

## THE WAR.

### HEALTH OF THE AMERICAN ARMY IN THE PACIFIC.

The Technical Information Division of the Surgeon-General at Washington supplies most interesting, up-to-date information *re* the war.

Since the unconditional surrender of Germany we appear, in this country, to surmise that war is at an end. No such thing—Japan must be crushed and our men are helping to do it.

Thus the following Report on the Health of the American Army by Major-General Norman T. Kirk, Surgeon-General of the Army, at the Secretary of War's recent Press and radio conference, is of interest to us:—

"The Army Medical Department is well prepared to maintain its record of saving lives and guarding against disease in the second phase of World War II, which will be centred in the Pacific. As combat activities increase in that area, troops moved from European theatres will find a different type of warfare, different diseases and different methods of combating disease.

"The Medical Department has been preparing for years for its fight on disease in the Pacific. In addition to its intensive research into diseases common to that area, it has gained much value in practical application of its methods from the campaigns already fought.

"In the Pacific areas our fighting men are exposed to many types of disease that are rare in the United States and Europe. However, this should not be considered cause for alarm. With proper preventive measures and medical service, the disease rate in the Pacific will be kept to a minimum.

"Every fighting unit in the Pacific area has had the same type of medical organisation accompanying it as those in other theatres. The chain of evacuation of the wounded is well organised and is very effective. Because of geographical and climatic differences, certain changes were desirable, but the same high type facilities are available.

"The main diseases to be encountered in the Pacific are malaria, the dysenteries, scrub typhus, skin infections, schistosomiasis, filariasis and dengue fever. Excellent progress has already been made in keeping the incidence of all these diseases to a very low degree.

"Malaria, for example, has been reduced to one-fourth its incidence in the early part of the war, so that the overall death rate from malaria in the Army is .01 per cent.

"The use of D.D.T. and atabrine is primarily responsible for lowering the incidence rate of the most disabling tropical diseases. The remarkable record in lowering the malaria rate is due also to strict discipline and control measures. Malaria is spread by the anopheles mosquito. D.D.T., a recently developed insecticide, is used to kill this mosquito and the larva. Areas are sprayed with D.D.T. by plane and a 5 per cent. solution of D.D.T. sprayed on barracks walls, in kitchens and huts, kills all mosquitoes and flies alighting thereon for months after spraying.

"The dysenteries, so common in the Pacific areas, which are spread by flies, are also rendered less prevalent by the use of D.D.T.

"Atabrine has been found more effective as a therapeutic agent in the control of malaria than quinine.

"Filariasis, which is also spread by the mosquito, is reduced by the use of D.D.T. and mosquito control methods.

"Schistosomiasis is caused by a small fluke found in pools and running streams which in a matter of seconds burrows through the skin and infects the individual. All water found to contain these flukes is posted and personnel is warned not to bathe, wade or wash in it.

"Areas found to contain scrub typhus are immediately burned over, clothing is impregnated, and efforts are being made to develop a vaccine to counteract it.

"Dengue fever, also spread by the mosquito, is controlled by the use of D.D.T. and mosquito abatement.

"It can readily be noted that D.D.T. is one of the miracle developments of this war.

"Last year a tropical disease centre was opened by the Army Medical Department at Moore General Hospital, Swannanoa, North Carolina. It was designated as a centre for the study and treatment of tropical diseases. This centre has assisted greatly in the investigation and treatment of these diseases and has reduced the loss of manpower as a result of illness, thereby making an important contribution to the continuing improvement of American medicine.

"In addition to protecting the soldier from diseases of the tropics, the Army Medical Department is affording all possible protection against disease and harmful pests which might be brought into the United States by military traffic. This is done through a quarantine branch which works in conjunction with the U.S. Public Health Service and the Navy.

"The Army programme includes measures to prevent the importation of dangerous insects from abroad. Extensive insect control programmes have been carried out about military stations and airports abroad, using highly effective techniques and agents. Passengers, planes, ships and cargo are sprayed with insecticides in order to eliminate insect risk.

"The battle is also waged through the control of rats and vermin. The most effective means of ridding ships of rats has been to build ships in such a way that rats cannot live or breed aboard them. Modern American ships are practically free of this age-old problem.

"To protect the country against agricultural diseases and pests which might be imported, rigid restrictions and inspections are made fully effective for military traffic. Particular stress is laid upon packing materials which might harbour insect forms.

"The Army Medical Department has complete medical and sanitary surveys of all the territory in the Pacific which is potential battle ground. The health hazards to soldiers are known to the Medical Corps officers who accompany all invasion troops and that knowledge is distributed to all the men.

"The Army Medical Department has been doing a fine job in the Pacific and will continue to do that job as activities in that theatre increase. It is true that the pestilential islands of the Pacific have not been changed into gardens of Eden, but when the deplorable health conditions that existed there are compared with what has been accomplished, it is obvious that our victory over the Japs will be hastened.

"While all of this work and planning was going on for the increased activity in the Pacific, the Army Medical Department performed the essential functions of caring for men wounded in battle, the injured and the sick, to maintain fighting strength with 45,000 medical corps, 15,000 dentists, 52,000 nurses, 2,000 veterinarians, 18,700 medical administrative corps men, 2,500 sanitary corps specialists, 1,000 physical therapists, 1,500 dietitians, 61 pharmacy corps officers, 535,000 enlisted medical aid men and approximately 80,000 civilian employees.

"Illness and recuperation of wounded and injured men does not cease with a formal declaration of the end of hostilities on any front. The care of these men and women is a continuing responsibility of the Medical Department which will go on for many months in the future. It will increase rather than diminish during the remainder of 1945, according to the best estimates which can be made now. Therefore, as I have said before, medical care by the Army has yet to hit its full stride. One thing I wish to promise is that the best scientific medical attention will continue to be furnished to every man needing it."

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)