



the sunshine project

NEWS RELEASE

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Pentagon Tests Ethnically-Targeted Crowd Control Weapons

US Army documents released under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) reveal disturbing efforts to design crowd control weapons that target people on an ethnic basis. The weapons, a group of foul-smelling chemicals called malodorants, are being developed for US soldiers to use overseas.

According to the Sunshine Project, the US has crossed a dangerous line. Successful or not, development of any ethnic weapon is intrinsically racist, and the international community should consider their development, stockpiling, or use by any country a violation of international law.

The Research

The Sunshine Project has obtained US Army Soldier and Biological Chemical Command contracts that detail testing of malodorant chemicals on human subjects. Malodorant weapons are used to provoke vomiting and psychological effects including fear and panic.

Almost sixty years ago, the US developed a nauseating 'bathroom odor' chemical for use as a weapon. But according to the Army, the old malodorant will not work outside of the US and Western Europe, because "*it was found that people in many areas of the world do not find 'fecal odor' to be offensive, since they smell it on a regular basis.*" Therefore, according to the Army, new agents are needed for overseas missions. These new malodorants are to be specifically adapted for their victims. According to a 1998 document: "*The objective of this work is the development of a comprehensive set of [malodorants] that can be applied against any population set around the world to influence their behavior.*"

The documents describe the Army research procedure. A group of subjects selected "*based on a diversity of geographic origins and cultural heritage*" is systematically exposed to candidate malodorants to develop "*culture-response data*" based on ethnic categories. That data is aggregated into "*odor response profiles*" that suggest the types and quantities of malodorants necessary to "*elicit a favorable behavioral response*" (i.e. incapacitation, panic, or flight) when used for crowd control on a particular ethnic group.

Malodorants themselves generally do not cause serious injury or death; but their physical and psychological effects can be very powerful. They can be loaded in shells, grenades, mortar rounds, and other devices. Malodorants can be used to control civil unrest (e.g. to halt protests), and in combination with lethal weapons as a 'force multiplier' in counterinsurgency and close combat in urban and enclosed areas.

The documents generally do not include details about research subjects and how researchers categorize them. Some experiments have been conducted outside the United States, or on immigrants. A February 2000 draft report refers to testing on "*a group of South Africans*". Another Army document contains unexplained images of indigenous women and girls from Panama or Colombia and southern Africa. Additional pictures appear to be from Africa and Asia, and one shows a boy dressed as a typical US high school student.

Not Since Apartheid

Past research on ethnic weapons has been rare. The last known attempt to create ethnic weapons was a widely condemned program conducted in the 1980s by the apartheid regime of South Africa, which tried to develop an agent to selectively sterilize black women.

The new US malodorant program began in 1998 and is the first known US work on population-specific weapons since "Project Agile" in 1966. In Agile, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) commissioned the Battelle Institute to assess the possibility of making malodorants to specifically target Vietnamese people. Agile was short-lived and did not reach a laboratory phase.

The Army's Partners

The US Army Soldier Chemical and Biological Command (Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland) has important partners in the malodorant research. The US Marine Corps-managed Joint Non-Lethal Weapons Program (JNLWP, Quantico, Virginia) is funding the research. Contracts signed with the Monell Chemical Senses Center of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, include DAAD13-99-M-0071 ("Behavioral Odor Study") and DAAD13-98-M-004 ("Establish Odor Response Profiles").

By Pentagon standards, the research is a small program, with five scientists. Contracts between SBCCOM and Monell total US \$195,000. The overall budget is unclear because the Marine Corps and Army also conduct work internally, whose details have not been released. JNLWP is, however, very active developing new delivery technology for malodorants including chemical mortar rounds and payload systems for unmanned aerial vehicles.

Ethnic Weapons: *Prima facie* Evidence

Whether the malodorants work or fail, research on any ethnic weapon raises serious legal questions and could set a very dangerous precedent. If the Pentagon saw any major legal barriers to ethnic weapons it would not have approved the malodorant research. The Pentagon's conclusion that ethnic weapons are permissible must be challenged. All such weapons should be universally considered intrinsically racist and to repudiate international law. To do this, governments should establish that the development, stockpiling, or use of ethnic weapons is *prima facie* evidence of intent to violate international law prohibiting racism, including prohibitions on genocide.

Inside the US, the malodorants research program must be cancelled, and the secretive Joint Non-Lethal Weapons Program opened to public scrutiny and transparency. Among the questions that the Joint Non-Lethal Weapons Program must publicly discuss is how its focus on building weapons systems that primarily target civilians is legally and ethically justified.

About the Sunshine Project's Research on Malodorants

Early last year, the Sunshine Project began investigating US military work on malodorants and calmatives (another type of crowd control agent). The Project's underlying concern is that some of these weapons may violate treaties prohibiting chemical and biological warfare.

In July 2001, the Project published "Non-Lethal Weapons Research in the US: Calmatives and Malodorants". In the course of preparing that paper, cryptic language in Army documents caused the Project to become concerned that some crowd control research was designed to develop population-specific weapons. Some Army documents indicated it was pursuing a single 'one-size-fits-all' malodorant that would affect people equally, regardless of ethnic background. But other Army papers showed a disturbing preoccupation with ethnicity. After publishing the first paper, the Sunshine Project filed additional FOIA requests, the results of which are first reported here.

The information (and all double " " quotes) in this news release is from the Army response to a FOIA request from October 2001, which was not answered (and then only partially) until February 2002. Additional FOIA requests on this topic are pending, the results of which will be presented in Sunshine Project publications.