

House panel calls for end to anthrax shots

WASHINGTON (AP) — The program to inoculate all 2.4 million American military personnel against anthrax as protection against biological warfare is based on "a paucity of science" and should be suspended, a House panel says in a report sharply critical of the Defense Department.

The anthrax vaccine should be considered experimental because its effectiveness against biological warfare is uncertain and the safety of troops taking the anthrax shots is not being monitored adequately, according to the report released today by the House

Government Reform national security subcommittee. "At best, the vaccine provides some measure of protection to most who receive it," says a draft of the report obtained by The Associated Press. "Just how much protection is acquired, by whom, for how long ... are questions the Defense Department answers with an excess of faith but a paucity of science."

A Defense Department spokesman, Jim Turner, said Wednesday that Pentagon officials were reviewing the congressional recommendations.

"Plagued by uncertain supplies, uncertain safety and unproven efficacy against the anthrax threat, the mandatory, force-wide immunization program should be suspended until the Department of Defense gets approval to use an improved vaccine," said Rep. Christopher Shays, R-Conn., chairman of the subcommittee.

"It is an unrealistically broad undertaking built on a dangerously narrow scientific, medical and industrial base," he said. "The consequences are we have some men and women getting sick."

Pentagon and Food and Drug Administration officials have said repeatedly the vaccine is safe and effective. FDA officials also say there is no basis for demoting the approved vaccine to an investigational drug category.

The 80-page report was written by the subcommittee's Republican majority after five hearings on the immunization program.

The vaccine has come under increasing scrutiny from lawmakers as soldiers have expressed concerns about taking the six-shot regimen. Complaints included fevers, muscle pain and dizziness. Reserve and National Guard pilots testified that morale was plummeting and colleagues would resign rather than take the vaccine.

"They are also flying our domestic planes, and if there are side-effects, the airlines have to worry about this too," said Rep. Mark Souder, R-Ind.

In 1998, Defense Secretary William Cohen ordered all active duty and reserve troops to get the shots, starting with soldiers most likely to encounter biological warfare overseas. More than 380,000 service members have been immunized so far.

About 200 to 300 have refused to take it because of concerns about its safety and efficacy, Pentagon officials say.

More than 400 reports of adverse reactions have been filed. While FDA officials have linked the vaccine to few of the reactions with a high level of confidence, the agency has not been able to rule it out entirely.

No court-martial for major refusing shot

DOVER, Del. (AP) — The Air Force says it won't court-martial a major who questioned the safety of the military's anthrax vaccine and refused the mandatory injections.

Maj. Sonnie Bates, a 14-year, decorated pilot, was believed to have been the highest-ranking Air Force officer on track to face a court-martial for refusing the anthrax vaccine.

Instead, Bates has agreed to an administrative hearing by his commander at Dover Air Force Base that could result in sanctions ranging from a loss of pay to 30 days arrest.

Under the agreement, there will be no conviction on his record, and the base commander could decide not to punish him.

Bates has been on administrative duty and grounded from flying since he refused his vaccination Dec. 3. He initially was charged with disobeying an order, punishable by up to five years in prison.

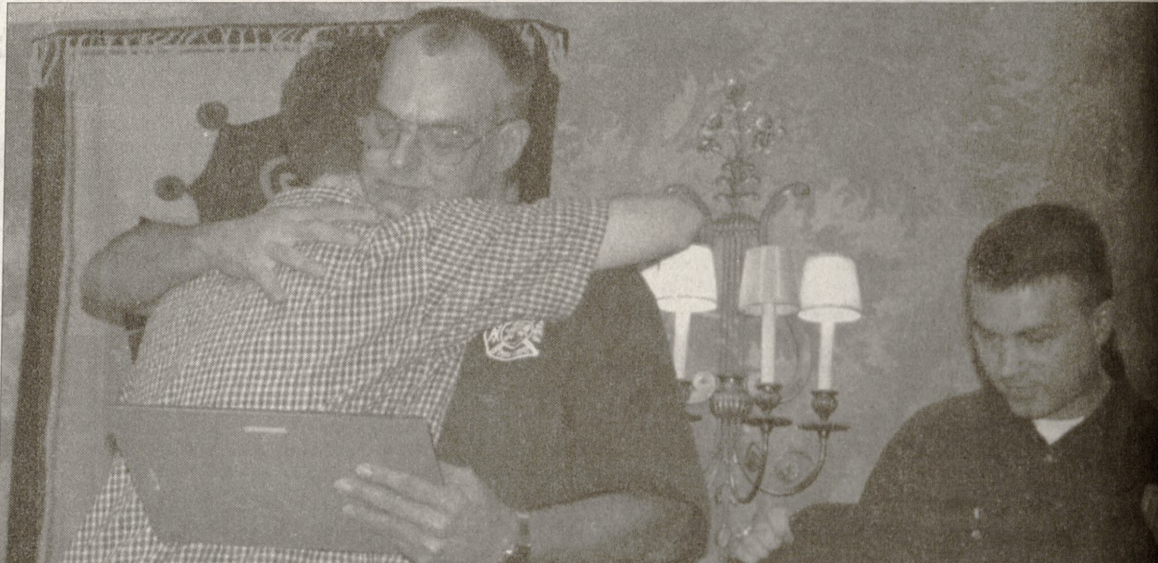
Bates' said his concerns grew after he saw members of his squadron become sick soon after starting the vaccination series.

