

FEVER OF JUNGLE MARCHING NORTH

Disease Approaching Mexico and British Honduras—Not Held by Natural Barrier

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Special to The New York Times.

WASHINGTON, Feb. 11 — Jungle yellow fever has resumed its northward march. It was believed to have been checked by natural barriers at the northern border of Honduras late in 1953.

Dr. Fred. L. Soper, director of the Pan American Sanitary Organization, said recently that no natural barrier existed to keep the fever out of British Honduras and Mexico and that the disease would reach those countries within a year. Mexico has had no yellow fever for the last thirty years, he said.

Jungle yellow fever is a monkey-borne disease that can be contracted by man. It was first discovered in this hemisphere when five fatal cases of yellow fever, the first since the early Nineteen Hundreds, occurred in Panama in 1948. It was learned that these patients had been infected in the forests east of the Panama Canal, on the South American side. The infection was by a forest strain of mosquitos that had bitten infected monkeys.

Once introduced by man into

urban areas, yellow fever may be further spread by its traditional carrier, the *aedes aegypti* mosquito.

* The organization that Dr. Soper heads checked on recurring outbreaks of the jungle yellow fever through laboratory tests of dead monkeys from Panama southward to Colombia, and then northward. It was found on both coasts of Costa Rica and southern Nicaragua in 1952 and 1953; in Nicaragua and Honduras in 1953 and 1954.

However, it was believed to have died out on the northern border of Honduras in September, 1954.

"We had a full year's observation there without any recurrence of the disease," said Dr. Soper. "The final outbreak had been in the vicinity of San Pedro Sula. The river valley there had been cleared of forests for the growing of bananas.

"Our workers there believed that this clearance, coupled with the interference of a low range of sparsely vegetated mountains along the border which would not furnish cover to either monkeys or mosquitos, would serve as a natural barrier to check the disease," he continued. "However, we have just received confirmation that the jungle yellow fever has jumped across this barrier, into Guatemala.

"We had heard rumors that in late November and December of 1955 some monkeys had died in the Puerto Barrios area of Guatemala," Dr. Soper added. "It was in such an isolated area that we did not get wind of it until the end of the year. That led to

studies in which public health scientists found some of the dead monkeys and checked out in the laboratory that they had died of the yellow fever. These findings were confirmed only Feb. 9 by a cable from the health officials of Guatemala.

"That same day," Dr. Soper continued, "we received another wire from our office in Guatemala saying that responsible local government health authorities had reported more dead monkeys farther to the north, around Lake Izabal. This comes fairly close to the borders of British Honduras and Mexico."