



Review of the Scientific Approaches Used During the FBI's Investigation of the 2001 Anthrax Letters

*Committee on Review of the Scientific Approaches Used During the FBI's Investigation of the 2001 Bacillus Anthracis Mailings, Board on Life Sciences, Division on Earth and Life Studies, Technology, and Law
Committee on Science, Policy and Global Affairs Division, National Research Council*

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Less than a month after the September 11, 2001 attacks, letters containing spores of anthrax bacteria (*Bacillus anthracis*, or *B. anthracis*) were sent through the U.S. mail. Between October 4 and November 20, 2001, 22 individuals developed anthrax; 5 of the cases were fatal.

During its investigation of the anthrax mailings, the FBI worked with other federal agencies to coordinate and conduct scientific analyses of the anthrax letter spore powders, environmental samples, clinical samples, and samples collected from laboratories that might have been the source of the letter-associated spores. The agency relied on external experts, including some who had developed tests to differentiate among strains of *B. anthracis*. In 2008, seven years into the investigation, the FBI asked the National Research Council (NRC) of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) to conduct an independent review of the scientific approaches used during the investigation of the 2001 *B. anthracis* mailings.

Review of the Scientific Approaches Used During the FBI's Investigation of the Anthrax Letters evaluates the scientific foundation for the techniques used by the FBI to determine whether these techniques met appropriate standards for scientific reliability and for use in forensic validation, and whether the FBI reached appropriate scientific conclusions from its use of these techniques. This report reviews and assesses scientific evidence considered in connection with the 2001 *Bacillus anthracis* mailings.

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