



UNITED STATES POSTAL INSPECTION SERVICE

PRESS RELEASE

DATE: 11/4/2021

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: **Ariana Ramirez**
TITLE: **U.S. Postal Inspector/Public Information Officer**
PHONE: **(202) 268-3700**
EMAIL: **ARamirez2@uspis.gov**

The U.S. Postal Inspection Service Looks Back At the 20th Anniversary of the Anthrax Mailings

WASHINGTON, DC – In the weeks after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on American soil, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service was confronted with another type of terrorist attack: anthrax mailings. Five people were killed, including two United States Postal Service (USPS) employees, Joseph Curseen, Jr. and Thomas Morris. Seventeen others were sickened, including Postal Inspector William Paliscak. Employees at the Brentwood Postal Facility in Washington, DC and the Trenton Postal Distribution Center in Trenton, NJ were hit hard.

Four anthrax-laced letters were sent along with a threatening message. The letters were addressed to U.S. Senators Tom Daschle and Patrick Leahy, as well as to NBC News anchor Tom Brokaw and the *New York Post*. These letters were sent via the U.S. Mail, and passed through automated sorting equipment inside the postal facilities where anthrax spores escaped. The Brentwood Postal Facility and Trenton Postal Distribution Center were closed for years for decontamination. When reopened, the Brentwood Facility was renamed the “Curseen-Morris Mail Processing and Distribution Center” in honor of the two postal workers who died of anthrax inhalation.

The U.S. Postal Inspection Service joined forces with the Federal Bureau of Investigation Special Agents and created the Amerithrax Task Force. The Amerithrax Task Force led a complex nine-year investigation and involved a slew of experts in microbiology and chemistry, as well as bio-weapons specialists working for the government, universities, and commercial laboratories. In all, the Task Force interviewed 10,000 witnesses spanning six continents, recovered over 6,000 pieces of possible evidence, issued 5,750 grand jury subpoenas, gathered 5,730 environmental samples from 60 locations, and scrutinized over 1,000 possible suspects. In 2010, the anthrax case was closed after it was concluded the anthrax mailer had killed himself in 2008.

At the time, even experts did not realize how spores were spreading through the postal facilities and how they escaped the envelopes in which the spores were placed. However, due to the investigation, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service developed initiatives enhancing mail screening to support USPS operations, improved intelligence gathering capabilities, and trained thousands of Postal Inspectors to ensure they are in constant state of readiness to respond to future incidents. The Inspection Service also encouraged the installation of Biohazard Detection Systems in every mail processing facility across the United States and its territories. Additionally, new investigative protocols and strategies were developed because of the anthrax cases.

The U.S. Postal Inspection Service honors and commemorates the lives of all those who passed away 20 years ago on the anniversary of the anthrax attacks. The Inspection Service is committed to protecting Postal Service employees, infrastructure, customers, and preserving the integrity of the U.S. Mail. We continue to adapt and evolve our technologies to support the USPS.

###