



Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 116th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 165

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, JULY 11, 2019

No. 116

House of Representatives

Smith Amendment on Bioweaponization of Ticks Passes House

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. I thank my good friend, the distinguished ranking member, for yielding.

Mr. Chairman, for years, books and articles have been written suggesting that significant research had been done at U.S. Government facilities, including Fort Detrick and Plum Island, to turn ticks and other insects into bioweapons. Now, a new book, “Bitten: The Secret History of Lyme Disease and Biological Weapons,” by Kris Newby, includes interviews with Dr. Willy Burgdorfer, the researcher who is credited with discovering Lyme disease. It turns out Dr. Burgdorfer was also a bioweapons specialist.

The interviews combined with access to Dr. Burgdorfer’s lab files reveal that he and other bioweapons specialists stuffed ticks with pathogens to cause severe disability, disease, even death to potential enemies.

With Lyme disease and other tickborne diseases exploding in the United States, with an estimated 300,000 to 437,000 new cases each year and 10 to 20 percent of all patients suffering from chronic Lyme disease, I believe Americans have a right to know whether any of this is true.

If true, what were the parameters of the program?

Who ordered it?

Was there any accidental release anywhere or at any time of any of the diseased ticks?

Were any ticks released by design? In the book, there is some talk of that happening at or near Richmond, Virginia. Can any of this information help current-day researchers—and this is most important of all—help current day researchers find a way to mitigate and maybe even cure these diseases?

It should be noted for the record that it was President Richard Nixon in 1969 who ordered the end to all bioweapons research, but we know that there were tick farms at Plum Island and Fort Detrick, like I said earlier, and other places where this research was done.

We need to know. I encourage Members to read this book if they get the time, “Bitten: The Secret History of Lyme Disease and Biological Weapons.” Again, it may offer some clues as to how we combat this terrible epidemic of Lyme disease in the United States.

My amendment tasks the DoD Inspector General to ask the hard questions and report back. The millions of people suffering from Lyme and other tick-borne diseases deserve to know the truth.