

Times Article Raps Detrick, Frederick, CBW

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'Dare We Develop Biological

Warfare?'

Under the arresting title of "Dare We Develop Biological Weapons?" the New York Times magazine of Sept. 28 carried an article by Seymour N. Hersh analyzing the function of Fort Detrick in the field of CBW.

This writer is author of "Chemical and Biological Warfare: America's Hidden Arsenal" and a forthcoming book about the Pentagon, "The Ultimate Corporation."

The article follows, in part: "It's less than an hour's drive from downtown Washington to Frederick, Md., a bustling farm city proud of its history. The Frederick County Court was the first to refuse to uphold England's 1765 Stamp Act; the city sent two companies of riflemen to George Washington's Continental Army; its citizens fought the Civil War on both sides. The county ranks first in farming and dairying in Maryland. The only other important business there is biological warfare.

Frederick is the home of Fort Detrick, America's center for the research and development of biological-warfare agents. Nearly 3,000 civilians and military men spend their working days there, ferreting out potential new disease agents and then learning how to defend against them. Such work has been given its own name by the biological warriors at Detrick - biological engineering.

"Utilizing the recent advances in genetics, researchers have been working for years on techniques that will enable them to develop a variety of diseases such as bubonic plague, pneumonic plague and anthrax that no longer could be cured by antibiotics such as penicillin or streptomycin. Thus, man's ingenuity could develop what in effect would be a 'doomsday bug,' a disease so uncontrollable it would trigger a pandemic across the world.

"Until recently, what was go-

ing on at Detrick was considered only the military's business: the fort is one of three U.S. bases devoted to furthering the art of biological warfare. As such, the biologicals are the less important part of the nation's chemical and biological warfare (C.B.W.) program. C.B.W. has been the subject of a growing nationwide protest, fanned in the past year by military accidents and excessive secrecy.

The protests, led by Representative Richard D. McCarthy, Democrat of New York, who singlehandedly pursued the issue in news conferences and on the House floor, reached a highpoint in mid-August when the Senate unanimously approved a series of curbs on the shipping and testing of C.B.W. agents.

"Much of the over-all criticism of C.B.W. has been aimed at biological warfare. The thought of using germs as weapons is generally considered by the American public to be, as McCarthy told the American Bar Association in a recent speech, 'unbelievable. . . It is directly contrary to the principles of humanity and decency for which America stands.' The United Nations added to the out-cry over C.B.W. in July when it published a comprehensive report prepared by officials from 14 nations, including the United States. Scientists, many of them former researchers in biological warfare, investigated the possible uses - and results - of all-out biological warfare and concluded that the overriding danger would apply as much to the country which initiated the use of these weapons as to the one which had been attacked.

"The protests over biological warfare have been equally sharp

in England, and that nation has offered a draft treaty to the multination disarmament conference in Geneva that would ban the development, production, stockpiling and use of biological weapons. The Soviet Union, Poland and Sweden have urged that the English proposal be rewritten to outlaw also chemical warfare, including the tear gases now in use in South Vietnam.

"Even the secrecy can't disguise the important role of Fort Detrick in America's biological warfare efforts. To the casual observer, the base, with its gray barracks and ramshackle brown laboratories, seems innocuous enough.

"But in one corner, carefully clustered behind high wire fences, is a group of large greenhouses. Much of the military work on developing biological anticrop diseases and chemical defoliants is carried out there.

A simulated rice field lies in another corner, enabling the Army men to research ways and means of killing young rice shoots. But killing plant life is only a peripheral part of the role of Fort Detrick; the most important mission is to develop a variety of diseases capable of killing or maiming man.

"To help do this, Fort Detrick spends something like \$30-million a year. Its professional staff includes 120 men with Ph.D. degrees in such fields as microbiology and biomathematics; 110 men with M.A. degrees, and 320 B.S. degree-holders. The 1,300-acre base also has 4 medical doctors and 34 veterinarians on its staff.

"The vets are needed simply because Detrick is perhaps the world's largest user of laboratory animals - more than 720,000 animals ranging from guinea pigs to monkeys are put to death in biological experiments and similar research each year. The animals are kept in a facility called the Animal Farm.

"Detrick personnel have played a key role in developing at least four strains of known diseases for military use. These diseases, now carefully cultured at the military's main biological production plant at Pine Bluff (Ark.) Arsenal, are anthrax, tul-

aremia, Q fever, and psittacosis. Anthrax was one of the dread scourges of the Middle Ages; it can kill up to 100 per cent of its victims. Tularemia is widely known as rabbit fever, with many victims later developing chronic effects. Q fever is an acute and sturdy infectious disease that can linger for up to three months in victims, although it is rarely fatal. Psittacosis, or parrot fever, can be mild and last about a week, or it can cause deaths in 10 per cent or more of those infected.

"The Army has invested heavily in Fort Detrick in the last 10 years. In the last nineteen-fifties, the first of what has become a series of ultra-modern research laboratories was constructed. Known cryptically as special operations-x (so-x), the laboratory may have been designed for the initial work on genetics. The base also has separate facilities for research into rickettsia, viruses and bacteria, under its biological sciences directorate.

"By 1960 the growing biological warfare research program forced Detrick officials to purchase a UNIVAC computer. The next year Detrick acquired \$334,000 for a 'biomath science building.' Biomathematics has the important role in biological warfare of determining how much of an agent should be spread over an area to get a predictable infection rate.

