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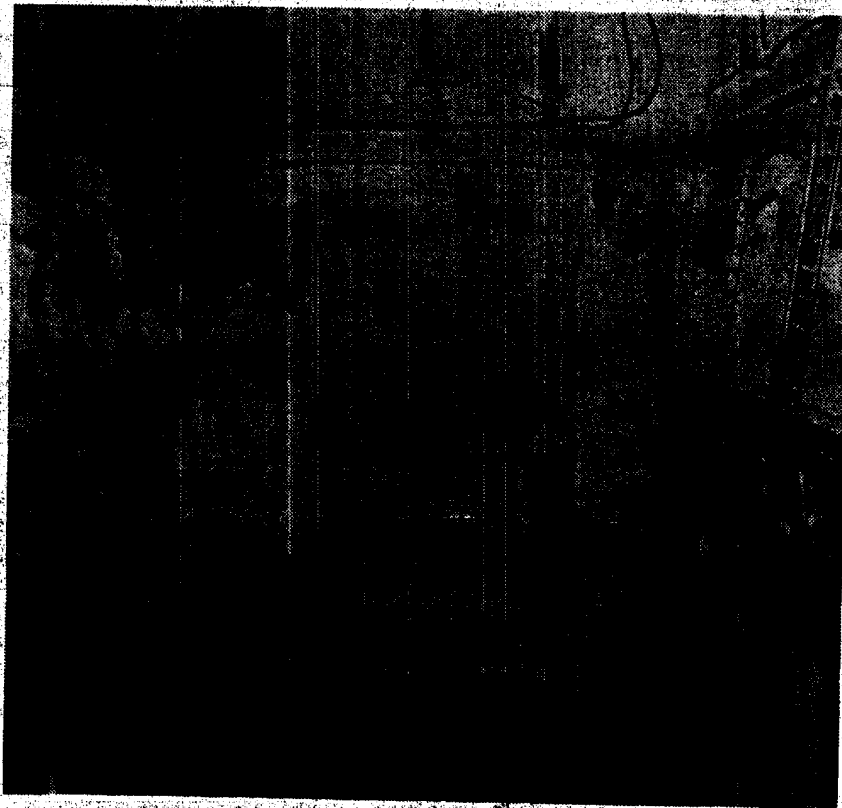
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Lab technicians work with infectious micro-organisms in safety cabinets.

U. S. Army

# Germ, War and Ft. Detrick

## 'Death Merchants' or Bulwark Against Attack?

By John Hanrahan  
Washington Post Staff Writer

The laboratories have a special entry area where workers don sterilized clothing then go through a system of air locks and ultraviolet rays into the labs.

The lab benches are enclosed in airtight safety cabinets with portholes to which rubber gloves are attached. Scientists work through the rubber gloves, so their hands never directly touch anything once it is in the cabinet.

Inside are produced such viruses as anthrax, encephalitis, Rocky Mountain spotted

fever, cholera and botulism and defoliants.

The place is Ft. Detrick, Md., the Nation's major center of chemical and biological warfare. The process was described by Detrick officials as "inefficient, clumsy—but safe."

They speak from the point of view of supporters of chemical and biological research, who see Detrick as a bulwark against a possible future attack by the Soviet Union or China. But to opponents of such research, Detrick is a symbol of the "new merchants of death" who once again are using science for destructive pur-

poses. And they very pointedly question its safety.

For the most part, chemical and biological research, until recently, was free of controversy. But after recent television special reports and newspaper editorials, Rep. Richard McCarthy (D-N.Y.) began to speak out repeatedly against the research and helped stir a public outcry against the Army's plans to send more than 800 carloads of obsolete nerve gas across the country for dumping in the Atlantic Ocean.

See DETRICK, A20, Col. 1

tensive briefing and a limited tour and Detrick's top military and civilian officials, repeatedly expressed anger over these criticisms.

### Negative Pressure

James Carey, assistant director for installations and service, points out that all laboratory areas are under negative air pressure.

