

L.A. TIMES SEPT. 19, 1975

Engineer Who Built Biological Arms for U.S. Denies Role in CIA's Poison Cache

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WASHINGTON—A government engineer told senators Thursday that he had developed exotic biological weapons, including umbrellas that shot poison and room bombs triggered by electric lights.

But the engineer, Charles Senseney, told the Senate's special committee on intelligence activities that the devices were chopped up and melted down in 1970 in accordance with a presidential directive.

Senseney said he had worked on biological weapons mainly for the Army but, in a few instances, for the Central Intelligence Agency. However, he denied sworn testimony by others that he had played a role in the CIA's retention of an illicit store of poisons.

As the committee concluded the first phase of hearings, focused on the CIA's violation of a presidential ban on biological warfare materials, Sen. Walter F. Mondale (D-Minn.) said that the Defense Department might have conspired with the CIA.

Referring to the transfer of deadly shellfish toxin from Senseney's Army office to the CIA, Mondale said:

"I am very suspicious that whoever did it—instead of obeying the presidential order, sneaked the stuff out the back door and then prepared an inventory indicating it had been destroyed."

Dr. Nathan Gordon, a retired CIA scientist, told the committee earlier this week that he kept the shellfish toxin and other deadly substances after Senseney suggested they should be transferred out of Ft. Detrick, Md., where biological materials were to be destroyed.

Gordon said the CIA owned five grams of shellfish toxin stored at Ft. Detrick, the Army's biological warfare center. But the supply that arrived at Gordon's CIA laboratory

PERHAPS
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amounted to 10.9 grams, he said. Asked about this, Senseney testified that Dr. Andrew Cowan, chief of his Special Operations Division at Ft. Detrick, told him after the biological weapons ban that the CIA "wanted it (the shellfish toxin) back."

"We were prepared to actually destroy everything," Senseney said. "But much of the material belonged to the CIA."

Richard M. Helms, then director of the CIA, has said that Gordon's action in keeping the poison violated Helms' oral orders to carry out the presidential directive.

Recessing the CIA hearings until next week, Sen. Frank Church (D-Ida.) the committee chairman, said:

"The case of the shellfish toxin illustrates how elusive the chain of command can be in the intelligence community. It underscores dramati-

cally the necessity for tighter internal controls, for better record keeping . . . and improved mechanisms of accountability all the way from the White House to the outer branches of the intelligence establishment."

Closing out the poison episode, the committee approved a letter to be sent to CIA Director William E. Colby suggesting that the highly expensive paralytic toxin be donated to private laboratories for medical research.

"It is fitting that out of an admitted wrongdoing, some benefit might be had," the letter said.

Senseney, recalling secret weapons he had developed, said the defunct arsenal included umbrellas and fountain pens that shot poison darts and an aerosol bomb that released gas in a room when the electric light was turned on.

"Did you ever attempt to impregnate a cigar with a poison substance?" asked Sen. Howard H. Baxter Jr. (R-Tenn.).

"That would be too easy," Senseney replied. "I don't think we would fool around with that."

He said he had developed dart guns for the CIA capable of incapacitating guard dogs, but told the committee he could not recall any other devices engineered for the agency. The CIA, however, had access to many items that he developed for the Army's Special Forces unit, Senseney said.

Sen. Richard S. Schweiker (R-Pa.) read aloud from a memo showing that the CIA once had asked Senseney's office to originate a poison device that could penetrate light clothing and skin "silently and without pain."

The committee is scheduled today to take closed-door testimony from

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~~James Bond is the fictional character
of the Ian Fleming spy novels.~~

Air Force Lt. Gen. Lew Allen Jr., head of the National Security Agency, in preparation for additional public hearings next week.