

Ray to cause eyes to burst made by Army researchers

WASHINGTON — The men who introduced the insidious white phosphorus and needle bombs to Vietnam have balked at using a destructive laser ray which they had researched for use against Viet Cong military leaders.

This strangest of weapons was dreamed up in the early '60s as a means of exploding

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the eyes of enemy soldiers and their officers from distances of more than a mile.

By blinding instead of killing, the weapons would cause endless grief not only to the victim, but to the authorities who would have to take care of the blinded soldiers.

Horrendous device

The research for this horrendous device was done for the 6570th Aerospace Medical Research Laboratory, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio. It was presented at secret sessions of a Pentagon-sponsored forum in San Diego.

We have copies of some of the classified research. "Giant pulse lasers" were used to bring rabbit and monkey eyes to the boiling point, causing bleeding and an actual explosion in the eye.

As the report to the secret forum put it in technical terms: "Retinal exposures to unattenuated Q-switch laser beams resulted in vaporization of . . . tissue with the production of relatively massive blast and hemorrhagic effects in addition to extensive retinal burns . . ."

"This is important in considering the anti-personnel weapon applications of the lasers . . . It would not matter upon which portion of the retina the image was formed because the resulting micro-explosion of the tissue would lead to blindness."

Countermeasure 'difficult'

The study goes on to say that countermeasures against the blindness ray would be "difficult" for an enemy to perfect because the lasers pierce most protective filters.

Putting the research into practice would be complex, but military scientists have told us it could be easily accomplished with adequate funding.

The weapons could be reduced to backpack size and aimed at enemy officers by use of high-power telescopic lenses. The

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beam would cover a circle with a diameter of several feet.

Any eye in that area would be destroyed if it was exposed to the ray for even a split instant — far less than a micro-second — the scientists said.

Asked for comment, a Defense Department expert said the material remained classified.

WHAT'S MY LINE?

Lost among the
men wh-