

SCIENTIST SAYS GAS WAS TRIED ON G.I.'S

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Admits Army Did Not Reveal
Fatal Nerve Fume Used
NYTimes

By JOSEPH B. TREASTER

A high-level Government medical researcher confirmed tonight a report by Representative Thomas J. Downey that the Army had tested deadly nerve gas on soldiers at the Edgewood Arsenal in Maryland without telling them exactly what they would receive.

Dr. Van M. Sim, who until about two weeks ago was in charge of human experiments by the Army at Edgewood, and was reached by telephone after the Representative made his assertions, said he felt that there had been no danger to the participants in the nerve gas tests. "If I had I wouldn't have conducted them," he said. "Unless I felt they were absolutely safe I would have vetoed them."

Dr. Sim said that he did not know the number of soldiers involved in the nerve gas tests, but Mr. Downey, a Democrat from Long Island, said that he learned in a visit to the Edgewood Arsenal in mid-week that more than 1,000 persons had participated.

Mr. Downey, who said he had gone to the base as a part of an overall investigation he was conducting into the Army's experiments on human subjects with LSD and other drugs, said that officials had indicated that volunteers had generally not been told that they were exposed to nerve gas, but that staff members had been directed to answer questions on the subject if they came up.

Dr. Sim said he had told the volunteers that they were "getting a compound much like a pesticide." "By that we meant the ones used in agriculture," he explained.

He said he believed that the experiments were carried out between 1955 and 1967, at the latest, and said that he had not used the term "nerve gas" because 'nerve gas' wouldn't have been identifiable to them at that time—they wouldn't have known what it was because the story wasn't really out.

A review of the files of The New York Times showed several reports referring to nerve gas dated as early as 1954.

Dr. Sim said that the nerve gas had been given to volunteers in the Army program in "minute, very, very tiny doses," in vapor, drinking water and in liquid applications to the skin. He said that he had administered nerve gas to himself, as he had every other drug he had tested on other humans, and stressed that "safety was always the first consideration."