Thus, Carey says, the outside air is at a higher pressure than the entry areas of a laboratory; the entry area is at a higher pressure than the rest of the lab; the lab is at a higher pressure than the freon-tight cabinets.

The result, Carey says, is that if a leak develops it cannot flow from the lab into the outside air.

Col. E. M. Gershater, commanding officer at Detrick, says, "We operate on the principle that we don't want any leaks from the inside out. Any leaks would have to be from the outside in. This is unlike antibiotic labs where they don't want any leaks from the outside in."

On the end of each cabinet are located "pass boxes." When scientists want to transfer something into the cabinet, they put the item in the pass box, then close the door. Using the rubber gloves, they then open a second door leading from the box to the cabinet and make the transfer.

This reporter visited a lab (not in use at the time) where viruses (causative agents of infectious diseases) and rickettsials (such as typhus and Rocky Mountain spotted fever) are produced through experiments involving embryonic chick eggs.

The eggs come into the lab on trays, going first to an "inoculation station" where the "seed material" (disease) is put into the eggs. They move through a system of tanks on a conveyor belt, finally ending up in a "harvesting station" where the eggs are broken. The "product goes down one chute, the waste material down another where it passes through a sewage system which involves cooking the wastes at ultra-high temperatures to kill all organisms.

The toxic product is re-

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### DETRICK, From A1

The outcry was also prompted by visions of another Dugway Proving Ground incident. In March, 1968, about 6400 sheep were killed in Utah when a test of a nerve gas went astray at Dugway.

In the fiscal year just ended, Pentagon officials acknowledged spending \$350 million for research on chemical and biological warfare. Critics of the program have disputed this figure, claiming that Edgewood Arsenal in Maryland, the military's main chemical warfare base, had by itself an overall budget of \$421.5 million.

Author Seymour M. Hersh, who has been the leading journalistic gadfly of the research establishment, claims that classified information shows that \$650 million a year is a "conservative figure" in trying to determine how much actually is spent for chemical and

biological research.

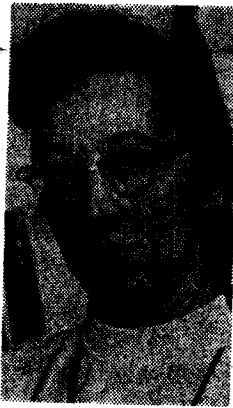
At Detrick, officials said their research and development budget alone for the fiscal year was \$19 million.

Located on 1229 acres, Ft. Detrick entails a \$95 million capital investment with \$155 million estimated replacement costs. With its 2600 military and civilian personnel, including 342 scientists, Ft. Detrick is the biggest employer in the area, pumping some \$25 million annually into the Frederick County economy.

### Well Educated

In Detrick's biological warfare program there are 1727 civilians, 59 Army officers and 128 enlisted men. Of the scientists, 423 are civilians and 112 have Ph. D. degrees. There are more than a dozen types of scientists there including—167 microbiologists.

Again and again, the secrecy and the dangers of chemical and biological warfare research and development are emphasized by opponents of the program. This reporter visited Ft. Detrick last month for an ex-



**HELEN ALEXANDER**  
... outspoken critic

tained for test purposes. Often, says Col. Gershater, the "pelleting" method is used to freeze small droplets of material for future use or shipment to Pine Bluff (Ark.) Arsenal, for stockpiling.

Gershater describes Pine Bluff as a "limited production facility" at which biological weapons could be produced in large quantities in the event of a war to "keep the enemy honest." The program's critics maintain that large quantities of biological weapons already have been produced and are kept in cold storage "igloos" at Pine Bluff.

In other laboratories and test areas at Detrick, experiments are performed on animals and human beings to test the diseases developed.

Detrick scientists have worked with, or are now working with, diseases and various strains that include tularemia (rabbit fever), brucellosis (found mainly in livestock), anthrax (acute bacteria disease), encephalitis, coccidioidomycosis (a fungus infection), glanders (bacterial disease), psittacosis (parrot fever), Rocky Mountain spotted fever, undulant fever, cholera, botulism, (food poisoning), pneumonic plague (the much-feared, highly infectious disease), 2-4-D (weed-killing compound used for defoliation in Vietnam) and gibberellic acid (plant growth regulator).

