

Science agency to review FBI's anthrax inquiry

May 9 2009, By DAVID DISHNEAU , Associated Press Writer

(AP) -- The National Academy of Sciences said Friday it will review the lab work behind the FBI's conclusion that Army scientist Bruce Ivins was responsible for the anthrax mailings that killed five people in 2001.

The FBI will pay the Washington-based society nearly \$880,000 for the independent, 15-month committee review of the genetic and chemical studies [investigators](#) used to link Ivins to the attacks, academy spokeswoman Jennifer Walsh said.

The review, which was requested by the FBI, won't assess the evidentiary value of the bureau's detective work or the FBI's conclusion that Ivins acted alone, the academy said.

Ivins' lawyer, Paul Kemp, has said the scientist was innocent and would have been cleared if the case had gone to trial. Some of Ivins' colleagues have expressed doubt about the FBI's conclusions.

Ivins was a civilian researcher at Fort Detrick in Frederick. He killed himself in July as investigators were preparing to charge him.

The scientific review was first reported in The New York Times.

The FBI's conclusions were based on microbial forensics, a relatively new field combining crime-investigation techniques and advanced microbiology. The bureau said scientists performed extensive tests that connected the [anthrax](#) used in the letters to that in a flask controlled by

Ivins.

The academy said it will evaluate "the reliability of the principles and methods used by the [FBI](#), and whether the principles and methods were applied appropriately to the facts."

Specifically, the committee will review genetic studies used to identify potential sources of the anthrax in the letters and analyses of four [genetic mutations](#) that were found in the mailed anthrax. The committee will also look at chemical and dating studies that examined how, where, and when the [spores](#) may have been grown and the role that cross-contamination might have played in the evidence collected.

Five people died in October and November 2001 from anthrax inhalation or exposure linked to the letters. They were a Florida photo editor, two postal workers in Washington, a hospital employee in New York City and a 94-year-old woman in Oxford, Conn.

Another Fort Detrick scientist, Steven J. Hatfill, received \$5.8 million from the Justice Department in June to settle his lawsuit claiming the government wrongly implicated him in the attacks by publicly labeling him a "person of interest" in the investigation.

On the Net:

[National Academy of Sciences: http://www.nasonline.org](http://www.nasonline.org)

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