

The Homeland Security Department swept aside evaluations of government experts and named Mississippi — home to powerful U.S. lawmakers with sway over the agency — as a top location for a new \$451 million, national laboratory to study some of the world's most virulent biological threats, according to internal documents obtained by The Associated Press.

The disclosure is the latest example of what critics assert is the Bush administration's politicizing of government decisions, such as efforts to steer science over global warming at the Environmental Protection Agency and hiring and firing practices at the Justice Department.

Some lawmakers already skeptical over the department's plans said (Homeland Security official, Undersecretary Jay) Cohen's intervention on behalf of Mississippi appears improper.

"It appears that the undersecretary responsible for this program may have corrupted the site selection process by putting his thumb on the scale in favor of a particular site and its contractor, in violation of his own rules and over the objections of his own advisers," said Rep. John Dingell, D-Mich. "This raises the question of whether DHS is interested in bioresearch or just shameless empire building."

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