"The sheer mathematics of biological warfare are staggering; scientists have determined that as few as three or four organisms of tularemia are needed to infect man, and it has been estimated that more than two billion organisms could be put in each fluid ounce of tularemia.)

"In May, 1967, groundbreaking ceremonies for another laboratory were held; the need to increase the output at Detrick was cited as justification for the construction. Congress initially approved the project and fixes its cost at \$7.1-million; by this year the price has risen to more than \$9-million. In June, 1968, an addition was approved, to cost \$6.5-million. At roughly the same time, Congress was asked for \$2.1-million for yet another laboratory; again no specific details on its mission were made available.

"The new buildings, along with increasing the base's ability to conduct biological warfare research, will increase the number of permanently assigned human volunteers from the 172 on hand in October, 1966, to 225. Detrick has been using human volunteers with little fanfare since the end of World War II. Much of the early work was aimed at developing vaccines, and that is the only justification for the program publicly given even now. Yet by the mid-sixties volunteers were being tested to determine the virulence of airborne diseases such as tularemia.

"In one study reported in a 1966 issue of Bacteriological Review, a publication of the American Society for Microbiology, Seventh-Day Adventists serving noncombat Army duties as conscientious objectors were exposed to airborne tularemia.

"All control subjects developed acute tularemia between two and seven days after exposure," the report said, later noting that all eventually recovered. Most of the volunteers are recruited from within the Army—usually by means of inducements which are forbidden by Army regulations—and may spend perhaps 30 days actually undergoing exposure to the germs. The Seventh-Day Adventist Church has supplied about 1,400 volunteers for the program, known as Operation Whitecoat, since 1954. This program is classified as secret.

"The Army defends its volunteer program and says all volunteers are fully informed before undergoing an experiment. Yet this statement contrasts sharply with one offered by a young soldier who spend three weeks at Fort Detrick as a volunteer in 1963. In a private letter, he told of being placed on a cold liquid

diet for 10 days prior to the experiment. 'At the beginning of the project,' he said, "we had been examined by the director... Each of us queried him as to the value of this particular project; however, we learned exactly what he wanted us to know and that was nothing." He went on:

"There was some apprehension among project members when it was made known this was D-Day (the day of the experiment). Much blood had been drawn previously, and therefore another needle stick or two didn't bother us. We were to learn this morning that we would be injected with endotoxin (a form of toxin liberated upon the disintegration of bacteria). This time both a nurse and Lieut. Col. Biesel (of the Army Medical Corps) were present at the injection. He injected the needle deep into my vein and told me that shortly I should have some reaction. Pain medication in the form of pink and gray Darvon capsules were left on my beside table.

"We were told to lie in bed until whatever happened was over.

"Within an hour, the top of my head felt like all the gremlins in Hades were inside trying to emerge by hitting the underside of my skull with sledge hammers. . . I couldn't have felt any worse if I had been hit by a speeding automobile. . . The Darvon was there to use, if the pain became severe enough. But an idiosyncrasy of mine is being unable to swallow capsules; thus I chose to bear the pain until it quit, which was some three and a half hours or four hours later.

"The balance of the three-week period was used to recuperate. . . The morning just before we were discharged, we were given our \$50 for the two pints of blood taken from us during the project."

"The experiment apparently had little to do with defensive warfare.

"In May, Detrick officials supplied Representative J. Glenn Beall Jr., Republican of Maryland, with a report on safety that began by simply saying: 'The Department of the Army accident record is commendable.' The report claimed that there were only 370 accidental infections at Fort Detrick in the period between 1943 and 1959, with a vastly improved record since then.

"Yet an unclassified Detrick study of laboratory accidents there, 'Casual Factors in Microbiological Laboratory Accidents and Infections,' published in April, 1965, by G. Briggs Phillips of Detrick's safety staff, specifically reports that the 3,300 accidents between 1954 and 1962 resulted in 531 persons being forced to leave work. Seventy-seven per cent of those absent, or about 410 persons, suffered from infections, the study said.

"The Detrick safety statement also took note of a 1959 case of pneumonic plague on the base and described it as 'an excellent test of Detrick's highly organized and specialized medical-treatment facilities. . . The patient

became ill in the morning, was admitted to the Fort Detrick hospital in the afternoon, diagnosis was made by the next morning, the Frederick County Public Health Officer was notified the same day. . . All efforts were successful. The patient was cured and the disease did not spread."

"What Detrick did not say in the report was that the victim was a 22-year-old enlisted laboratory technician who also served as a part-time lifeguard at a base pool opened to the public. At one point after he became ill, a secret Army memo was sent to the Public Health Service, cautioning that the youth 'is a lifeguard at the swimming pool, and therefore had had numerous contacts.'

"The memo went on to say that local health authorities do not anticipate any action unless a secondary case develops. . . No press release has been made or is contemplated by any DoD (Department of Defense) agency, unless death occurs (emphasis added)."

"No attempt was made to inform Frederick residents of the danger or to provide preventative antibiotic treatment, despite the fact that Detrick personnel constantly mingle with the city residents.

"The county health officer who agreed to go along with the fort on the pneumonic plague case was Dr. Forbes H. Burgess, who retired this fall after 19 years with the Maryland State Health Department, 16 of them in Frederick. Burgess acknowledged in an interview with The Baltimore Sun shortly before he retired that he had covered up that incident, and two other cases involving anthrax, at the request of Detrick. He said he did not file written reports and did not inform community officials of the disease out-breaks in order to avoid 'causing a panic.' He also said he never inspected all of the base facilities during his 16 years in Frederick, although he held a 'secret' clearance that would allow him to do so."