Col. Gershater noted with pride that the Fort's "Animal Farm," a name that makes chemical and biologi-

cal warfare opponents wince, often is visited by school groups. It houses thousands of animals used in research and testing, mainly mice, guinea pigs, hamsters and monkeys.

The human volunteers for the tests are prison inmates and the special category of conscientious objectors who agree to "alternative service" rather than actually serving in the military.

The human volunteers are drawn mainly from the ranks of Seventh-Day Adventists for the so-called "Project White Coat."

Washington area pacifists recently have made quiet efforts with Seventh-Day Adventist officials at the Takoma Park headquarters to discontinue cooperation with Detrick in the program. Church officials defend their participation as a demonstration of patriotism by those who have scruples against carrying guns.

Once workers leave the lab, they are required to shower with germicidal soap before putting on their personal clothing. All air, waste materials and other items leaving the lab are sterilized before they reach the outside air, officials say.

Also, says Col. Gershater, there is no open-air testing of products at Detrick, such as that reported Friday at Edgewood Arsenal and Ft. McClellan, Aia. When equipment for disseminating biological weapons is tested, he said, harmless aerosol sprays are used. Never, he claims, have diseases been sprayed into the open air on the test field or elsewhere at Detrick.

#### Critics Remain

Detrick officials also note that publications on laboratory safety written by the Fort's scientists serve as models in the field. They point out that Detrick scientists were involved in setting up the laboratory that will receive materials brought back from the moon on this week's space flight.

Despite the assurances of

safety, there have been problems in convincing the critics.

In January, 1967, the Defense Department acknowledged that one man had died and 11 others were infected prior to 1965 in a building at Ft. Detrick that had "a hazardous condition." This came to light when a \$1.3 million construction contract to remedy the situation was awarded to the Thurmont Construction Co.

The Defense Department was vague as to what caused the man to die of viral encephalitis, 10 more to become ill with various infectious diseases and one infected with tuberculosis. It said the infections "were not due to deficiencies in the laboratory" in which the men were working. All of the other 11 who were infected eventually recovered, the Defense Department said at the time.

Rep. McCarthy raised the question of danger in April and May of this year with a speech inserted in the Congressional Record and with other public statements.

He charged that Detrick had 3300 accidents connected with biological warfare research between 1954 and 1962. He also contended that in 1959 a Ft. Detrick lifeguard caught the plague, yet local residents who might have come into contact with him were not warned.

In addition, McCarthy said, the man died but the accident was never reported to the World Health Organization as is required by international agreement.

During the recent tour of Fort Detrick, this reporter spent several hours with Detrick officials, including Gershater, Housewright, Carey, Dr. Arnold G. Wedum, director of industrial health and safety; Dr. Harold Glassman, assistant scientific director for research, and Major Marvin D. Brailsford, acting deputy commanding officer.

#### Defend Research

In wide-ranging discussions, these men defended chemical and biological research and development; praised the Ft. Detrick's

safety record, emphasized that the Frederick community was not endangered; angrily assailed the research program's critics and, in general, offered a rare public insight into the thinking of the persons developing terrifying weapons of war.

"This recent criticism gives the idea that we're a bunch of warmongers, that we live in caves and have forked tails," said Housewright. "We're trained not in warfare, but in the business of saving lives."

Pointing to a Parade Magazine article on Rep. McCarthy, Housewright cited a portion saying that the Congressman became worried about chemical and biological warfare after his wife called his attention to it after seeing a television program earlier this year.

"There are a lot of us who have been worried about it since he (McCarthy) was 16 years old," Housewright said. "He's only been worried about it since he saw a badly done CBS special. I can't understand why he is so steamed up about it when he just found out about it."

"We were professionals in the area of infectious diseases when we became interested—and we don't claim to be experts yet."

The direct language was typical of the interview. In addition to their duties of developing defenses to chemical and biological warfare, the scientists at Ft. Detrick also have been busy developing defenses against congressional and mass media attacks.

