

# ARMY TO DESTROY GERM WAR STOCKS AS NIXON PLEDGED

Biological and Toxic Arms  
Will Be Disposed Of at  
4 Storage Arsenals

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 18 —

The Army announced today detailed plans to destroy its biological and toxic weapons in accordance with pledges made by President Nixon.

The germ warfare stocks, now stored at four arsenals in the United States, will be destroyed at a cost of \$12.2-million as soon as the plans have been finally approved by all interested Federal, state and local agencies. The work will probably begin early next year and take 12 months.

Primary emphasis in disposing of these materials will be placed on "safety and security rather than cost or time," Lieut. Col. Gerald G. Watson of Kilgore, Tex., the officer in charge of the destruction program, said today.

He emphasized that the materials would not be moved but destroyed where they are now stored. Other officers said that the Army was anxious to avoid public anxiety of the kind that occurred last March when the Army planned to ship nerve gas from Okinawa to a depot in Oregon. The uproar obliged the Army finally to choose Johnston Island in the Pacific as a storage place.

## Made Since 1962

Colonel Watson and the United States had been making biological weapons since 1943 but that the supplies now to be destroyed were manufactured from 1962 to 1969, at a total cost of \$726-million. Supplies before 1962 have been destroyed from time to time as they became obsolete.

Most of the supplies to be disposed of are for use against human beings and are stored at the Pine Bluff Arsenal in Arkansas. The rest, for use against enemy crops, are at Fort Detrick, near Baltimore; Rocky Mountain Arsenal, Denver, and Beale Air Force Base, Marysville, Calif.

The program will take 48 weeks at Pine Bluff, 26 weeks at Fort Detrick, 52 weeks at

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Rock Mountain Arsenal and 12 weeks at Beale. In the operation 298 persons will be employed.

Both biological materials and toxins are to be destroyed. Biological materials are living organisms whereas toxins are poisons generated by bacteria.

While bacterial agents may not act immediately and might get out of hand—if, for instance, birds carried a contagion back to an attacking country—toxins are more immediately potent. And toxins would affect only those directly exposed. The toxins include botulin, the substance that poisons consumers of improperly canned vegetables by attacking the nervous system. It can paralyze the breathing muscle.

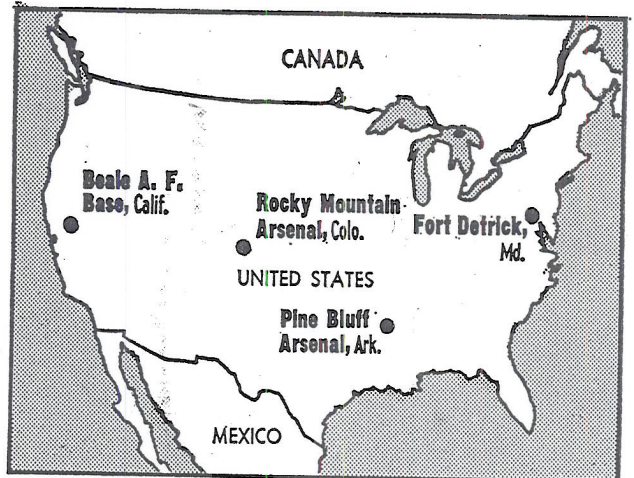
Colonel Watson declined to disclose either the quantity or the nature of the supplies to be destroyed. It was reliably reported in October of last year, however, that the Army had produced more than 20,000 bullets containing botulin. There is no evidence that they were ever used.

## Not Chemical Weapon

President Nixon rounced the manufacture and use of biological and bacteriological weapons on Nov. 25 of last year, and on Feb. 14 of this year he extended the rejection to toxins.

The United States has, however, not renounced the manufacture or use of chemical weapons, including various kinds of gas and defoliants. Butis is American policy that this country will not be the first to use gas.

A protocol banning the use of chemical as well as biologi-



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cal weapons was adopted in Geneva in 1925. It was approved by the White House and sent to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, where it remained until it was returned to the White House in 1947.

Last August, in response to renewed international pressures, the White House again submitted this protocol to the Senate, but the Foreign Relations Committee has not called for hearings.

The elaborate method by which biological materials will be destroyed at Pine Bluff was described by Colonel Watson today. The building in which the work is done is kept at low pressures so that any leaks will seep into rather than out of its shell, and exhausts from the buildings are sterilized at 1,000-degree temperatures, he said.

## Steam Heat Sterilizing

Some conception of the precautions taken is conveyed by the following passage in his description of the destruction process:

"In the hold tanks the material will be sterilized by heat-

ing with steam to 280 degrees Fahrenheit and held at this temperature for three hours. After cooling, samples will be removed, taken to the laboratory and extensively tested to verify beyond any question that the agent has been destroyed. After verification, the harmless material will be inoculated with sewage organisms and bio-degraded in a manner similar to the treatment of domestic sanitary sewage.

"The material is sterilized again at 280 degrees Fahrenheit for three hours. Samples will again be drawn and tested to verify there are no living organisms present. After this verification the liquid will be placed in drums and sterilized in an autoclave and moved out of the plant. The waste will then be transported to a small commercial sewage treatment facility near the plant where it will be further bio-degraded.

"The harmless liquid waste will be discharged to a sealed, covered evaporation pond where

vit will be allowed to dry. The dry material will then be collected and spread on the arsenal property adjacent to the plant. It will be diced into the soil to a depth of about four inches, and grass planted as a cover crop."