



FACT SHEET

Office of the
Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs)
Deployment Health Support Directorate

For more information
(703) 578 - 8500
(800) 497 - 6261

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Deseret Test Center

Swamp Oak

Shortly after President Kennedy's inauguration in 1961, the Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, directed that a total review of the U.S. military be undertaken. The study consisted of 150 separate projects. The chemical and biological warfare review was known as Project 112. As part of the Project 112 review, the Joint Chiefs of Staff convened a working committee that recommended a research, testing, and development program for chemical and biological weapons. To oversee this program, the Deseret Test Center was established at Fort Douglas, Utah, in 1962. Both land-based and ship-based tests were conducted during the period 1962 – 1973. The Deseret Test Center closed in 1973.

The objective of Swamp Oak was to determine area-time-dosage relationships as a function of burst height and agent diffusion characteristics, within subarctic forested areas, for Sarin nerve agent-filled artillery munitions in temperatures ranging from -1°C to -18°C.

Sarin nerve agent-filled M121A1 (155mm) artillery shells were detonated statically and singly in a coniferous forest under winter conditions. To simulate an air burst, the shell was suspended using a cable, a hoist, and a special strap-steel sling.

Swamp Oak trials were conducted during March and April 1966 at the Gerstle River test site near Fort Greely, Alaska.

The Department of Defense (DoD) is providing this information, at the request of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), to assist the VA in providing healthcare services to qualified veterans and to assist veterans in establishing service connection for disability claims. The Deployment Health Support Directorate (DHSD) collected this information from multiple sources and requested that the military services declassify it to allow its public distribution. The VA accepts this information provided on location, dates, units and/or ships, and substances involved in this exercise, which DHSD extracted from classified DoD records, and will provide it to individual veterans as necessary, but the VA cannot verify its accuracy.

Test Name	Swamp Oak (DTC Test 66-3)
Testing Organization	US Army Deseret Test Center
Test Dates	March - April 1966
Test Location	Gerstle River test site, near Fort Greely, Alaska
Test Operations	To determine time-area-dosage relationships as a function of burst height and agent diffusion characteristics, within subarctic forested areas, for Sarin nerve agent-filled artillery munitions in temperatures ranging from -1°C to -18°C.
Participating Services	US Army, Deseret Test Center personnel
Units and Ships Involved	Not identified
Dissemination Procedures	Sarin nerve agent-filled M121A1 (155mm) artillery shells were statically and singly detonated in a coniferous forest under winter conditions.
Agents, Simulants, Tracers	Sarin Nerve Agent
Ancillary Testing	Not identified
Decontamination	Not identified
Potential Health Risks Associated with Agents, Simulants, Tracers	<u>Sarin Nerve Agent (GB)</u> Sarin gas is a volatile and lethal nerve agent. It can enter the body by inhalation, ingestion, through the eyes, and to a lesser extent through the skin. After exposure to a sufficient dose, human symptoms may occur within minutes and include runny nose, watery eyes, difficulty breathing, dimness of vision, confusion, drowsiness, coma, and death. Very little information is available regarding long-term health effects following exposures to low levels that do not cause acute symptoms. No information is available regarding potential carcinogenicity. An Institute of Medicine committee concluded that there was insufficient evidence for or against an association

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between low-level sarin exposure and long-term health effects.

(Sources: <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/Agent/Nerve/Sarin/Sarin.asp> [as of February 13, 2002] Institute of Medicine (National Academies), Gulf War and Health (vol.1): Depleted Uranium, Pyridostigmine Bromide, Sarin, Vaccines. National Academy Press, Washington DC, 2000.)

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