#### Three Deaths

Detrick officials claim there have been 420 accidental infections resulting in the human deaths at the post since 1943. There have been no accidental infections since 1967, they maintain.

Gershater says that the 3300 accidents cited by McCarthy between 1954 and 1962 covered the entire post and only about half were in laboratories. Those in the laboratories primarily consisted of minor cuts, abrasions and incidents of glassware being broken or



COL. E. M. GERSHATER  
... Detrick's commander

dropped in which no injury resulted.

Of the 3300 accidents, there were just 158 infections in that period, of which 21 per cent did not require hospitalization, Fort officials say.

"The implication has been made that people in neighboring Frederick are living on the edge of terror," Gershater says. "In 26 years, there has not been one example of anyone from the Frederick community not connected with Ft. Detrick having been injured or killed as a result of what we're doing here."

The three deaths listed by Detrick officials occurred in 1951, 1958 and 1964. The first two died of anthrax, the third of Venezuelan Equine Encephalitis.

The first man died in 1951, Glassman says, after working in the laboratory with anthrax aerosols. The third man died in a project requested by the Public Health Service.

The 1958 death remains a mystery.

"We have never understood how he got infected," Glassman says. "He was an electrician who was changing a light bulb in the area where they were working with anthrax. He wasn't vaccinated, but we have no idea how he contracted it."

#### 'Good Record'

Three deaths in 26 years

is "a good record," Gershater says, considering the nature of the work.

Wedum also charged that McCarthy "has his facts all wrong." The man who contracted pneumonic plague did not die as McCarthy claimed, Wedum says. In addition, the case was reported to the World Health Organization, Wedum maintains.

Besides, Wedum said, pneumonic plague "is not really dangerous in the United States... It's dangerous in less developed countries where people are huddled in shacks at night." Since 1950, there have been 34 cases of the plague reported in the U.S., with 11 resulting in death, he notes.

Detrick, he says, has had just one case of the plague since 1943. Incidence of other cases at Ft. Detrick since 1943 include tularemia, 146; brucellosis, 90; Q fever, 50; anthrax, 31; Venezuelan Equine encephalitis, 20; psittacosis, 18; coccidioidomycosis 9; glanders, 7; Rocky Mountain spotted fever, 5.

Sen. Gaylord Nelson (D-Wis.), a critic of the program, tried unsuccessfully for several months to find out about one of Detrick's missions during World War II involving field testing of aerosols of botulism toxin on Horn Island, off the coast of Mississippi.

The Pentagon informed Nelson's aides that the information was still "classified."

"It's really creepy trying to get something that happened 25 years ago and you just can't get it," says Thomas Blair, an aide to Nelson. "It's almost like they've taken history and banished it."

#### Secrecy Charges

Detrick officials claim they can't understand the charges of "secrecy" made by the critics.

"We tell too much," says Wedum. "When you compare us to other countries working on chemical and biological warfare, we're blabbing. We tell too much, rather than not enough."

"I read every day about this 'super-secret' place," says Housewright. "But does that look super-secret to you?" He pointed to a table

cramped with 18 volumes of reprinted articles that appeared in scientific and technical journals and six drawers full of 3 by 5 cards listing articles. All were written by Detrick scientists.

"It's impossible for anyone outside the field to judge what we're doing here," says Wedum. "There's no organism we work with that isn't being worked on in other laboratories somewhere in the country—and with less safety precautions, I might add. Why, at the Public Health Service's plague laboratory at Fort Collins, Colo., they're working with rats (that have plague) right out in the open on tables."

Although they noted that chemical and biological research policy is not made at Detrick, the Fort's officials make it clear that they think the research is valuable as a deterrent and as a possible weapon in war.

"Let's say we listened to some of the 'authorities' and scrubbed the program tomorrow," Gets hater said. "Then, one morning the President wakes up and he finds he has a big threat facing him from the enemy—the ChiComs or the Soviets."

