

Laser Ray Can Be Used to Blind Foe

By Jack Anderson

The men who introduced the insidious white phosphorus and needle bombs to Vietnam have balked at using a destructive laser ray which they had researched for use against Vietcong military leaders.

This strangest of weapons was dreamed up in the early sixties as a means of exploding the eyes of enemy soldiers and their officers from distances of more than a mile.

By blinding instead of killing, the weapons would cause endless grief not only to the victim, but to the authorities who would have to take care of the blinded soldiers.

The research for this horrendous device was done for the 6570th Aero-space Medical Research Laboratory, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio. It was presented at secret sessions of a Pentagon-sponsored forum in San Diego.

We have copies of some of the classified research, "Giant pulse lasers" were used to bring rabbit and monkey eyes to the boiling point, causing bleeding and an actual explosion in the eye.

As the report to the secret forum put it in technical terms: "Retinal exposures to unattenuated Q-switch laser beams resulted in vaporization of . . . tissue with the production of relatively massive blast and hemorrhagic effects in addition to extensive retinal burns . . ."

"This is important in considering the anti-personnel weapon applications of the lasers . . . It would not matter upon which portion of the retina the image was formed because the resulting micro-explosion of the tissue would lead to blindness."

The study goes on to say that countermeasures against the blindness ray would be "difficult" for an enemy to perfect because the lasers pierce most protective filters.

Putting the research into practice would be complex, but military scientists have told us it could be easily accomplished with adequate funding.

The weapons could be reduced to backpack size and aimed at enemy officers by use of high-power telescopic lenses. The beam would cover

a circle with a diameter of several feet.

Any eye in that area would be destroyed if it was exposed to the ray for even a split instant — far less than a microsecond — the scientists said.

Asked for comment, a Defense Department expert said the material remained classified.

What's My Line?

Lost among the innumerable, anonymous men whom George Wallace calls "Briefcase-totin' bureaucrats" are some government employees whose jobs would stump a "What's My Line" panel.

One lonely government worker spends his days looking for bookworms. Real ones. Charley Brown, 24, wearing a mustache, sunglasses and a black knit cap, hunts down worms in the rare book collection at the Library of Congress.

The worms can do great damage, and the rare books are extremely valuable. So Brown takes his job seriously. "When I find a worm," he says with determination, "I report it."

James Reed, another government employee who never picks up a briefcase, still has his hands full. His job is to haul hundreds of flags up and down the flagpoles on the roof of the Capitol.

Reed's patient work permits congressmen and senators to send their constituents flags that have actually—at least momentarily—flown over the Capitol.

Reed apparently does his uncommon job uncommonly well. "When I get going," he says, "I'll be ruaning them up and down every three minutes."

Perhaps most unusual is the assignment recently given David Dinius of the Agriculture Department. He was trying to determine whether newspapers could be recycled as low grade forage for animals.

For several months, he fed The Washington Post to a group of cows. Unfortunately, the cattle didn't like the Post any more than Vice President Agnew does.