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By WALTER SULLIVAN

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During the current fiscal year and the one preceding it the United States used herbicides in Vietnam on such a scale that the total cost will reach almost \$100-million.

This is in contrast to an expenditure of \$12.5-million in the fiscal year 1966. These figures were made public here yesterday by a military specialist who argued that the killing of foliage that could conceal Vietcong ambushes leads to no long-term effects.

The speaker was Dr. Charles E. Minarik, director of the Plant Science Laboratory at Fort Detrick, Md., an adviser to the Pentagon on defoliation practices.

He addressed the Northeast Weed Control Conference at the Commodore Hotel and elaborated afterwards in an interview.

His arguments contrasted with charges made last week by Dr. Barry Commoner, director of the Center for the Biology of Natural Systems at Washington University in St. Louis.

Dr. Commoner spoke at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

He said the association had tried in vain to obtain from the Department of Defense sci-

Pentagon Adviser Asserts That Killing of Foliage Has No Long-Term Effect

entific data supporting the Pentagon's contention that the defoliation program would not have long-term ill effects on Vietnam and its population. At a news conference he said one of the herbicides, maleic hydrazide, had produced cancer in mice.

Another, cacodylic acid, used to kill elephant grass around American bases, contains arsenic, Dr. Commoner said. An area one-third the size of Montana has been sprayed, he asserted. In his prepared text he added:

"We have engaged in a massive environmental intrusion without being aware of the biological consequences."

Dr. Minarik said maleic hydrazide had not been used in Vietnam and that cacodylic acid, like most other herbicides in use there, was soon broken down by bacteria in the soil.

When eaten by cattle with their fodder, he added, the substance is excreted in their urine and, unlike DDT, does not appear in their milk.

He said there was no known case of death or serious in-

jury to anyone from herbicides in use in Vietnam, even in factories where large amounts of the material was processed. However, he added, that the Vietcong probably "believe their own propaganda."

They have said bleeding from the nose and ears had resulted from poisoning by herbicides, he said. The spraying of areas of potential ambush thus scares them away, as well as denying them cover, he said.

He argued that defoliation in Vietnam was essentially no more a threat to the balance of nature than the spray-killing of vegetation along power lines, railways and highways in the United States.

In Vietnam the goal is to kill vegetation within "a couple of hundred feet" of highways and waterways where ambushes are likely, Dr. Minarik said.

As along American power lines and other rights of way, the animal life retreats from the defoliated zone into the nearby forest with little effect on the region as a whole.

The Midwest Research Institute in St. Louis has completed for the Pentagon a study of the effects of large-scale use of herbicides on the life of a region like Vietnam, Dr. Minarik said.

The results have not yet been made public, he added.

One of the herbicides, Tordon 101, contains a component, picloram, which does not break down quickly in the soil, Dr. Minarik said. However, it is employed sparingly, he added. In this country it is used to kill conifers.

One problem is to find herbicides that act quickly, even on trees 100 to 150 feet tall. Those now in use usually take from four to six weeks for maximum effect. Regrowth begins after six to twelve months. Peasants are planting crops in areas that have been cleared of forest by defoliants, Dr. Minarik said.