"As I see it, the President would have just two choices. He can go all out and use the nukes—or he can surrender. Now with chemical and biological warfare, there is something in between. We can keep our options open and not give the enemy the satisfaction that he has superiority."

"Policy is not made here at Detrick," says Housewright. "That's not to say that we don't have any firm views on it. We (the U.S.) have a very well enunciated policy of no first use of chemical or biological warfare. Our principal business here is, and has been since the program was established, the defense of this country."

#### Offense Necessary

Although there have been no Dugway-like incidents at Detrick, there recently has come to light a series of incidents that has concerned these involved a farmer, many of the Fort's critics, John H. Hall, whose land sits on the Monocacy River, downstream from Detrick's sewage plant. Hall has lost more than 230 cows in the

last seven years.

About 90 of the cows died. Others became so ill and sterile they could not give milk and had to be sold for meat. No one has an adequate explanation for what happened to them.

Detrick officials conducted their own tests, studying water samples taken weekly from the Monocacy in the vicinity of the sewage plant since 1961. They determined that Detrick was not to blame for the cow's deaths.

#### More Died

Hall's lawyer agrees that Detrick is free of blame. But the cows continue to suffer—12 more died last week.

Most of the opposition to Detrick's activities has been generated outside the community, with the bulk of it centering in Washington and its suburbs.

The Mid-Atlantic Committee on Ft. Detrick, consisting of doctors, scientists, government workers and pacifists, has staged several demonstrations against Detrick. In recent months, the group has held gas mask demonstrations at the Pentagon, the White House and various other places in downtown Washington.

The group also staged a program last November at Hood College where, for the first time in memory, someone spoke out publicly against Detrick within the city of Frederick.

That someone was Dr. Theodore Rosebury, one of Ft. Detrick's original staff members in 1943. He called for scrapping the secret programs and turning Detrick into an "international center for microbiological research."

Rosebury, who was civilian chief supervising airborne infection projects, also offered his insight into the thinking behind the program at Fort Detrick:

"Because of the lack of any real positive research or knowledge about what types of biological warfare the opposing side was involved in, we had to devise our own conception of what were potentially technically available types of agents that could be produced," he said.

"Thus, we became involved in the offensive manufacture of biological weapons here in order to devise a means of attempting to as-

certain if there was any way we could produce fairly safe countermeasures to the dissemination of diseases as weaponry during conflicts.

"There is no way to stop the dissemination of such a weapon. With no way to stop it, the only way to insure it was not used by the other side was to use our research and perfect the sophistication of agents and get into the balance of power to put



U.S. Army Photograph  
**DR. A. G. WEDUM**  
... safety director

it into the class where it could not be used by either side.

"It was about this time that I terminated my association with Ft. Detrick."

Another former top Detrick official, who asked that his identity not be revealed, said recently that he and many other scientists had the same feelings as Rosebury when they saw the direction the program was taking after World War II.

"There are many parallels between people like myself and atomic scientists," this microbiologist says. "We were both motivated by patriotism during World War II.

"Then, after the war, we saw where it was going but unlike the atomic scientists who formed an organization and said, 'We have seen sin, the chemical and biological scientists just got out of the program and went on to something else.'"

In his years at Detrick, the scientist said, the programs were "dominated by military thinking... not only that, but the dogs of the military." On top of this he said, most of the good quality research that was being done was kept secret.

The scientist discounted any notion that the researchers at Detrick are evil men.

"I don't think that people at any level—military or civilian—want to annihilate the world," he says. "Many

are just earning a living and are baffled by the criticism of their work."

In addition this scientist is disturbed by the participation of the Central Intelligence Agency in chemical and biological warfare planning. The CIA, he says, supplies reports as to what it believes the Russians and the Chinese are doing in the field.

The over-all secrecy, he says, also means that Detrick is unable to draw on outside, independent experts to evaluate its work to insure that the quality of the research is not colored by internal prejudices.

#### Small Danger

As for dangers to the Frederick community, the scientist notes that Detrick "is in the retail business and not in the wholesale business" and produces only small quantities. Any accident, he says, would have an effect only in an area within a block of the Fort, he believes.

