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**What's Really
Going On at
the Israeli
Institute for
Biological
Research?
Exposing
Israel's Most
Dangerous
Secret**

June 24, 2011 - Drivers will only dart a glance at that mammoth structure nestled in the dunes south of Rishon Litsion southeast of Tel Aviv as they speed on their way. It is forbidden to turn off the Tel Aviv-Rishon Litsion highway onto the side road leading up to that building, which is barricaded by cement walls equipped with state-of-the-art surveillance and warning systems developed by Israel's military

What's Really Going On at the Israeli Institute for Biological Research?

Exposing Israel's Most Dangerous Secret

By SALEH EL-NAAMI

June 24, 2011

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That fortress-like structure is the Israeli Institute for Biological Research (IIBR) where Israel develops its biological and chemical weapons and prepares for any eventuality of biological or chemical warfare. It is the most top-secret military installation in Israel. So tightly is it guarded by military censorship that the Israeli press has to turn to Western sources for scraps of information made available to them, very intermittently, by special contacts inside the institute.

Only once has the Israeli press been given leeway to discuss what goes on behind those high security walls. That was last month when Avisha Klein filed a suit against the IIBR administration for harassment and emotional abuse. A long-term employee at the institute, Klein has served in various positions, one of which was as part of a team to develop an ointment to protect the skin from mustard gas. But this is only one of the many details that have come to light in the course of the proceedings, which have shed considerable light on the nature and scope of the institute's work.

The IIBR is staffed by some 300 scientists and technicians employed in one or more of its many departments, each of which specialises in a specific area of chemical or biological research generally aimed at the production of chemical or biological weaponry. One of these departments, for example, is reported to have developed the poison that was used by the notorious Mossad assassination unit, Kidon, in its botched attempt to eliminate Hamas politburo chief Khaled Meshaal in 1997. Nevertheless, if there remains some question over the accuracy of this information, which was reported in Haaretz, no one disputes that the first time the institute's products were used in an assassination operation was in late 1977 when then prime minister Menachem Begin ordered Mossad to eliminate Wadie Haddad.

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A leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Haddad was accused by Israel of responsibility for several terrorist operations, the last of which was the hijacking of an Israeli passenger plane en route to Entebbe in 1976. According to a recently published book by the Israeli journalist Aharon Klein, Haddad had a great fondness for Belgian chocolates. Mossad obtained some of these special chocolates, coated them with a slow-acting poison, and had them delivered to Haddad, who was then living in Baghdad, by an Iraqi official who was a Mossad agent and who had struck up a friendship with Haddad. Klein relates that the deadly substance was first developed in the IIBR and that its slow-acting and undetectable properties ensured that the agent and the instrument of death would not be discovered.

And indeed, following a gradual but severe deterioration in his health, Haddad was flown to a hospital in East Germany where he was diagnosed with leukaemia and eventually died on 28 March 1978. It was not until 32 years later that the truth came to light: that the real cause of death was a poison produced by IIBR.

It is not unlikely that Mossad conducted many assassination operations in this way, so as not to leave its fingerprints. In other words, the seemingly accidental deaths of many individuals that Israel regarded as a threat may have actually been caused by substances produced by IIBR. Most likely, the poison that Mossad agents injected into Hamas leader Mahmoud Al-Mabhouh in Dubai in February 2010 came from IIBR.

According to information that has recently come out, the institute contains a department specialising in the production of vaccines against biological weapons. One of the chief focuses of research and development, here, was anthrax, which Israel fears the Arabs and resistance organisations will use against it in a confrontation. The institute also has a department for developing remedies to minimise and counter the effects of chemical weaponry. The whole presents a gruesome picture of a curious chemical and biological race, with the institute virtually competing with itself to produce antidotes to weapons that it, itself, is producing, or that it fears others will use against Israel in an eventual confrontation.

The IIBR works closely and in full coordination with the Israeli army and intelligence, which furnish the institute with their lists of priorities in light of their strategic threat forecasts. For example, information that has come to light during the coverage of Klein's suit reveals that many years ago the Israeli military establishment was concerned that Arab states might use such chemical agents as mustard gas in an potential assault against Israel and, therefore, instructed the institute to develop a chemical substance to minimise the effects of the gas. Not surprisingly, the institute coordinates closely with the Israeli army's medical corps, which receives the antidotes and distributes them to its branches in the military in accordance with demand.

The institute also works closely with Mossad and Shin Bet, the agencies primarily responsible for most of the assassination and liquidation operations against Arab and Muslim targets. Also, since Mossad and the military intelligence unit "Aman" are responsible for gathering enemy intelligence and presumably monitor nonconventional weapons programmes in Arab countries, they would instruct IIBR to develop the necessary



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biological or chemical responses to these programmes.

However, the IIBR has another purpose on top of developing and producing biological and chemical weapons and antidotes. It is also a major hard currency income-generator. The Hebrew Haaretz website reports: "The institute has received a grant of hundreds of millions of dollars to develop an anthrax vaccine." The grant followed an attack in the US by a home-grown terrorist group that developed a concentrated strain of anthrax spores and delivered them to several individual targets in US; the vaccines that IIBR was commissioned to develop were destined for use in the US.

More importantly, we learn from the website that Israeli soldiers have been used to test the vaccines, causing some permanent physical damage. Reports of the internationally banned use of human guinea pigs raised moral hackles in Israel and sharpened suspicions that the lives of Israeli soldiers had deliberately been put to risk for the sake of financial gain received for promoting the security of another country, namely the US in this case.

The IIBR has a live animals department, where rabbits, pigs, monkeys and other animals are used in experiments. And perhaps human beings as well, judging by the suits soldiers filed against the Israeli Ministry of Defence after they were used in the anthrax experiments. The soldiers demand that they be officially recognised as disabled veterans and receive compensation accordingly. The case remains in the courts, but the IDF, caving into pressure from the families of the soldiers and public opinion, recently announced that it would no longer conduct experiments on soldiers.

It was Israel's first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, who ordered the construction of the IIBR on the basis of the advice of a number of Jewish scientists. Throughout his rule, from 1948 to 1963 (with the exception of the years 1953-1955 when Moshe Sharett served as prime minister), Ben-Gurion was directly responsible for the institute and every detail in it. The staff were forbidden to disclose to anyone even the smallest tid-bit of data or information without first obtaining Ben-Gurion's approval. That continued to apply even during that interstice when Sharrit was in power, for when this prime minister visited the institute in 1954 scientists had to apologise for not being able to show him the programmes they were working on at the time.

Although many scientists have taken a turn to direct the IIBR, it is generally believed that the one to have left the greatest imprint is its current director, Avigdor Shafferman. Shafferman, who has been named in Klein's suit, has the reputation of being something of a powerhouse but also being very strict and quick to fire staff members on disciplinary grounds.

Nevertheless, as significant as the details that have come to light in this rare glimpse into the workings of the IIBR may be, little attention has focussed on a larger truth. As the international community hounds a host of countries for pursuing conventional weapons programmes that pale in scale next to Israel's, it refuses to budge an inch to deter Israel, which only encourages Tel Aviv's belligerent and tyrannical behaviour.

Saleh El-Naami writes for Al-Ahram, where this article originally appeared.

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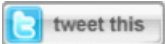














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