

The History of Bioterrorism in America

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Who is behind the recent spate of Anthrax attacks? Who would intentionally expose Americans to such deadly germs? To answer these questions, it is useful to know that there have been previous cases bioterrorism in the U.S. Previous incidents of bioterrorism in America since WWII, although more widespread than this year's anthrax-related incidents, received very little media attention.

The identities of those who planned and perpetrated decades of bioterror attacks on Americans is known. Although they have admitted their guilt - in written confessions to Congress - they remain immune from prosecution. They are above the law.

In a 1977 special report to Congress, the U.S. Army admitted conducting hundreds of chemical and biological warfare tests, including at least 25 that deliberately targeted the unsuspecting public. The military disclosed evidence that it had released disease-causing germs in at least 48 open-air tests. (U.S. Army Activity in the U.S. Biological Warfare Programs, 1942-1977. Vols 1 and 2, February 24, 1977)

In 1994, Senator John D. Rockefeller's report (Examining Biological Experimentation on U.S. Military) further revealed that over the previous 50 years, the U.S. military intentionally exposed hundreds of thousands of their own soldiers to dangerous microbes, mustard and nerve gas, radiation, hallucinogens and psychochemicals.

Recent bioterror attacks have prolonged the national crisis sparked on September 11. Widespread concerns about anthrax have served those who wish to promote the draconian laws that are descending upon the U.S. Curiously, the strain of anthrax bacteria being used most likely originates from the U.S. military (Debora MacKenzie, New Scientist, October 24)

The following quotations, compiled from various sources, summarize the shameful but little-known history of the U.S. military's responsibility for exposing Americans to the terror of biological weapons.

1943 Fort Detrick:

The U.S. began research on biological weapons at Fort Detrick, MD.¹ They studied anthrax, brucellosis, Botulinus toxin, plague, Sclerotium rolfoi, late blight, late blast, brownspot of rice, rinderpest, tularemia, mussel poisoning, coccidioidomycosis, rickettsia, psittacosis, neurotropic encephalitis, Newcastle disease and fowl plague.²

1945 Recruiting Nazis:

The U.S. State Department, Army intelligence and the CIA initiated Project Paperclip to recruit Nazi scientists and offer them immunity and secret identities in exchange for work on top secret, U.S. government projects [including bio-warfare experiments on unwilling human subjects].¹

1946 Japanese war criminals:

The U.S. began negotiations with Japan to acquire their germ warfare data. In exchange, Japanese scientists received immunity from prosecution for their war crimes. Dr. Shiro Ishii, a physician and army officer who began experiments in germ warfare in 1932 when Japan invaded Manchuria, formed a biological-warfare unit (Unit 731) that used Chinese soldiers and civilians as test subjects. About 9,000 died of bubonic plague, cholera, anthrax and other diseases. U.S. soldiers captured in the Philippines were sent to Unit 731 so the Japanese could test biological weapons on them.²

1948 Cttee. on Biological Warfare:

The Secretary of Defense's Research and Development Board, requested an evaluation of biological agents as weapons of sabotage. The Committee on Biological Warfare recommended that methods be assessed for disseminating biological agents, with emphasis on special operations. It recommended research to test "innocuous organisms" in ventilation systems, subways and public water supplies. This influenced administrations for 20 years and the U.S. conducted highly-classified scientific tests on unknowing populations throughout the country.

The biological warfare research program in the early 1940s and 1950s involved antipersonnel, anticrop and antianimal studies. Field trials included open-air vulnerability testing, and contamination of public water systems with live organisms such as *Serratia marcescens*. Covert programs were conducted by the CIA. Pathogenic organisms were tested in Florida and the Bahamas in the 1940s. Chemical anticrop studies evaluated defoliation and crop destruction.³

1949 Germ bombs:

Explosive munitions tests with pathogens were begun.³

1950 The First "open air tests":

The first open-air tests with biological agents were conducted in various locales, including off the coast of Norfolk, Virginia.³

1950 Spraying San Francisco:

The first large-scale, aerosol test was conducted in San Francisco Bay in September 1950, using two species of bacteria (*Bacillus globigii* and *Serratia marcescens*). Many experiments used various *Bacillus* species because of their similarities to *B. anthracis*.³

On September 26 and 27, 1950, the U.S. Army sprayed *S. marcescens* from a boat off the coast. On September 29, patients at San Francisco's Stanford University Hospital began appearing with *S. marcescens* infections.⁴ Many residents came down with pneumonia-like symptoms and one died. A military, follow-up study showed that nearly every single exposed person became infected with the test organism.⁵

The death of Edward J. Nevin was associated with this release of *S. marcescens*.⁴ (The first lawsuit against the U.S. government was filed by his family [in 1981]. The court decided that the U.S. government could not be sued, under the Federal Tort Claims Act, since the decision to spray *S. marcescens* was a part of national defense planning.)³

