

# GM Mosquitoes With Possible Link To Zika Virus Awaiting Release In Florida

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*As the World Health Organization prepares to convene an emergency committee under international health regulations on Monday February 1, many are now wondering exactly where the Zika virus came from.*

Seemingly coming out of nowhere, Zika went from its first discovered case in 1947 and sporadic appearances up until last year, the virus is now in outbreak stage with WHO officials concerned that it may become a pandemic. World health researchers seem perplexed as to the genesis of the virus or at least, the sudden appearance and rapid spread of it in 2015.

Claire Bernish of The Anti-Media [points out one possibility](#):

When examining a rapidly expanding potential pandemic, it's necessary to leave no stone unturned so possible solutions, as well as future prevention, will be as effective as possible. In that vein, there was another significant development in 2015.

Oxitec first [unveiled](#) its large-scale, genetically-modified mosquito farm in Brazil in July 2012, with the goal of reducing "the incidence of dengue fever," as The Disease Daily [reported](#). Dengue fever is spread by the same Aedes mosquitoes which spread the Zika virus — and though they "cannot fly more than 400 meters," WHO stated, "it may inadvertently be transported by humans from one place to another." By July 2015, shortly after the GM mosquitoes were first released into the wild in Juazeiro, Brazil, Oxitec proudly [announced](#) they had "successfully controlled the Aedes aegypti mosquito that spreads dengue fever, chikungunya and zika virus, by reducing the target population by more than 90%."

Though that might sound like an astounding success — and, arguably, it was — there is an alarming possibility to consider.

Nature, as one Redditor keenly [pointed out](#), finds a way — and the effort to control dengue, zika, and other viruses, appears to have backfired dramatically.

The mosquitoes that were released by Oxitec OX513A, were genetically engineered to need the presence of tetracycline in order to survive to maturity. Outside of the presence of tetracycline, they die. The idea behind the GM mosquitoes, was that they would be released into the wild and would mate with the natural female mosquitoes (only males were modified). The offspring that result are also supposed to die without the presence of

tetracycline in their system. The GM mosquito program was introduced under the guise of controlling disease-carrying mosquito populations to reduce the amount of diseases in humans that were spread by mosquitoes.

There is a massive problem with this program, however, most notably, the fact that the presence of tetracycline in the environment is not as rare as one might suspect. Particularly in a place like Brazil.

As Claire Bernish writes:

According to an unclassified [document](#) from the Trade and Agriculture Directorate Committee for Agriculture dated February 2015, Brazil is the third largest in “global antimicrobial consumption in food animal production”—meaning, Brazil is third in the world for its use of tetracycline in its food animals. As a study by the American Society of Agronomy, et. al., [explained](#), “It is estimated that approximately 75% of antibiotics are not absorbed by animals and are excreted in waste.” One of the antibiotics (or antimicrobials) specifically named in that report for its environmental persistence is tetracycline.

Back in September 2010, Dr. Ricarda A. Steinbrecher [wrote a report](#) in which he stated that there is a known survival rate of 3-4 percent of the GM mosquitoes. He suggested that further studies should be conducted before they’re released in the environment.

Claire Bernish points out that the survival rate might actually be much higher than what Steinbrecher suggested.

In fact, as a confidential [internal Oxitec document](#) divulged in 2012, that survival rate could be as high as 15% — even with low levels of tetracycline present. “Even small amounts of tetracycline can repress” the engineered lethality. Indeed, that 15% survival rate was described by Oxitec:

“After a lot of testing and comparing experimental design, it was found that [researchers] had used a cat food to feed the [OX513A] larvae and this cat food contained chicken. It is known that tetracycline is routinely used to prevent infections in chickens, especially in the cheap, mass produced, chicken used for animal food. The chicken is heat-treated before being used, but this does not remove all the tetracycline. This meant that a small amount of tetracycline was being added from the food to the larvae and repressing the [designed] lethal system.”

Even absent this tetracycline, as Steinbrecher explained, a “sub-population” of genetically-modified *Aedes* mosquitoes could theoretically develop and thrive, in theory, “capable of surviving and flourishing despite any further” releases of ‘pure’ GM mosquitoes which still have that gene intact. She added, “the effectiveness of the system also depends on the [genetically-designed] late onset of the lethality. If the time of onset is altered due to environmental conditions ... then a 3-4% [survival rate] represents a much bigger problem...”

Yet there are still more problems with the process of releasing GM mosquitoes into the environment.

Another risk associated with the Oxitec experiment is the potential for the release of genetically engineered biting females into the environment. Since female mosquitoes are

the mosquitoes which bite humans, Oxitec claims that its GE mosquito population is an all-boys club. However, due to the method by which the mosquitoes are sorted, the potential for release of female mosquitoes is very real.

As [Eric Hoffman writes](#), “The sorting is conducted by hand and could result in up to 0.5 percent of the released insects being female. This would raise new human health concerns as people could be bit by GE mosquitoes. It could also hamper efforts to limit the spread of dengue fever.”

It should also be noted that eradicating the *Aedes aegypti* type of mosquito might well leave the area open to invasion by other species who may, in fact, be much more dangerous to human health. For instance, the Asian Tiger mosquito, considered one of the most invasive species in the world, is known to be a carrier of both Dengue fever and the West Nile Virus. What would be the result of an Asian Tiger invasion into South Florida? An eradication of *Aedes aegypti* might well provide us with an answer.

While many might be concerned about the spread of the Zika virus, from places like Africa and Brazil to the Western world and beyond, or that the virus will become an epidemic in the places it currently resides, many Americans might be surprised to learn that the Oxitec GM mosquitoes are slated to be released inside the United States.

