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Germ War: the US Record

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The United States, which has deployed its CBW arsenal against the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Vietnam, China, North Korea, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Cuba, Haitian boat people and Canada, plus exposure of hundreds of thousands of unwitting US citizens to an astonishing array of germ agents and toxic chemicals, killing dozens of people.

The US experimentation with bio-weapons goes back to the distribution of cholera-infect blankets to American Indian tribes in the 1860s. In 1900, US Army doctors in the Philippines infected five prisoners with a variety of plague and 29 prisoners with Beriberi. At least four of the subjects died. In 1915, a doctor working with government grants exposed 12 prisoners in Mississippi to pellagra, an incapacitating disease that attacks the central nervous system.

After World War I, the United States went on a chemical weapons binge, producing millions of barrels of mustard gas and Lewisite. Thousands of US troops were exposed to these chemical agents in order to “test the efficacy of gas masks and protective clothing”. The Veterans Administration refused to honor disability claims from victims of such experiments. The Army also deployed mustard gas against anti-US protesters in Puerto Rico and the Philippines in the 1920s and 1930s.

In 1931, Dr. Cornelius Rhoads, then under contract with the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Investigations, initiated his horrific Puerto Rico Cancer Experiments, infecting dozens of unwitting subjects with cancer cells. At least thirteen of his victims died as a result. Rhoads went on to head of the US Army Biological Weapons division and to serve on the Atomic Energy Commission, where he oversaw radiation experiments on thousands of US citizens. In memos to the Department of Defense, Rhoads expressed his opinion that Puerto Rican dissidents could be “eradicated” with the judicious use of germ bombs.

In 1942, US Army and Navy doctors infected 400 prisoners in Chicago with malaria in experiments designed to get “a profile of the disease and develop a treatment for it.” Most of the inmates were black and none was informed of the risks of the experiment. Nazi doctors on trial at Nuremberg cited the Chicago malaria experiments as part of their defense.

At the close of World War II, the US Army put on its payroll, Dr. Shiro Ishii, the head of the Imperial Army of Japan’s bio-warfare unit. Dr. Ishii had deployed a wide range of biological and chemical agents against Chinese and Allied troops. He also operated a large research center in Manchuria, where he conducted bio-weapons experiments on Chinese, Russian and American prisoners of war. Ishii infected prisoners with tetanus; gave them typhoid-laced tomatoes; developed plague-infected fleas; infected women with syphilis; performed dissections on live prisoners; and exploded germ bombs over dozens of men tied to stakes. In a deal hatched by Gen. Douglas MacArthur, Ishii turned over more than 10,000 pages of his “research findings” to the US Army, avoided prosecution for war crimes and was invited to lecture at Ft. Detrick, the US Army bio-weapons center in Frederick, Maryland.

In 1950 the US Navy sprayed large quantities of *serratia marcescens*, a bacteriological agent, over San Francisco, promoting an outbreak of pneumonia-like illnesses and causing the death of at least one man, Ed Nevins.

A year later, Chinese Premier Chou En-lai charged that the US military and the CIA had used bio-agents against North Korea and China. Chou produced statements from 25 US prisoners of war backing him his claims that the US had dropped anthrax contaminated feathers, mosquitoes and fleas carrying Yellow Fever and propaganda leaflets spiked with cholera over Manchuria and North Korea.

From 1950 through 1953, the US Army released chemical clouds over six US and Canadian cities. The tests were designed to test dispersal patterns of chemical weapons. Army records noted that the compounds used over Winnipeg, Canada, where there were numerous reports of respiratory illnesses, involved cadmium, a highly toxic chemical.

In 1951 the US Army secretly contaminated the Norfolk Naval Supply Center in Virginia with infectious bacteria. One type was chosen because blacks were believed to be more susceptible than whites. A similar experiment was undertaken later that year at Washington, DC’s National Airport. The bacteria was later linked to food and blood poisoning and respiratory problems.

Savannah, Georgia and Avon Park, Florida were the targets of repeated Army bio-weapons experiments in 1956 and 1957. Army CBW researchers released millions of mosquitoes on the

two towns in order to test the ability of insects to carry and deliver yellow fever and dengue fever. Hundreds of residents fell ill, suffering from fevers, respiratory distress, stillbirths, encephalitis and typhoid. Army researchers disguised themselves as public health workers in order photograph and test the victims. Several deaths were reported.

In 1965 the US Army and the Dow Chemical Company injected dioxin into 70 prisoners (most of them black) at the Holmesburg State Prison in Pennsylvania. The prisoners developed severe lesions which went untreated for seven months. A year later, the US Army set about the most ambitious chemical warfare operation in history.

From 1966 to 1972, the United States dumped more than 12 million gallons of Agent Orange (a dioxin-powered herbicide) over about 4.5 million acres of South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. The government of Vietnam estimates the civilian casualties from Agent Orange at more than 500,000. The legacy continues with high levels of birth defects in areas that were saturated with the chemical. Tens of thousands of US soldiers were also the victims of Agent Orange.

In a still classified experiment, the US Army sprayed an unknown bacterial agent in the New York Subway system in 1966. It is not known if the test caused any illnesses.

A year later, the CIA placed a chemical substance in the drinking water supply of the Food and Drug Administration headquarters in Washington, DC. The test was designed to see if it was possible to poison drinking water with LSD or other incapacitating agents.

In 1969, Dr. D.M. McArtor, the deputy director for Research and Technology for the Department of Defense, asked Congress to appropriate \$10 million for the development of a synthetic biological agent that would be resistant to the immunological and therapeutic processes upon which we depend to maintain our relative freedom from infectious disease.

In 1971 the first documented cases of swine fever in the western hemisphere showed up in Cuba. A CIA agent later admitted that he had been instructed to deliver the virus to Cuban exiles in Panama, who carried the virus into Cuba in March of 1991. This astounding admission received scant attention in the US press.

In 1980, hundreds of Haitian men, who had been locked up in detention camps in Miami and Puerto Rico, developed gynecomastia after receiving "hormone" shots from US doctors. Gynecomastia is a condition causing males to develop full-sized female breasts.

In 1981, Fidel Castro blamed an outbreak of dengue fever in Cuba on the CIA. The fever killed 188 people, including 88 children. In 1988, a Cuban exile leader named Eduardo Arocena admitted "bringing some germs" into Cuba in 1980.

Four years later an epidemic of dengue fever struck Managua, Nicaragua. Nearly 50,000 people came down with the fever and dozens died. This was the first outbreak of the disease in Nicaragua. It occurred at the height of the CIA's war against the Sandinista government and followed a series of low-level "reconnaissance" flights over the capital city.

In 1996, the Cuba government again accused the US of engaging in “biological aggression”. This time it involved an outbreak of thrips palmi, an insect that kills potato crops, palm trees and other vegetation. Thrips first showed up in Cuba on December 12, 1996, following low-level flights over the island by US government spray planes. The US was able to quash a United Nations investigation of the incident.

At the close of the Gulf War, the US Army exploded an Iraqi chemical weapons depot at Kamashiya. In 1996, the Department of Defense finally admitted that more than 20,000 US troops were exposed to VX and sarin nerve agents as a result of the US operation at Kamashiya. This may be one cause of Gulf War Illness, another cause is certainly the experimental vaccines unwittingly given to more than 100,000 US troops.