

A person wearing a blue hazmat suit and green gloves is working in a biohazard laboratory. The person is holding a clear plastic container. The background is a red wall with a metal railing. The text "THE ANTHRAX FILES" is overlaid on the image in a white box.

THE ANTHRAX FILES

1 X 53 HD



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In the fall of 2001, envelopes carrying deadly anthrax were delivered to U.S. Senate offices, network news divisions, and a tabloid newspaper. Five people were killed, many more infected and the nation was terrorized. Seven years later the largest criminal investigation since 9/11 ended when the prime suspect, Army scientist Bruce Ivins, committed suicide. The FBI insists they found the murderer. But ten years after the attacks, new questions are being raised about the FBI's investigation of the case and whether Ivins really was the anthrax killer.

The film reconstructs the FBI's first failed attempt to indict a prime suspect. Shortly after the attacks, FBI investigators focused on one man: former Army scientist Stephen Hatfill. Early on, *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof identified Hatfill—whom he called “Mr. Z”—as a possible perpetrator of the mailings. FBI Director Robert Mueller and others in the government became convinced that Hatfill was the source of the anthrax.

For five years the FBI tried and failed to link Hatfill to the attacks. Eventually, he was cleared of suspicion and was paid \$5.8 million by the government for invasion of privacy. Under renewed pressure to close the case, Director Mueller named a new head of the investigation, FBI special agent Edward Montooth, who shifted the focus of investigators to the scientific evidence.

Montooth quickly found a new suspect: Bruce Ivins. A long time anthrax researcher, Ivins came into focus after a genetic analysis seemed to link the attack anthrax to a flask in Ivins' Army lab. As investigators dug into Ivins' past, they found a string of suspicious behavior: he had spent late nights in a biological “hot suite” just before the attacks, he had a history of psychiatric problems, and investigators believed he attempted to conceal the genetic signature of the flask to throw them off. But when investigators searched Ivins' home they ran into the same problem they had with Hatfill. They couldn't find the telltale spores that would have linked Ivins directly to the crime.

As the pressure from the investigation increased, Ivins took his own life. Only days later, investigators declared they were “firmly convinced” that Ivins was the sole perpetrator of the anthrax attacks.

But questions about the case continue. Earlier this year, a panel from the National Academy of Sciences raised doubts about the FBI's scientific conclusions. And many of Ivins' colleagues insist the FBI got the wrong man.

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FRONTLINE

credits

Writer: Michael Kirk

Director: Michael Kirk

Producers: Michael Kirk, Jim Gilmore and Mike Wiser

Reporter: Jim Gilmore

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