In December 2011, I wrote an article entitled “Releasing Genetically Engineered Mosquitoes Poses Unknown Risks to Florida” where I documented the Oxitec plans to release 5-10,000 GM mosquitoes near the Florida Keys. This program was presented to the public under the guise of an attempt to eradicate Dengue fever and is still [awaiting approval from regulatory agencies](#) despite widespread opposition from the public. So if it is true that there is a link between the GM mosquitoes and Zika virus, then Florida may soon be covered in ticking time bombs over its swamps, waiting to provide us with yet another public health emergency.

Yet the program itself is actually older than that. In 2009, also under the guise of preventing the spread of Dengue fever, GM mosquitoes were released by Oxitec in the Cayman Islands. In fact, it is this release that has many questioning whether or not the GM mosquitoes actually have a link to increased rates of Dengue fever. After all, shortly after the release of the GM mosquitoes in the Caymans, cases of Dengue fever in Florida doubled. Is it merely a coincidence that cases of Dengue increased shortly after millions of mosquitoes capable of carrying the fever were released miles away in the Cayman Islands?

While Dengue fever had been eradicated in terms of naturally occurring outbreaks in the United States, cases that were research-related and laboratory-generated have occurred in the country for many years. This is because [Dengue fever has been of particular interest](#) to the United States government, US Army, and CIA since at least the middle part of the 20th century. There is a great deal of evidence suggesting that the biochemical research facilities at Fort Detrick were conducting tests on Dengue fever as a bio-weapon as far back as 1942. It is generally known that in the 1950s the CIA partnered with Ft. Detrick to study Dengue fever and other exotic diseases for use as biological weapons.

It is also interesting to note that, according to CIA documents as well as a 1975 congressional committee, the three locations of Key West, Panama City, and Avon Park (and two other locations in central Florida) were testing sites for Dengue fever research.

As is generally the case, the experiments in Avon Park were concentrated in low-income neighborhoods, in areas that were predominantly black with newly constructed housing projects. According to H.P. Albarelli Jr. and Zoe Martell of [Truthout](#), CIA documents related to the MK/NAOMI program revealed that the agency was using the *Aedes aegypti* type of mosquito in these experiments as well. In one of these experiments, 600,000 mosquitoes were released over Avon Park and in another 150,000 insects were released in specially designed paper bags that were designed to open up when they hit the ground.

Truthout interviewed residents (or test subjects) of Avon Park still living in the area who related that there were at least 6 or 7 deaths resulting from the experiments. As quoted by Truthout, one resident said, “Nobody knew about what had gone on here for years, maybe over 20 years, but in looking back it explained why a bunch of healthy people got sick quick and died at the time of those experiments.” Truthout goes on to point out that around the same time of the Avon Park experiments “there were at least two cases of Dengue fever reported among civilian researchers at Fort Detrick in Maryland.”

[In 1978, a Pentagon document](#) titled, “Biological Warfare: Secret Testing & Volunteers” revealed that similar experiments were conducted in Key West by the Army Chemical Corps and Special Operations and Projects Divisions at Fort Detrick.

Like the current situation, U.S. government agencies teamed with NGOs, academia, and other organizations to conduct mosquito-related projects. Operation Bellweather, a 1959 experiment consisting of over 50 field tests, was conducted over several states including Georgia, Maryland, Utah, and Arizona, and Florida. Operation Bellweather was coordinated with the Rockefeller Institute in New York; the facility that actually bred the mosquitoes. What’s more, the experiment was aided by the Armour Research Foundation, the Battelle Memorial Institute, Ben Venue Labs, Inc., the University of Florida, Florida State University, and the Lovell Chemical Company.

The military and CIA connections to Dengue fever outbreaks do not end with these experiments, however. It is widely believed that the 1981 outbreak in Cuba was a result of CIA and U.S. military covert biological attacks. This outbreak occurred essentially out of nowhere and resulted in over one hundred thousand cases of infection. Albarelli and Martell write:

American researcher William H. Schaap, an editor of *Covert Action* magazine, claims the Cuba Dengue outbreak was the result of CIA activities. Former Fort Detrick researchers, all of whom refused to have their names used for this article, say they performed ‘advance work’ on the Cuba outbreak and that it was ‘man made.’

In 1982 the CIA was accused by the Soviet media of sending operatives into Pakistan and Afghanistan for the purposes of creating a Dengue epidemic. Likewise, in 1985 and 1986, authorities in Nicaragua made similar claims against the CIA, also suggesting that they were attempting to start a Dengue outbreak.

While the CIA has characteristically denied involvement in all of these instances, army researchers have admitted to having worked intensely with “arthropod vectors for offensive biological warfare objectives” and that such work was conducted at Fort Detrick in the 1980s. Not only that, but researchers have also admitted that large mosquito colonies, which were infected with both yellow fever and Dengue fever, were being maintained at the

Frederick, Maryland facility.

There is also evidence of experimentation with federal prisoners without their knowledge. As [Truthout](#) reports:

Several redacted Camp Detrick and Edgewood Arsenal reports indicate that experiments were conducted on state and federal prisoners who were unwittingly exposed to Dengue fever, as well as other viruses, some possibly lethal.

With all of the evidence that CIA and military tests have been conducted regarding Dengue fever, there is ample reason to be concerned when one sees a connection like the recent release of mosquitoes and the subsequent outbreak of Dengue fever in Florida, a traditional testing site for these organizations.

The response to the Dengue outbreak should also be questioned as [aerial spraying](#) campaigns were intensified. While these sprayings were claimed to be for the eradication of the Dengue-carrying mosquitoes, the number of people who contracted the illness actually rose.

While it was painfully obvious from the very beginning, that releasing genetically modified mosquitoes was a very bad idea, the possible connection to the mosquitoes and the increase of previously eradicated or extremely rare diseases should be a dramatic wake-up call to everyone.

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