Experimenting with Microwave Weapons

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Over the last few years, microwave researchers at the Brooks Air Force Base in San Antonio have published a series of papers showing that 94 GHz millimeter waves have minimal effects on the eyes and the skin, and that current models are adequate for predicting pain and thermal thresholds. It has been no secret that this work was to support the military's development of a microwave weapon for crowd control — active denial technology. After all, how else would people be exposed to 94 GHz radiation?

This week, *Wired News*, with the help of the Sunshine Project, made public eight Air Force protocols for exposing volunteers to Active Denial radiation, which had been released under the Freedom of Information Act. The Brooks papers are cited in the protocols to justify the claim that none of the test subjects would get hurt.

The Air Force did acknowledge that some would find the experiment unpleasant. In one set of tests in which military working dog teams were going to be zapped, the human subjects were warned that, "you are at risk of being scratched or bitten by your dog."

Can the military really be trusted to do objective science when they are developing new weapons? We don't think so. We have long argued that this is a blatant conflict of interest.

Insiders have revealed why we should be wary. Back in February 1991, Dennis Hjeresen, then at Los Alamos National Lab, disclosed that, "pressure was applied [by Brooks officials] ... that we not report significant biological effects of low-power microwave irradiation." In a letter published in *Health Physics*, Hjeresen stated the problem in uncharacteristically blunt terms:

> "The U.S. Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine has consistently suggested to us that there are no effects of low-level microwave exposure despite evidence to the contrary presented in the peer-reviewed literature. Empirical

> results from their laboratories would be helpful and might provide a more compelling argument for their position. Because the U.S. Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine is one of the few remaining funding sources for research in the microwave bioeffects field, a more satisfying response would be sustained by financial support for unrestrained research in this area by independent laboratories."

The only major change since then is that today, 15 years later, the Air Force is the *only* source of money for microwave health research in the United States.

U.S. Air Force, Brooks Air Force Base, active denial technology, microwave weapons, Dennis Hjeresen,

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