

HARVARD UNIVERSITY  
THE BIOLOGICAL LABORATORIES  
16 DIVINITY AVENUE  
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138

25 September 1975

Mr. William Miller  
Room G-308  
New Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Bill,

Here is a reprint of a 1951 article from the A.M.A. Archives of Internal Medicine describing eleven cases of infection of a type very rarely found in humans. The reason that it may be of interest is that I was told by a colleague several years ago that the Navy Biological Laboratories in Oakland, California had once attempted to determine the practicability of a germ warfare attack on a coastal city. My colleague was a friend of an individual who once worked at the Navy Biological Laboratories but who has subsequently died of lung cancer. According to this individual, bacteria (Serratia marcescens) was dispersed off shore from the San Francisco Bay Area. Detection stations were set up at various points to determine the effectiveness of the trial. Personnel at the Navy Biological Laboratories subsequently learned of a number of human infections with the same organism, and, according to what I was told, there were several deaths. It was decided not to reveal the tests, so as to avoid involving the Navy Biological Laboratories. Some time after I heard these allegations, I looked through some of the medical journals that might be expected to record any unusual epidemic. I did not conduct a complete search of the literature but I did find this one article, a copy of which I have enclosed. It describes a series of eleven patients all infected with Serratia marcescens who presented themselves at the Stanford University School of Medicine during the period September 29, 1950 to February 21, 1951. The fact that Serratia infection in man is rare plus that the identical pattern of drug sensitivity was found for each of the eleven isolates shows almost certainly that all eleven infections came from a single source. The authors of the article state that they were unable to identify the source.

The story I was told involved several deaths from Serratia infection, including one or more apparently contracted during surgery. The article I found describes only one death. I suppose there is a possibility that others occurred but were not reported, at least not in the journals that I consulted.

I do not know the name of the commanding officer at the Navy Biological Laboratories during the time of the alleged tests. However, he would almost certainly have been the immediate predecessor of Dr. Carl Lamanna.

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Turning now to a different subject, could you let me know the identity of the material or agent used by the Central Intelligence Agency in its test in the New York Subway system? The testimony I read in the newspaper leaves open the possibility that it was a live biological agent. It gave the impression that the committee witness was striving to avoid this implication.

With best regards,

Sincerely yours,

Matthew Meselson  
Professor of Biology

ENC: 1

Reference: Wheat, R.P. et al. "Infection due to Chromobacteria,"  
AMA Archives of Internal Medicine 88(4):461-466,  
October 1951.