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# Pneumonia cases may be linked to fort testing

## From staff and Wire Reports

Ft. McClellan was one of eight American cities and military installations subjected to simulated biological warfare by Army scientists between 1950 and 1966, the newspaper Newsday said today.

Newsday said information released by the Army showed the tested ended when a bacterium, *Serratia marcescens*, was released in the New York City subway system.

Quoting unnamed sources and documents, the newspaper said that following the 1952 test at Ft. McClellan, the number of pneumonia cases more than doubled in Calhoun County. In that year, the Calhoun County area, though it had less than three per cent of Alabama's population, accounted for more than 12 per cent of the state's reported cases of pneumonia, according to health officials.

A Ft. McClellan information office spokesman said today the fort's official history does not go back to 1952. She also said there was no one presently at the fort who was there in 1952.

The Chemical Warfare School at the fort, which was phased out four years ago, was moved there in 1954, the spokesman said.

Sources in the Naval Biosciences Laboratory in Oakland, Calif., headquarters for a similar test in San Francisco, said *Serratia* could cause pneumonia, particularly in infants. Newsday said that in at least two instances, an Army test was associated with a peculiar rise in pneumonia cases.

Dr. Thomas Chester of the Alabama State Health Department said Calhoun County had 139 cases of pneumonia in 1951. In 1952, the year of the test, the number of cases increased to 333 in the county, he said. In 1952 the number dropped to 98, according to records.

Information released by the Army confirmed that tests were conducted in Key West and Panama City, Fla.; New York City and San Francisco over the the 16-year period that ended when the bacterium was dispersed in the New York City subway system.

The Army said similar tests, in which bacteria were released into the air and their spread was monitored by military personnel, were conducted in Army installations at Ft. McClellan, Point Mugu and Port Hueneme, Calif., in the Los Angeles area, and a Navy facility in Mechanicsburg, Pa. The Army also admitted testing bacteria at the Pentagon but would discuss no details.

Newsday said one man — a hospital patient — died after the 1950 test in San Francisco and that death was caused by *Serratia* which found its way into his bloodstream.

It said the Army continued to use the bacterium despite

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# Army test

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the death because, according to unnamed sources, it was believed to be harmless and easily traceable.

The information released by the Army came from a still-secret report on biological warfare prepared in 1970 to brief top military officers, Newsday said. It quoted Joseph Penton, an Army spokesman, as saying the list might be incomplete.