

Scientists study pesticide link to diplomats' 'Havana syndrome'

March 3 2020

Cuban scientists are helping investigate whether pesticides caused mysterious health complaints from US and Canadian diplomats in Havana that were originally blamed on sonic attacks, a conference heard.

Dozens of embassy officials and their families first reported in 2016 suffering from what became known as "Havana syndrome," with symptoms including dizziness, fatigue and headaches, as well as hearing and vision complications.

US and Canadian authorities initially suspected an attack using some sort of acoustic weapon, which led to heightened diplomatic tensions between Washington and the Caribbean island nation.

But last year a Canadian study suggested the illnesses may have been caused by a neurotoxin in anti-mosquito spray.

Researchers in Cuba and Canada were now working together to study whether the symptoms mirrored those of people with exposure to pesticides, said Cuban Neuroscience Center director Mitchell Valdes-Sosa.

"We are not denying that a group of diplomats felt badly and were sick," he told AFP on the sidelines of a Havana research conference into the [illness](#).

"(But) in many parts of the world there is evidence that if you are

exposed to insecticides, even in low doses, chronically, some people develop [neurological symptoms](#)."

The results of the research would be available in a month, Valdes-Sosa said.

The spate of illnesses dealt a blow to the historic agreement to improve relations between Washington and Havana forged by the Obama administration.

That accord was scaled back when US President Donald Trump took office and reinstituted sanctions against Cuba.

© 2020 AFP

Citation: Scientists study pesticide link to diplomats' 'Havana syndrome' (2020, March 3) retrieved 6 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-03-scientists-pesticide-link-diplomats-havana.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--