

## Secret Army Chemical Tests Did Not Harm Health, Report Says

By WARREN E. LEARY

WASHINGTON, May 14 — The spraying of a potentially toxic chemical in several cities in Army tests in the 1950's and 60's apparently had no adverse health effects, a National Research Council committee said today.

The 15-member committee said in a report that the compound, zinc cadmium sulfide, which was secretly sprayed from airplanes, rooftops and moving vehicles in 33 urban and rural areas of the United States and Canada, did not expose residents to

chemical levels considered harmful.

The panel, which looked at the toxicity of the compound and its components as well as exposure data collected by the military, said it was highly unlikely that people were exposed to significant levels of the most dangerous component, cadmium. In occupational studies and studies on animals, cadmium inhaled in high doses has been found to be a cause of lung cancer.

In most of the Army tests, people were exposed to such small amounts of the compound that they would have been likely to get higher doses

of cadmium from environmental and industrial sources, the report said.

The Army Chemical Corps sprayed the compound in dispersion tests to determine how biological weapons might spread if used in various environments, seeking data both on how to use such weapons and on how to defend against them. Zinc cadmium sulfide was used because its particles are similar in size to those of biological agents, because it is fluorescent under ultraviolet light and easily detectable and because it was considered safe, the report said.

Since the disclosure of the secret

tests several years ago, residents of affected areas have expressed fears that the chemicals increased their risks of cancer, kidney damage, birth defects and other health problems.

"After an exhaustive, independent review requested by Congress, we have found no evidence that exposure to zinc cadmium sulfide at these levels could cause people to become sick," said the committee chairwoman, Dr. Rogene F. Henderson of the Lovelace Respiratory Research Institute in Albuquerque, N.M.

"Even when we assume the worst about how this chemical might be-

have in the lungs, we conclude that people would be at a higher risk simply from living in a typical urban, industrialized area for several days or, in some cases, for months." Dr. Henderson said.

The committee said that exposure to the compound during the tests generally was very low and that the cadmium in the compound was in an insoluble form that made it hard for the body to absorb and retain.

The secret spraying took place in Minneapolis and surrounding areas; Corpus Christi, Tex.; Fort Wayne, Ind.; St. Louis and in 29 other urban and rural areas in the United States and Canada, the report said.

Senator Paul D. Wellstone and

Representative Martin Olav Sabo, both Minnesota Democrats, had pushed for an investigation of the testing. Mr. Wellstone said the release of the long-awaited study might not put everyone's fears to rest, but represented "encouraging news for the many families who have worried over the years about their exposure to this chemical."

"No one should ever have been subjected to these tests." Senator Wellstone said, "but this study indicates that many of our fears may not have been realized."

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