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Visit Our Kids' Page**Apply for a Job****Press Release****For Immediate Release****October 16, 2001****Washington D.C.****FBI National Press Office****(202) 324-3691****Statement of Director Mueller on FBI Investigations into Anthrax Exposures and Suspected Anthrax Exposure****Images of Anthrax Letters**

Good afternoon. This afternoon, I want to spend a few moments at the outset talking about the anthrax issue.

As most of you know, the FBI is investigating anthrax exposures and suspected anthrax exposures in Florida, in New York, here in Washington, DC, and elsewhere around the country where such exposures have been reported. Every threat is taken seriously. Every threat receives a full response. We have no choice but to assume that each reported instance is an actual bio-threat. And while organized terrorism has not been ruled out, so far we have found no direct link to organized terrorism.

There are, however, certain similarities between letters sent to NBC in New York and to Senator Daschle's office here in Washington. We're now testing, analyzing, and comparing powders from these letters to each other and to what we know from Florida. And I should point out that the tests are being done under the auspices of the Centers for Disease Control, or CDC.

Since October 1, the FBI has responded to more than 2,300 incidents or suspected incidents involving anthrax or other dangerous agents. And as all of you know, an overwhelming majority of these incidents have been false alarms or practical jokes. The FBI will devote whatever resources are necessary to investigate each of these situations.

However, I want to reiterate the comments of the Attorney General. Hoaxes, pranks and threats involving chemical or biological agents are serious crimes and warrant a serious response. They will be investigated thoroughly and vigorously by Special Agents of the FBI, by the postal authorities, by local authorities and by other law enforcement.

As the indictment discussed today makes clear, individuals who attempt to prey on people's fears or even to pull a prank will pay a price. In addition to the price that they are paying, they should know that they are squandering millions of dollars in public health and law enforcement resources, resources that could be better spent in responding to actual terrorist acts. More importantly, they are taking manpower and time away from individuals who could be ensuring that there are no future terrorist acts.

As incidents arise, we are working closely with the Centers for Disease Control, with city and state public health officials, and with a host of federal, state and local law enforcement authorities. We greatly appreciate the help and expertise.

FBI investigators and specially trained scientists, public safety officers, and hazardous materials response experts are being called upon as needed, whether they be at the federal government level or the state or the local level. We are making a concerted and coordinated effort to keep state and local law enforcement authorities informed and involved. Quite obviously, their skills and expertise are top notch, and we need their help.

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