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DESTRUCTION OF TOXIC AGENTS BEGUN: Operator at Pine Bluff Arsenal, Ark., wears protective garb as he prepares to destroy cans of frozen toxic warfare agents.

Army Is Destroying Biological Weapons

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Special to The New York Times

PINE BLUFF, Ark., July 13 —After a year and a half of planning and preparation, the Army has begun destroying the nation's stockpile of germ and toxin warfare agents, along with the munitions that would have been used to carry them to an enemy.

Only a small quantity of the agents is being kept at various laboratories around the nation to continue developing defenses against them, the Army has said. There is little chance of that quantity's being used to rebuild an offensive supply, according to Army spokesmen.

"It would take 10 to 15 years to recreate what we are destroying today," Col. John K. Stoner Jr., commander of the Pine Bluff Arsenal, where the nation's stockpile of the agents is kept, said this morning.

Colonel Stoner and his top assistants took a group of newsmen into the tightly guarded arsenal in a pine woods eight miles northwest of here to watch the early phase of the destruction on closed circuit television.

Outsiders Barred

No outsiders are permitted inside the storage igloos and elaborate laboratories where the germs and toxins are being destroyed and where, from 1953 until President Nixon banned them in 1969, the deadly and disabling microorganisms and poisons were produced.

The Army finally revealed last week what it had been making there all these years. It said the agents were the following:

Francisella Tularensis, formerly called Pasteurella Tularensis, the organism responsible for tularemia, commonly known as rabbit fever.

Bacillus anthracis, the organism responsible for anthrax, a disease that is usually fatal if untreated.

The virus of Venezuelan equine encephalomyelitis.

Coxiella Burnetii, the Rickettsia responsible for Q fever.

Botulinum Toxin A, a dangerous food poisoning similar to that found recently in cans of Bon Vivant vichyssoise.

Staphylococcus enterotoxin, a food poisoning.

Shellfish poison. Some of these, such as rabbit fever, cause very few deaths among those infected.

'Benefits' Cited

"This is one of the benefits of biological and chemical warfare," Colonel Stoner said. "You can incapacitate people without killing them. It's more humane."

The first of the agents were destroyed last Wednesday. It will take 48 weeks to destroy them all.

Then the Directorate of Biological Operations, with its \$100-million worth of fine laboratories and 504 acres of arsenal land, will be turned over to the Food and Drug Administration to become the National Center for Toxicological Research.

The Army and other public agencies have planned the destruction of the biological and toxic stockpiles with elaborate care to assure the world that it is actually being done and that none of the harmful substances will be left to infect people accidentally. The job will cost more than \$10-million.

Workmen could be seen on the television screens today handling trays of rabbit fever germs with special gloves that extend to the inside of glass-enclosed cases, then removing infectious substances and placing them in other containers, then burning the containers in special furnaces.

They were working in a brick, windowless 10-story building about 100 yards from the newsmen beyond a barbed wire fence and several guards.

ARMY STATEMENT

An Army briefing pamphlet describes what will happen to the waste left from this process as follows:

All waste from the demilitarization process will be in liquid form, containing at least 2 per cent caustic, and will be transferred to separate holding tanks. In these

tanks it will be sterilized by heating 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. This verification will be validated by the center for disease control, U. S. Public Health Service, in Atlanta, Ga.

After verification the harmless material will be inoculated with sewage organisms and biodegraded in a manner similar to the treatment of domestic sanitary sewage. It will again be sterilized at 280 degrees Fahrenheit for

three hours. Samples will be tested again to verify that there is no living organism present.

After this verification, materials will be placed in drums, sterilized in an autoclave, and moved out of the plant. The material will be transported to a small commercial sewage treatment facility near the plant, where it will be further biodegraded.

This harmless material will be discharged to a sealed, covered evaporation pond where it will be allowed to dry. The harmless material will be collected, spread on arsenal property, disked into the soil to a depth of four inches, and a cover crop of grass planted.