

clear bomb of several kilotons' force on the far side of the moon to provide a source of large shock waves that could be monitored by lunar seismometers (SN: 12/20 p. 573). The main factor causing him to withdraw the suggestion, aside from "considerable mail," says Dr. Latham, is that scientific colleagues persuaded him that the radioactive material thrown out by the blast, while not a danger to astronauts, could upset background readings for other types of scientific experiments. Instead, he now proposes a large, non-nuclear blast or impact, greater than the planned crash into the lunar surface of the third-stage rocket from Apollo 13. □

FT. DETRICK

No home for a weapons lab

The Defense Department is forbidden by Presidential mandate to do any more work on bacteriological warfare (SN: 11/29, p. 495).

And a phrase in the latest Defense Appropriations Act forbids Defense to do basic research not connected to its mission (SN: 1/10, p. 36).

The combination, plus a general tightening of Government-wide research budgets, puts in doubt the future of Ft. Detrick, Md., and of the 806 scientists and technicians who work there.

Detrick for years has been the focus of much of the Pentagon's basic research on chemical and bacteriological warfare.

Laboratories at Ft. Detrick are valued at nearly \$250 million.

Dismantling it is regarded as a waste of the first-class research facility. Finding another Government agency that wants—and can afford—another laboratory raises its own problems.

Discussions have been started with the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, specifically with the Public Health Service and the National Institutes of Health. According to officials at both Ft. Detrick and HEW, the discussions are still in an early stage. "It has not been decided what the entire future of Ft. Detrick is to be," says Dr. Riley D. Housewright, the installation's scientific director.

The research center has been doing a good deal of work on vaccines and viruses, both topics of interest to NIH, and has especially good facilities for working with dangerous viruses in controlled and isolated environments. These facilities may be of special interest for research on possible viral causes of cancer.

There is some apprehension that if the future of Ft. Detrick remains in doubt for a long time, many scientists may be prompted to leave. Already the

general defense budget cut has cost 219 jobs out of a total of 2,500 employees at Ft. Detrick, and Sen. Charles McC. Mathias (R-Md.) is urging a decision before further attrition occurs.

One of Mathias's suggestions is that NIH might use Ft. Detrick as an in-house agency to do some of the research it now contracts out. But that suggestion may not get an enthusiastic reaction from university administrators outside Maryland. □

DRAFT

Threatening deferments

A gradual end to student and occupational draft deferments is next on the Nixon Administration's list of changes in the Selective Service system, according to Defense Secretary Melvin A. Laird. Laird says the change is a further move in the direction of making the draft more equitable and ending special privileges.

Changes would not be retroactive and would not affect men now holding such deferments. Hardship and medical deferments would remain available to those who qualified for them. Occupational deferments can be ended by Presidential order, but an end to deferments for undergraduate students would require Congressional action. □

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