

DODD QUESTIONS HANDLING OF ANTHRAX COMPLAINT CHARGES WERE FORWARDED
TO
MILITARY OFFICE RESPONSIBLE FOR VACCINE
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U.S. Sen. Christopher Dodd is questioning how the Pentagon's Inspector General handled a complaint by two Connecticut Air Force Reserve majors that two high-ranking Army officers gave false or misleading testimony.

The dispute centers on a drug manufacturer's application for a license to make the anthrax vaccination being given to service members to protect them against biological warfare.

The military has been inoculating service members since early 1998, even though the manufacturer's existing license describes the vaccine's use for humans exposed to anthrax-infected animals. The license request, if granted, would officially cover use of the vaccine for humans exposed to airborne anthrax spores.

Connecticut Air Force Reserve Maj. Russell Dingle and Thomas Rempfer say the application, filed in September 1996 and still pending, shows the vaccine has not been proved effective against airborne anthrax.

They filed their complaint against two Army officers who they say misrepresented the status of the license application to cover up its significance in separate testimony before a Canadian military court and the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Dodd, a Connecticut Democrat, is asking the inspector general's office to explain why its officials forwarded the complaint against the two Army officers back to the very office that supports and lobbies for the program.

"These allegations are serious," Dodd said, "and they need to be addressed."

A spokesman for the inspector general said Thursday that Deputy Inspector General Robert J. Lieberman is taking Dodd's request "very seriously," and is preparing an answer.

Three weeks after receiving the allegations against the two officers in January, Leonard Trahan Jr., assistant director of the IG's Hotline, forwarded the inquiry to the senior adviser to the deputy secretary of defense for chemical and biological protection. For the past three years, that office has defended against scores of claims that the vaccination program is causing sickness. Military members who resist taking the inoculations have faced punishment; many others, especially in the reserve and National Guard, have quit rather than take the anthrax vaccination.

Dingle and Rempfer filed their complaint against Lt. Gen. Ronald Blanck, the former Army surgeon general who has since retired, and Col. Arthur Friedlander, an Army medical supervisor who has been closely involved in vaccine testing and administration.

Blanck told the Senate Armed Services Committee in April 2000 that a 1996 license application for another protective use of the drug "is really

for the [new BioPort manufacturing] facility, not for the vaccine per se." Blanck was referring to BioPort's pending application to operate a new manufacturing facility.

Contacted by The Courant, Blanck continued to insist the license is for the facility, and not needed for the vaccine. He did not acknowledge the existence of a separate, pending 1996 license application renewed specifically for protection against biological warfare. Kim Root, a BioPort spokeswoman, said the 1996 vaccine license application is not a part of the application for a licensed new facility, and is still pending approval.

Dingle and Rempfer say if Blanck had informed the senators the Pentagon had sought a new license application, it was highly likely the senators would want to know why the present license is insufficient, in turn leading to further investigation of the anthrax vaccine program.

Friedlander testified before Canadian Military Judge G. L. Brais last March 30. He was then an expert witness at the court martial of a Canadian soldier for refusing to take the anthrax vaccine.

A court transcript shows Friedlander denied knowing anything about the manufacturer's new license application, supervised in part by the Army medical office where he works. Friedlander refused to concede that the anthrax vaccine was licensed only for skin exposure to anthrax, and not for exposures through the lungs.