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Ike Seamans Report: Cuba's Biological Weapon Industry

NBC 6

MIAMI, October 10 - The sudden, sharp focus on the potential for bioterrorism to be directed at the U.S. must now include a wary eye cast toward Cuba.

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That's the conclusion from a wide range of experts who say Cuba's broken economy is forcing it to sell biotechnology.

Cuba has just sold many of its biotechnology secrets to Iran, secrets that can be used to build biochemical weapons. Both countries are on the State Department's list of terrorist nations capable of doing that.

While experts say Cuba poses no immediate threat to the United States, there is concern about Iran and this new, potentially dangerous relationship forged by Fidel Castro.

With help from the Soviet Union's massive secret biological weapons program, Castro was able to build one of the world's most sophisticated biotechnology industries which can also be used to build weapons of mass destruction.

In his book, Biohazard, former Soviet scientist Ken Alibek says he helped to train Cubans in this technology. It is something he now regrets.

Dr. Ken Alibek: "This work would be used for developing biological weapons or biological agents. As a result of this, we helped Castro develop biological weapons. It was such a stupid decision to just do this."

Gen. Charles Wilhelm, a former Southcom Commander says: "The indications we have is that they have the capability to

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produce those type of substances."

In 1995, the U.S. Senate released a report saying Cuba was one of just 17 countries believed to have biological weapons. Last year, in this classified report, Secretary of Defense William Cohen warned of "Cuba's potential to develop and produce biological agents" that can kill.

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In the Angolan Civil War, Cuban soldiers used a deadly biological weapon it developed called "yellow rain" to kill rebels opposed to the Marxist government.

The Canadian Security Intelligence Service, who investigates terrorist threats, said in a 1996 report, "Cuba has been a supply source [to terrorist groups] for toxin and chemical weapons."

Now Castro has sold this technology to Iran. Back in May, he said that together they can "bring the United States to its knees."

A report by the University of Miami's Institute for Cuban studies warns: "...Cuba's closeness with...militant terrorist groups in the Middle East is troublesome."

The study was written by Diego Amuchastegui, who was involved with Cuba's Middle East policy before he defected.

Amuchastegui says: "He wants to expand his relations in the Middle East."

Castro has consistently condemned the September 11th suicide attacks. However, he is also condemning the U.S. military action in Afghanistan, calling it a cure worse than the disease.



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