr. King accused the Senate of "pompous posturing and windbagging."

"We did what the police and doctors told us to do," he said, adding: "The issue was not to leave town. The issue was to cooperate with the police and the medical professionals . . . I'd rather do what's right than be a senatorial windbag."

• This article is based in part on wire service reports.