



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

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Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development**

### **Written statement\* submitted by Planetary Association for Clean Energy, Inc., The, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[22 August 2021]

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\* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



## **The United States of America and the release of entomological bioweapons during the Cold War**

During the Cold War, the United States military ran a secret entomological weapons programme in which fleas, mosquitoes and ticks were filled with disease-causing microbes, with the intent of releasing them on enemies. The military also developed airborne biological agents that could be sprayed over large areas and many of these organisms were spread by mammals, fleas, mosquitoes and ticks long after the US biological weapons programme ended.<sup>1</sup>

The US army summarized the advantages of bug-borne bioweapons in a 1959 report: “[T]hey inject the agent directly into the body, so that a mask is no protection to a soldier, and they will remain alive for some time, keeping an area constantly dangerous.”

New evidence reveals that the US military conducted uncontrolled releases of non-native ticks and tick-borne diseases both inside and outside of US borders, and this could be contributing to the sharp increase in tick-borne disease worldwide. Disclosures include:

(a) A CIA-funded operation in which infected ticks were dropped from an aeroplane on Cuban sugar cane workers in 1962;

(b) An army-funded university researcher who worked as a contractor to the US entomological warfare programme released hundreds of thousands of radioactive ticks in Montana and on the Atlantic Bird Flyway from 1966 to 1969, potentially spreading non-native ticks and unnatural diseases along the coast from Canada to South America via migratory birds;

(c) The discoverer of the Lyme disease bacterium, Swiss-American scientist Willy Burgdorfer, admitted that he worked in the US biological weapons programme for years and that he believed that the original 1968 disease outbreak of three novel tick-borne diseases around Lyme, Connecticut, had been caused by a bioweapons-related accident. He was asked to suppress his evidence.

There are also unsubstantiated accounts of the use of entomological weapons by the United States of America during the Korean and Vietnam Wars, but historians and journalists have been unable to verify these due to the strict secrecy that the US maintains on related records. The long-term health effects of these “living weapons” on the health of humans and the environment can be as devastating as nuclear fallout, and the human and societal damages could be construed as a violation of the 1972 Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction, one of the instruments of international law aimed at reducing the suffering caused by war.

With this statement, PACE would like to request that the United Nations Human Rights Council call for hearings and the declassification of US records related to the development and deployment of insects or arachnids as biological weapons, and of weaponized microbes that can be spread by these bugs. Known tick-borne bioweapons agents include tularemia, encephalitis viruses, spotted fever rickettsiosis, and reoviruses such as Colorado tick fever virus.

Disclosures should include locations where the organisms were released via open-air experiments, accidents, and deployments of these biological weapons both inside and outside of the US between 1950 and 1975.

In addition, research on how these agents cause disease and what protective vaccines and treatments were developed to protect US soldiers should be shared. This information would enable public health officials to test and treat the long-term illnesses caused by these agents more effectively.

Requests made by journalists for entomological bioweapons documents through Freedom of Information processes are frequently stonewalled or rejected. When US Congressman

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<sup>1</sup> References: <http://www.nuremberg2.org/un/references12.pdf>.

Christopher Smith called for investigations into the entomological bioweapons operations of the US Department of Defense, his amendments were thwarted. Similar investigations into the use by the military of the Agent Orange defoliant in Viet Nam, live biological agents released in the Shipboard Hazard and Defense project on North American coasts and in the Pacific, and the CIA-run mind-control experiments, all resulted in millions of dollars' worth of legal damages.

In recent decades, the health impact of tick-borne diseases has reached alarming levels around the world. In the US alone, cases of Lyme disease have risen steadily, hitting a record annual high of 475,000 in 2019. Reported cases of tick-borne diseases have doubled in the last 13 years. There is no vaccine or reliable testing for Lyme disease and the recommended treatment protocols fail patients somewhere between 10 and 36 per cent of the time. Medical costs for Lyme disease are estimated to be between US\$ 712 million and US\$ 1.3 billion each year in the US., alone Non-native ticks seeded by the bioweapons programme continue to be transported by birds, mammals, and pets, spreading disease across country borders.

It has been 50 years since three highly virulent tick-borne diseases suddenly appeared and began spreading outwards from Lyme, Connecticut, near a military research laboratory based on nearby Plum Island. Fixing the situation is going to require extraordinary efforts. Disease-carrying ticks move into new territories. The US medical system is still reluctant to test for and treat Lyme disease and tick co-infections. And the US is underfunding tick-disease research. If the tick disease problem throughout the world was sparked by US releases domestically and internationally, it needs to be exposed so that the problem can be tackled intelligently.

It is hoped that international pressure will motivate the US military to release the details of biological releases, accidental or not, in the US and internationally. The public has the right to know what organisms were released and what protective vaccine or treatments were developed for US soldiers. Only then can the world effectively manage the spread of these disease-causing ticks and develop effective diagnostic tools and treatments for specific geographic regions. If the US military has nothing to hide, why will they not release the classified entomological bioweapons documents to prove it?

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