

# U.S. Slow to Dismantle Its Germ-Warfare Arsenal

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 9—Almost a year ago, President Nixon said that the United States was renouncing germ warfare.

Today, despite the President's proclamation and the publicity that accompanied it, the United States has authorized as much money for biological research as was appropriated last year.

It has not destroyed the stocks of biological warfare agents—including 45,000 poison bullets and darts—stored at Pine Bluff Arsenal in Arkansas nor has it dismantled any of the Army's biological research facilities at Pine Bluff or at Fort Detrick, Md.

The Government still has not done away with the anticrop biological agents, stored at Pine Bluff and elsewhere, that produce such diseases as wheat rust and rice blast.

Additionally, the Geneva Protocol of 1925, which bans the first use in war of chemical and biological agents, has not yet been approved.

### Treaty in Senate

Nine months passed before the Administration sent the treaty to the Senate for ratification. According to Government sources, it took that long because the White House was undecided how to tell the Senate that it did not consider tear gas and herbicides—which the United States has used in great quantities in Vietnam—to be covered by the treaty.

Last December, the United Nations General Assembly asserted, by a vote of 80 to 3, that the protocol did ban tear gas and herbicides.

The White House finally decided to send the treaty to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee with no explicit reservations attached. Nevertheless, when witnesses from the State Department and the Pentagon come to the committee to testify, they may be asked some difficult questions.

In any case, the committee doubts that it will manage to hear all the executive branch's witnesses this year; it may not even start the hearings on the protocol until January.

### Marginal Area of Policy

Advocates of ratification argue that while germ warfare is a marginal area in terms of national policy, the issue provides an index to the seriousness of the Administration's intentions.

Last Nov. 25 the President

announced that the United States would not use any biological weapons, even to retaliate against an enemy attack, and he ordered existing American germ weapons destroyed. He also pledged that research on biological agents would be only defensive in nature.

While specific information on biological agents is secret, Government visitors to Pine Bluff Arsenal report the existence of a 10-story tower where biological agents were produced and 273 mounds, or igloos, visible from the air where the germs or toxins—toxins are the dead but poisonous products of bacteria—are kept under refrigeration.

According to reliable sources, four types of agents are stockpiled at Pine Bluff. These agents produce tularemia, Q fever, anthrax and Venezuelan equine encephalitis.

### Lethargy Is Suspected

Some Government officials attributed the delay in destroying these stocks to the lethargy of the bureaucracy; others contend that the White House has failed to take vigorous action to make sure its decision is carried out.

In any case, the Army will

probably spend almost the same amount on germ warfare in this fiscal year as it spent in the last. Congress appropriated \$21.9-million then; it authorized \$21.1-million for this fiscal year.

What the army has done is shift almost all the funds it used to spend to buy germ agents into "defensive equipment," which a Pentagon spokesman said included warning devices, protective equipment and clothing and antidotes.

The figure for "biological research"—which used to embrace offensive and defensive research but is now supposed to be limited to defensive research—has not dropped. It remains at \$7.6-million.

The President's decision gave the Office of the Surgeon General in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare the right to pass on the Army's plans for destroying the stocks of germs. While the office has been at this task for more than six months, a spokesman for the department would make no comment on its progress except to say that the matter was

No plans have been announced for the conversion or closing of Pine Bluff or Fort Detrick.

Government discussions of a method of convincingly destroying the stockpiles of germs have included the suggestion of having outside observers as witnesses.

This is sensitive however, since the Army is reportedly determined to have no outside witnesses to the destruction of the poison bullets and darts since it is apparently unwilling to have anyone know they existed.

The bullets and darts reportedly contain botulinum, a toxin that produces a swift and fatal disease of the nervous system. Knowledgeable sources indicate that the weapons could serve only one purpose: assassination. To kill an enemy leader, it would be necessary to do no more than nick him.