But, he adds, "You can't predict where a cloud will go—witness the Dugway incident in Utah. It's even possible that this fiasco at Dugway was, in the minds of those who did it, an effective exercise in determining whether it could be used against troops."

Despite the controversy in Washington—just 45 miles south of Detrick—the still basically rural cattle farming area at Detrick exhibits virtually no dissent against the biological warfare research and development activities at the Fort.

The city establishment and officials at the Fort work hand in hand in building a good image for Detrick. Most local citizens tell reporters they pay no attention to what goes on at Detrick. The local newspapers constantly praise the Fort.

And says Col. Gershater, "When someone implies Ft. Detrick is apart from the community... when someone implies that people downtown don't like us, that's erroneous. The people downtown are us."

#### "Biggest payroll"

A publication distributed to incoming personnel at the post about 12 years ago contained this Army view con-

cerning community feelings about Detrick:

"True, of course, many activities remain in the classified category, but the citizens are not inquisitive—they appreciate the influence of Detrick on their way of life."

Frederick Mayor John A. Derr speaks glowingly of Detrick and its "biggest payroll in town."

"As far as the danger... no one knows what that is. All of it has been highly exaggerated. Officials at Ft. Detrick tell us the dangers to the community are nonexistent—and we must rely on their judgment."

Helen Alexander, a former Detrick worker who was the lone picket against Chemical and biological research on the recent Armed Forces Day, sadly acknowledges that local opposition to Detrick is scarce. Some people who are concerned are afraid to speak out, she says. After more than eight years as a switchboard operator at Detrick, Mrs. Alexander quit in 1967.

"I learned that what we were using to defoliate in Vietnam had been developed at Ft. Detrick. I decided that no matter what you do at Detrick, you're a cog in the machine. That's when I decided to leave."

Her picket sign carried the message: "Turn Ft. Detrick into Low Cost Housing."

#### "Like Auschwitz"

The Rev. Lyle Harper, of the United Methodist Church, in nearby Walkersville, also has spoken out against the program in his sermons. The Rev. Walker has referred to it as "like having an Auschwitz right here."

But on the other side, Col. Gershater speaks glowingly of the town's relationship with Ft. Detrick.

"We usually take the economic impact first... perhaps that's because money talks," says Gershater. "We do put \$25 million per year into the local economy... that's a fair impact."

Gershater also prepared a list detailing Detrick's substantial social, educational and scientific impact on Frederick.

# Mathias, Army to Discuss Open-Air Tests

Sen. Charles McC. Mathias (R-Md.) said yesterday he will meet early in the week with an Army representative to discuss the open-air testing of nerve gases at the Edgewood Arsenal, 5 miles northeast of Baltimore.

An aide to Mathias said he requested the meeting Friday after a House Conservation Subcommittee released figures on testing of chemical and biological warfare agents at Edgewood, at the Dugway Proving Ground

in Utah and at Ft. McClellan, Ala.

Mathias asked Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird Friday to suspend the tests at Edgewood and the other two sites until the Army reports simultaneously to Laird and Congress on the tests and their threat to the safety of the population surrounding the test areas.

According to the report, 110 chemical tests were planned at Edgewood in the last three months and another 129 are planned for the quarter beginning July 1.

Rep. Clarence D. Long (D-Md.), whose district includes Edgewood, said the tests should be stopped until Congress is informed fully about them. "Frankly, I'm getting awfully tired of the military plunging ahead on so many fronts without consulting Congress," Long said.

The report said the gases tested at Edgewood involve quantities ranging from 50 grams of Sarin to 10 pounds of VX, which killed 6400 sheep in a Utah testing accident in March, 1968. A

spokesman for the Edgewood Arsenal said "only small amounts" were tested "under strict safety precautions with weather and wind being vital factors."

The Associated Press reported that the Ft. McClellan information officer denied that open-air tests were being conducted. He said small amounts of lethal chemical agents only were used for training purposes. "There has been no open-air testing since October, 1967. There has never been open air biological testing," he said.