

# “Entomological Warfare”: US Army Researched the Weaponizing of Mosquitoes

By [The Smoking Gun](#)

Global Research, March 15, 2016

[The Smoking Gun](#) 10 March 2015

Since the Zika virus has been declared an international public health emergency by the World Health Organization, we’re revisiting a U.S. Army report detailing the military’s interest in the weaponization of mosquitoes.

So let the conspiracy theories fly.

The March 1981 report on [“entomological warfare”](#) was prepared following research at the Dugway Proving Ground, the sprawling Utah facility where the Army tests biological and chemical weapons systems.



AD \_\_\_\_\_  
ROTE Project No. 1L162706A553-TA3-7  
TECOM Project No. 3-CO-513-FBT-023  
DPG Document No. OPG-S-445A

AN EVALUATION OF ENTOMOLOGICAL WARFARE  
AS A POTENTIAL DANGER TO THE  
UNITED STATES AND EUROPEAN NATO NATIONS (U)

By

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March 1981

The report examined the methods by which U.S. military members and civilians could come under attack by mosquitoes infected with yellow fever. The report notes that, according to

U.S. intelligence information, Warsaw Pact nations “have attempted development of an EW capability.”

Along with [cost estimates](#) for possible EW attacks—which seem remarkably affordable and cost effective—the report estimated that upwards of 40 percent of those bitten by infected mosquitoes would die.

The Army report also summarizes prior U.S. research into the possible battlefield use of fleas and mosquitoes (which are referred to as “arthropod vectors”).

**dissemination of these arthropod vectors:**

[“Operation Big Itch”](#) revealed that fleas could be dropped in munitions from airplanes with “little or no die-off.” The insects, researchers found, “were successful in acquiring hosts but were not active longer than 24 hours.”



In [“Operation Big Buzz,”](#) the Army placed more than 300,000 uninfected mosquitoes in munitions that were dropped from military aircraft. The mosquitoes, dropped “without mortality,” were “dispersed by the wind and their own flight.”

The female mosquitoes were “active in seeking blood meals from humans and guinea pigs,” according to the report, which notes that some mosquitoes were collected as far as 4/10 of a mile from the “target release site.”

The Army report also contains a section on “Operation Drop Kick,” but the description of that program is redacted in its entirety.

In case of an EW attack on an American city, [the report recommends](#) that citizens should be warned to remain indoors. For those who “must venture outside,” they are advised to wear “mosquito netting over face and neck” and use mosquito repellent. (10 pages)

## UNCLASSIFIED

### SECTION 7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDED DEFENSIVE MEASURES

#### 7.1 CONCLUSIONS

(U) Intelligence information gathered about the Warsaw Pact countries indicates that in the past, they have attempted development of an EW capability. Indirect evidence, e.g., mass rearing of potential insect vectors and working with microbiological agents compatible with EW that are not a problem in these countries, comprises the evidence available to indicate present activity in this area. The Warsaw Pact nations certainly have the capability to conduct EW.

(U) The *A. aegypti*/yellow fever virus system is estimated to be the most likely antipersonnel EW system that could be used by the Warsaw Pact countries against the United States or the European NATO nations. Foot and mouth disease virus is a likely animal EW agent that could be effectively spread by *M. domestica*.

(U) In the magnitude of the city attack scenarios described in this report, i.e., 16 simultaneous attacks on urban areas, the *A. aegypti*/yellow fever virus EW attack system was estimated to be less cost effective than the *P. tularensis* aerosol mode of attack in casualties produced, but it may be more cost effective when considering mortalities produced. The *A. aegypti*/yellow fever virus attack system becomes more cost effective in relation to the *P. tularensis* aerosol attack mode if the magnitude of the attack becomes smaller, and less effective when the magnitude becomes greater. The *A. aegypti*/yellow fever virus EW attack system also requires less expertise to develop and employ than the *P. tularensis* aerosol system

(U) EW systems are not likely to be employed on military units because the agent vectors must be released too close to the target area. This would make a covert attack on a military unit very difficult to achieve. EW could be very effectively used against civilian urban populations or it could be used to cause great economic losses in the cattle and livestock industry.

#### 7.2 RECOMMENDED DEFENSIVE MEASURES

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