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## Chemical Weapons Tests by US in 60s

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By MATT KELLEY, Associated Press Writer

The United States held open-air biological and chemical weapons tests in at least four states — Alaska, Hawaii, Maryland and Florida — during the 1960s in an effort to develop defenses against such weapons, according to Pentagon ([news](#) - [web sites](#)) documents.

A series of tests in Alaska from 1965-67 used artillery shells and bombs filled with the nerve agents sarin and VX, the records show.

The Defense Department planned to release summaries of 28 chemical and biological weapons tests at a House Veterans Affairs Committee hearing Wednesday. The Associated Press obtained the summaries Tuesday.

The documents did not say whether any civilians had been exposed to the poisons. Military personnel exposed to weapons agents would have worn protective gear, the Pentagon says.

The Pentagon previously acknowledged that it had conducted biological and chemical tests, but this was the first time it disclosed that some tests were conducted over land and not out at sea.

The tests were part of Project 112, a military program in the 1960s and 1970s to test chemical and biological weapons and defenses against them. Parts of the testing program done on Navy ships were called Project SHAD, or Shipboard Hazard and Defense.

The tests were directed from the Deseret Test Center, part of a biological and chemical weapons complex in the Utah desert.

Some of those involved in the tests say they now suffer health problems linked to their exposure to dangerous chemicals and germs. They are pressing the Veterans Affairs Department to compensate them and the Defense Department to release more information about the tests.

In response to pressure from veterans and Congress, the Pentagon began releasing details of the tests last year. Earlier this year, the Defense Department acknowledged for the first time that some of the 1960s tests used real chemical and biological weapons, not just benign stand-ins.

"The Cold War era experiments of Project SHAD, which we are now learning used live toxins and chemical poisons on American servicemen on American soil, must be aggressively investigated in as open and transparent a manner as possible," said the House Veterans Affairs Committee chairman, Rep. Chris Smith, R-N.J. "Our focus must be on quickly identifying those veterans who were involved, assessing whether they suffered any negative health consequences and, if warranted, providing them with adequate health care and compensation for their service."

The Defense Department has identified nearly 3,000 soldiers involved in tests disclosed earlier, but the VA has sent letters to fewer than half of them. VA and Pentagon officials acknowledged at a July hearing that finding the soldiers has been difficult.

The tests described in the latest Pentagon documents include:

\_ Devil Hole I, designed to test how sarin gas would disperse after being released in artillery shells and rockets in aspen and spruce forests. The tests occurred in the summer of 1965 at the Gerstle River test site near Fort Greeley, Alaska, the documents said. Sarin is a powerful nerve gas that causes a choking, thrashing death. It killed 12 people in a Tokyo subway attack in 1995 and the Bush administration says it is part of Iraq's chemical arsenal.

\_ Devil Hole II, which tested how the nerve agent VX behaved when dispersed with artillery shells. The test at the Gerstle River site in Alaska also included mannequins in military uniforms and military trucks. VX is one of the deadliest nerve agents known and is persistent in the environment because it is a sticky liquid that evaporates slowly. Iraq has acknowledged making tons of VX.

\_ Big Tom, a 1965 test that included spraying bacteria over the Hawaiian island of Oahu to simulate a biological attack on an island compound, and to develop tactics for such an attack. The test used *Bacillus globigii*, a bacterium believed at the time to be harmless. Researchers later discovered the bacteria could cause infections in people with weakened immune systems.

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On the Net:

Descriptions of some of the tests:

[http://rd.yahoo.com/dailynews/ap/ap\\_on\\_go\\_ca\\_st\\_pe/inlinks/\\*http://deploymentlink.osd.mil/current\\_issues/shad/shad\\_intro.shtml](http://rd.yahoo.com/dailynews/ap/ap_on_go_ca_st_pe/inlinks/*http://deploymentlink.osd.mil/current_issues/shad/shad_intro.shtml)