

Confidential

30 Charles River Road, Cambridge, Massachusetts
KPS-HBS July 10, 1942

Office of the Coordinator of Research and Development
Navy Department
Washington, D.C.

Dear Sir,

When last in Washington the writer called at your office and presented an idea which has been brought to NDRC for its consideration and action. This idea, as will be evidenced by the attached correspondence, was first presented to the President of the United States last January and has since been brought to the attention of various individuals and organizations without, however, being finally disposed of in one way or another.

Briefly stated, the concept is to use the common American bat as a carrier for small incendiaries. The original proposal was to release these bats, for example, some hundreds of miles off the shores of Japan and at such a time as would permit the bat to travel to land, arriving shortly before daylight. The habit of the bat is such that with light it would seek a refuge by crawling into crevices under roofs, thatching, and generally into small places where conceivably fires could be very easily started by means of a bat-borne incendiary weighing approximately one ounce.

...Just how we could proceed experimentally to explore this idea is quite a problem. Doubtless there are many of the questions that could be answered by consulting the proper authorities, but NDRC has not thus far pursued the matter, as the first point to be determined is whether any of the Services would be interested in the idea. Obviously, this is not a major incendiary. From the standpoint of destruction it cannot be reckoned in the same class with other incendiaries now available. On the other hand, the use of such means might be very demoralizing, especially against a superstitious people. It cannot conceivably have any value as an incendiary for use against purely military objectives, as the chances are that the bats would seek the countryside rather than urban districts.

In submitting these papers to your Office it is my understanding that there is a group within the Navy which considers ideas originating within the Service, and that this suggestion might properly be submitted as having that origin. NDRC is prepared to go into this matter in whatever detail may be desired. The writer expects to be in Washington some time during the week of July 20 and will then follow up this letter by getting in touch with your Office.

Very truly yours,
Earl P. Stevenson