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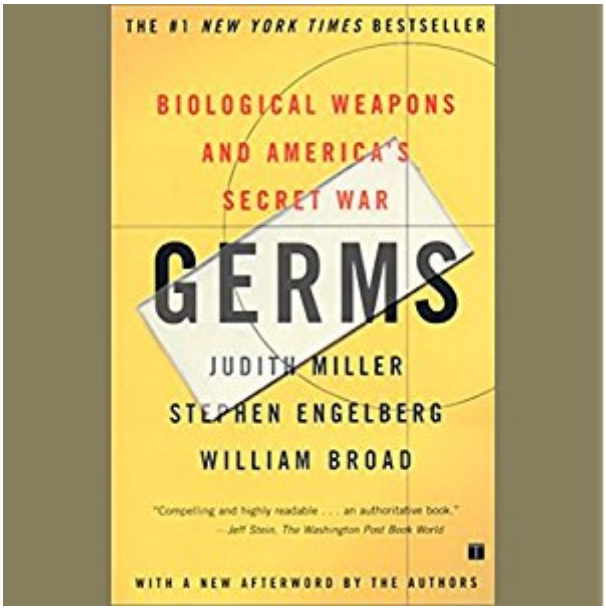
Germs: Biological Weapons And America's Secret War



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Synopsis

Deadly germs sprayed in shopping malls, bomb-lets spewing anthrax spores over battlefields, tiny vials of plague scattered in Times Square -- these are the poor man’s hydrogen bombs, hideous weapons of mass destruction that can be made in a simple laboratory. In this groundbreaking work of investigative journalism, Judith Miller, Stephen Engelberg, and William Broad of "The New York Times" uncover the truth about biological weapons and show why bio-warfare and bio-terrorism are fast becoming our worst national nightmare. Among the startling revelations in "Germs: " How the CIA secretly built and tested a model of a Soviet-designed germ bomb, alarming some officials who felt the work pushed to the limits of what is permitted by the global treaty banning germ arms. How the Pentagon embarked on a secret effort to make a superbug. Details about the Soviet Union’s massive hidden program to produce biological weapons, including new charges that germs were tested on humans. How Moscow’s scientists made an untraceable germ that instructs the body to destroy itself. The Pentagon’s chaotic efforts to improvise defenses against Iraq’s biological weapons during the 1991 Persian Gulf War. How a religious cult in Oregon in the 1980s sickened hundreds of Americans in a bio-terrorism attack that the government played down to avoid panic and copycat strikes. Plans by the U.S. military in the 1960s to attack Cuba with germ weapons. "Germs" also shows how a small group of scientists and senior officials persuaded President Bill Clinton to launch a controversial multibillion-dollar program to detect a germ attack on U.S. soil and to aid its victims -- a program that, so far, isstruggling to provide real protection. Based on hundreds of interviews with scientists and senior officials, including President Clinton, as well as on recently declassified documents and on-site reporting from the former Soviet Union’s sinister bio-weapons labs, "Germs" shows us bio-warriors past and present at work at their trade. There is the American scientist who devoted his professional life to perfecting biological weapons, and the Nobel laureate who helped pioneer the new biology of genetically modified germs and is now trying to stop its misuse. We meet former Soviet scientists who made enough plague, smallpox, and anthrax to kill everyone on Earth and whose expertise is now in great demand by terrorists, rogue states, and legitimate research labs alike. A frightening and unforgettable narrative of cutting-edge science and spycraft, "Germs" shows us why advances in biology and the spread of germ weapons expertise to such countries as Iran, Iraq, and North Korea could make germs the weapon of the twenty-first century. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book has been hyped to death (no pun intended) and rightfully so: it was written BEFORE the terrorist attacks and Anthrax cases and is guarenteed to chill your spine -- and maybe haunt your dreams. The bottom line: for years (until 9/11) most Americans had no idea that behind the scenes horrific weapons were being developed that could potentially wipe out an entire country and that if these weapons did not work as expected the whole even world could be at risk. And, worse, that as unpredictable as nations might be, terrorists are far more unpredictable -- and these weapons could easily fall into their hands or be made by them. Ironically, the original run of this book was reportedly modest, but in the aftermath of Sept. 11 it shot to the top of the New York Times best seller list -- and again for GOOD REASON: it is the most "accessible" of the germ warefare books. Germs is a masterful work: full of blow-by-blow detail on the various "germs" (biological, chemical) and the lies and deceit practiced by ALL countries that worked on these unspeakable weapons(lies and deceit aimed at other countries and their own populaces). It’s a book that you MUST read, or gift or lend. REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD READ THIS BOOK: 1)It shows how various countries including the US secretly worked on biological/chemical warefare weapons for defense purposes through the years. To it’s credit, the US got mostly out of the germ warefare biz...but Sadaam’s preoccupation with weapons of mass destruction forced the US back in. 2)It shows how the Soviet Union misled the US just as badly as Iraq’s dictator did. 3)It goes into stark detail on how deadly these weapons are and how easy it would be for terrorists to develop and use them..and get their desired deadly results. 4)At times it resembles a kind of scientific MYSTERY or THRILLER: it’s a whosedoing it with an easy-to-read narrative style. 5)It outlines how researchers discovered precisely who is working on what and what it means -- and does it with a journalistic approach: quotes, facts, but a story with

