

No Move To Eradicate Killer Mosquito Plagues

by Linda Everett

The emerging U.S. epidemic of mosquito-borne West Nile virus and the recent resurgence of the old scourge, malaria, in Virginia, makes an urgent demand on public health authorities to launch a nationally coordinated campaign to eradicate these killers endangering the general welfare.

Public health officials, reacting after these infections break out in the population, have been caught short by how the diseases—well known in other countries—are transmitted in new ways in this country. Only after more sick patients and more deaths, did the Federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) find out that the West Nile virus can survive in blood components and can be transmitted through blood, blood products (received by 4.5 million people every year), organ donations, and also orally, in mothers' breast milk.

During a Sept. 19 teleconference, the CDC announced that six West Nile-infected people in Louisiana and Mississippi developed acute weakness or severe polio-like paralysis in their arms and legs, which had not abated over two months. Like polio, West Nile affects anterior horn cells—the nerve cells that most directly allow muscles to move. Unlike the elderly and those with compromised immune systems who died after contracting West Nile virus, these paralyzed patients were previously healthy people between the ages of 39 and 60 years. Some of them are now dependent on respirators.

The virus, now reported in 41 states, has sickened 2,530 people, killed 125, and, according to the CDC's Dr. Lyle Peterson, has likely infected "a couple hundred thousand" Americans. Public health now requires the immediate reintroduction of DDT for general spraying, as Lyndon LaRouche publicly demanded on Aug. 16. From African and other countries' data, public health experts did know that West Nile causes sickness, potentially long-lasting spinal nerve damage, or death—yet, they did not act to block its spread. Dr. Peterson admitted that this epidemic was "not totally unexpected"; but, as Ron Bialek, Executive Director of the Public Health Foundation, told *EIR*, the vast majority of states are cutting back their health departments' funds. With tens of thousands dying annually from influenza, health departments face a Hobbesian choice: Spray for West Nile to prevent a "few" deaths, or use resources for vaccines to save thousands of lives. Either way, people die.

Dr. Mohammad Akhter, Executive Director of the American Public Health Association, testified to Congress on Oct.



One of three places where malaria-infected mosquitoes have been trapped in Loudoun County, Virginia, is right next to this Leisure World retirement home, near the Potomac River. No general spraying has been done there.

3, that America needs "a war college for public health" to deal with these new emerging infections.

On Sept. 7, hours after news that the West Nile virus had spread to the West Coast, two Loudoun County, Virginia teenagers, neither of whom had travelled abroad, were reported to have contracted malaria. Experts told *EIR* that the transmission likely occurred by a mosquito biting a person who had traveled from a country with widespread malaria, and then biting a second person.

Within weeks, malaria-infected mosquito pools were found in three other locations in Northern Virginia. Not for 20 years had mosquitoes carrying the parasite been identified in a U.S. community where humans were also infected. The findings prompted minimal spraying with the natural insecticide Anvil in one area; and larvicide and slight oil slicks in water in another; and spraying was not considered at all in yet another. Though Maryland officials have requested help from specialists at the Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences in Bethesda, neither Maryland nor Virginia has even discussed general spraying to kill adult mosquito populations.

Malaria once took a tremendous toll throughout the Southern United States. Under Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the Public Health Service mounted a major malaria control program that included aerial spraying of mosquito larvicides. During World War II, with the introduction of DDT, the Public Health Service used it to keep military training camps in the South free of malaria under a program known as the Malaria Control in War Areas. DDT spraying dramatically reduced the incidence and death rates of malaria in the South. By the 1960s, malaria was eradicated completely in the United States. DDT—banned by the Environmental Protection Agency against the findings of its own study's director in 1972—provides the means to wipe out West Nile, malaria, and other insect-borne diseases.