1951 Racist Germs:

Army researchers deliberately exposed a disproportionate number of black citizens to the fungus *Aspergillus fumigatus*, to see if African Americans were more susceptible to such infection, like they were already known to be to coccidioidomycosis (*Coccidioides immitis*). Similarly, in 1951, unsuspecting [black] workers at the Norfolk Supply Center, Norfolk, VA, were exposed to crates contaminated with *A. fumigatus* spores.³

1955 Whooping Cough:

Tampa Bay, FL, experienced a sharp rise in Whooping Cough cases, including 12 deaths, following a CIA bio-war test in which bacteria from the Army's Chemical and Biological Warfare arsenal was released to the environment.⁵

1951-1969 Dugway Proving Ground:

Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of open-air tests using bacteria and viruses that cause disease in human, animals and plants were conducted at Dugway Proving Ground, a military testing facility about 80 miles from Salt Lake City, Utah. These tests were to determine how the agents spread, survive and effect people and the environment.

It is unknown how many people in the vicinity were exposed to potentially harmful agents during these open-air tests. In 1969, concerns were expressed at a congressional hearing about the possible public health implications of the VEE virus tested there.

University of Utah scientists and doctors are greatly concerned about the potential health consequences not only for military personnel who work and train at Dugway, but also for civilians who live in a nearby small town and Indian reservation. Utah Medical Society physicians complained about the lack of information provided to the medical community.

According to Rutgers University political science professor Dr. Leonard Cole, the use of potentially harmful chemical and biological agents continues at Dugway. He testified that the U.S. Army uses *Bacillus subtilis* "which is recognized as a potential source of infection and can cause serious illness in some people when they are exposed to it in large numbers and they inhale large numbers of those microorganisms."⁴

Mid-1950s-early 1970s Project Shad:

The Dugway Proving Ground and Fort Douglas had a secret navy, called Project Shad. Their ships sailed through clouds of germ and chemical agents. Some sailors blame these tests for the cancer and other diseases that they suffer from.⁶

1956 Operation Transit III:

One of Project Shad's first tests occurred in San Francisco Bay as part of Operation Transit III. In September 1956, plans called for a 40-foot munitions boat to create clouds of *Bacillus globigii* germs that the Eastman would travel through. Plans called for enough germs to ensure that "a minimum respiratory dose of 10,000 organisms is received on deck." Planners considered *B. globigii* a safe "simulant" of more dangerous germs. (The U.S. Army still uses it for field testing.)

The tests included dropping "20,000 gallons of BG (*B. globigii*) slurry" from helicopters.⁶

1956 to 1958 Testing on Blacks:

The U.S. Army did field tests in the poor black communities of Savannah, Georgia, and Avon Park, Florida, in which mosquitoes were released into residential neighbourhoods from ground level and from planes and helicopters. Many were swarmed by mosquitoes and developed unknown fevers; some even died. After each test, Army personnel posing as public health officials photographed and tested the victims and then disappeared from town. It is theorized that the mosquitoes were infected with a strain of Yellow Fever. Details of the tests remain classified.⁵

1950s to 1970s Operation Whitecoat:

Many experiments that tested various biological agents on human subjects, referred to as Operation Whitecoat, were carried out at Fort Detrick, MD. The human subjects originally consisted of volunteer enlisted men. However, after the enlisted men staged a sitdown strike to obtain more information about the dangers of the biological tests, Seventh-Day Adventists who were conscientious objectors were recruited for the studies. Because they did not believe in engaging in actual combat, they became human subjects in military research projects that tested various infectious agents. At least 2,200 Seventh-Day Adventists were used in biological testing during the 1950s through the 1970s.⁴

1962 More on Project Shad:

Training outlines show that Project Shad sailors were briefed on work with germs causing some of the deadliest diseases known, including tularemia, anthrax, parrot fever, Q fever, African swine fever, the plague and botulism.⁶

1963-1965 Project Shad ships "participated in 111 tests" using nerve agents GB and VX, and biological agents *Bacillus globigii*, *Serratia marcescens* and *Escherichia coli*. (Letter from Maj.Gen. L.J.Del Rosso, Army director of space and special weapons, to Senator Steve Symms, R-Idaho, 1992)⁶

1966 New York Subway:

From June 7-10, the U.S. Army's Special Operations Division dispensed [*Bacillus subtilis* var *niger*]³ throughout the New York City subway system. The Army's justification for the experiment was the fact that there are many subways in the USSR, Europe and South America. Details of the experiment are still classified.⁵ More than a million were exposed when army scientists dropped lightbulbs filled with the bacteria onto ventilation grates.¹

1987 Continued Research:

The Department of Defense admitted that, despite a treaty banning research and development of biological agents, it continues to do research at 127 facilities and universities in the U.S.¹

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