

VETERANS SUE CIA, ARMY FOR EXPERIMENTS AT DETRICK, EDGEWOOD

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A year and a half after a group of veterans sued the CIA, Army and Department of Defense for testing chemicals on troops without consent, the group has asked a judge to penalize the agencies for refusing to cooperate and provide vital records.

According to the veterans, the CIA "exposed thousands of test subjects to hundreds of toxic compounds over the course of many years," states the most recent court document filed in Vietnam Veterans of America v. Central Intelligence Agency.

The veterans claim they were part of experiments that involved psychochemicals, such as LSD, nerve gas and mind control tactics. The veterans never gave informed consent and have not been compensated for health problems they now suffer, they claim.

The focus of the lawsuit is on testing in Army facilities in Maryland under the control of the Chemical Corps in the 1950s to 1970s, but the plaintiffs said

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similar military experiments took place in universities and hospitals around the country.

"The case has been brought as a class action on behalf of all military personnel exposed to chemical and biological test experiments or mind control research," said Gordon Erspamer, an attorney for the veterans. "This includes, but is not limited to, those exposed at Fort Detrick and the Edgewood Arsenal."

Erspamer said the team of lawyers has not filed paperwork to open the lawsuit up to more veterans, but a class-action suit is the ultimate plan for the case.

For now, five veterans and three organizations are listed as plaintiffs — a sixth man had been part of the lawsuit but died last week of cancer, Erspamer said.

The veterans are not seeking punitive damages from the government, only compensation for several medical conditions they've developed that are related to the chemicals they were exposed to, Erspamer said.

To identify more potential plaintiffs, and to identify scientists and government officials involved in the experiments who could be called to testify, the veterans' attorneys have requested that the CIA, Army and Defense produce tens of thousands of pages of records.

The lawyers made their first records request 15 months ago, but they've received only about 16,000 pages — a fraction of what they requested, they said. Much of the paperwork handed over to the lawyers was redacted, hiding the very names the lawyers sought, according to a recent court document they filed.

The attorneys made two more requests for information but have not received any response at all, Erspamer said. Because of the pattern of noncompliance, the veterans' attorneys filed a complaint against the defendants and ask that they be penalized for

not fulfilling their legal obligations. A judge will consider the complaint on Sept. 29.

Though Fort Detrick was one of the sites of the experiments, spokesman Chuck Gordon said he was not aware of Fort Detrick officials being involved in pulling any records for the lawsuit. Fort Detrick is not specifically named as a defendant in the lawsuit.

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