a beginning a middle and an all too possbily frightening end. 6)It is in itself a STRONG argument for eventual military action against Iraq: Sadaam remains the lingering threat, according to the authors. 7)It sets off the alarm -- but leaves room for hope. WHY YOU MIGHT NOT LIKE THIS BOOK: 1)If you're looking for a research document this won't be for you since it is a journalistic work. 2)If you're looking for a pure recitation of each kind of threat and what it means that is probably another book; the info is there but it is woven into the overall theme. 3)If you're looking for a book that says we are just a minute away from buying the farm, this isn't for you -- but you will get a sinking feeling at the horrorific threats out there. Above all: this book was NOT written to capitalize on the present climate...it was written BEFORE the recent tragic events, which makes its well-delivered message even more compelling and credible.

Now the authors are riding the wave of topicality following the anthrax letters in October 2001, but the truth is that their book would be frightening at any time. The authors have played off each other's strengths and come up with a book that addressess the political, scientific, and historic context of germs as a weapon of mass destruction. It is scary to hear what the Soviet Union and Russia, and Iraq have been doing in this area, and how we react. If it was possible I'd like to have seen more about other countries besides Russia and Iraq. What is really frightening is the description of the Gulf War debates and preparations; or rather the lack of perparation by the American government. And there is no real reason to think it's much different today. Both the specter and the dangerous lack of perparation leaves us, and quite frankly most countries, in a very precarious position.Much of the writing comes across almost as a Clancy thriller - with double and triple talking and hiding the facts. And even if you grant some literary license to the story, the kernal at the center is extremely frightening. Often times the book comes out as an 'Us vs. Them' posturing, and I for one don't believe that the american government has been clean on germ research, but this might help the story and what they are trying to say - they do not seem to have an axe to grind over this issue -rather they want to tell us what's going on.And it is a very scary situation.

After watching the World Trade Center attacks, trying frantically to reach friends in New York and then watching the day's events unfold (with an increasing feeling of horror and disbelief) while worrying about possible biological and chemical agents that might have been released (thank goodness, a false alarm in this case) I knew that I wanted more information about the potential dangers that face our country. This book provides that information, from accounts of experiments

with various biological weapons and agents, interviews with workers in the field and more. Highly recommended for anyone who wants to be as informed as possible and who wants to make whatever decisions are possible to protect their families and friends. I won't kid you- the book doesn't purport to say that all dangers can be avoided or guarded against. But it does provide the type of information that you may be seeking about what has been done to provide national security against germ warfare - and what still needs to be done - in our country and in other countries. You may also want to consider taking some common-sense precautions as well, precautions which this book should guide you to make.

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