The Air Force maintains the vaccine is safe, though manufacture of it was temporarily halted in December after the Food and Drug Administration found numerous violations in an inspection of the Michigan plant that makes it.

Military law still allows the Air Force to pursue further discipline if Bates is ordered to take the vaccine and refuses again.

Sgt. Paul Fazzini, a spokesman for Dover Air Force Base, said in all likelihood, Bates will face another order to take the anthrax vaccine.

Speechless



TRICIA JOST/SPECIAL TO THE BATTALION

"You want a speech? I can't even breathe," said Park Knight (facing), Care Team adviser. Wes Capps, Care Team President and sophomore psychology major, hugs Knight after being presented with the National Collegiate Adviser of the Year award. The award was presented to Knight Thursday because he was unable to attend the conference. It was kept a secret until the presentation. Jeremy Hyde, EMS assistant chief and senior management major, looks on.

S.C. expects high voter turnout

WASHINGTON (AP) — When letter carrier Bill Wilson of Anderson, S.C., talks

to people on his rounds he hears lots of chatter about the state's GOP presidential primary from Republicans, independents and Democrats alike.

"I think there will be quite a bit of voting by independents and Democrats, just from delivering mail and talking to people," said Wilson, a Republican. "Just from walking the streets. I see a lot of McCain and Bush signs in the yards."

Wilson's perception is backed up by polls suggesting that turnout Saturday will be the highest of any GOP presidential primary in the state. Polls and campaign-watchers are finding plenty of enthusiasm for Sen. John McCain and an energized GOP base for Gov. George W. Bush — el-

ements for a hot contest, indeed.

"They are ignited," Clemson University political scientist David Woodard said of core Republicans rallying for Bush. "They are glowing in the dark."

State Republican officials have printed an additional 400,000 ballots to be sure they have enough.

Turnout in the 1996 Republican primary was 276,000 and a third of the voters identified themselves as independents or Democrats, according to exit polls. State GOP director J. Sam Daniels said he expects more than 300,000 voters this time, and possibly many more.

In polls out Wednesday, Bush had a 2-to-1 lead or better among Republicans while McCain held a slightly bigger margin among independents and Democrats.

Bush and McCain were in a dead heat in a Los Angeles Times poll out early this week in which 45 percent of the respondents were non-Republicans. In polls with

a smaller sampling of non-Republicans 40 percent — Bush has held a slim lead been in a dead heat with McCain.

Among them, a CNN-USA Time Gallup poll had Bush slightly ahead and Zogby poll had them essentially tied.

An American Research Group poll of 600 voters gave Bush 47 percent and McCain 41 percent, with 7 percent undecided. The poll, also of 40 percent non-Republicans, was taken Sunday through Tuesday and has an error margin of plus or minus 4 percentage points.

A Mason-Dixon poll done for media outlets in South Carolina had the race essentially tied, Bush with 45 percent and McCain with 42 percent with a 4 point error margin. The third candidate in the race, Al Keyes, has been in single digits.



BUSH



MCCAIN

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- | | |
|---|--|
| Sunday (2/20)
8:30 am
Noon - 2 pm | SWE Fun Run @ Research Park
Free Fajita Kickoff Lunch @ Rec Center |
| Monday (2/21)
11:30 am - 2 pm
5:30 - 7:15 pm | Free Zachry Lawn Lunch (Subway);
Prof Dunking Booth
Society Scavenger Hunt@Research Park |
| Tuesday (2/22)
All Day (9-3)
6 - 11 pm | Art Gallery -- Zachry lobby
AIChE basketball tournament @ Rec |
| Wednesday (2/23)
10 am - 2 pm
5:30 - 6:45 pm | Professors Sharing Research in Zachry lobby
TI Digital Light Processing demo |
| Thursday (2/24)
10 am - 3 pm
7 - 11 pm | Computer Games @ MSC; Bungee Run @ Rudder Fountain
Social & Pool/42 tournament @ The Rack Warehouse |
| Friday (2/25) | Last day Penny Wars - students manning tables in Zachry |
| Saturday (2/26) | Engineering Day at the Mall! |

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