

POLITICS | NATIONAL SECURITY

U.S. Diplomats' Illnesses Likely Linked to Pulsed Energy Attack

Panel releases findings on medical symptoms experienced by those working in Cuba, China



The U.S. Embassy in Havana last month.

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Dec. 6, 2020 1:10 pm ET

A U.S. scientific panel has concluded that exposure to a type of directed energy was the most likely culprit for a number of medical symptoms, including dizziness and memory loss, experienced by diplomats posted in Cuba and China.

In a new assessment published Saturday by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, scientists identified “directed, pulsed radio frequency (RF) energy” as the most likely explanation for a series of symptoms experienced by diplomats posted at U.S. facilities—a broad category of energy that can include microwave radiation.

The scientists concluded that the symptoms experienced by a number of U.S. and Canadian diplomats, which included dizziness, headache, fatigue, nausea, anxiety,

cognitive difficulties and memory loss, were “unlike any disorder in the neurological or general medical literature.”

The panel of 19 scientific and medical experts had been tasked by the U.S. State Department to advise the government on the reasons for the symptoms experienced by people posted at diplomatic facilities abroad.

The committee said the abrupt onset of symptoms was most consistent with “a directed radio frequency (RF) energy attack” rather than inadvertent or environmental exposure, but also that more research was needed. Governments, including the former Soviet Union and the U.S., have tested using directed energy as a potential weapon or a tool for espionage or crowd control in the past.

“Because the committee was not able to assess specific scenarios involving malevolent actors, one strong suggestion is that follow-up studies on this topic be undertaken by subject-matter experts with proper clearance, including those who work outside the U.S. government, with full access to all relevant information,” wrote David Relman, professor of medicine at Stanford University and chairman of the panel, in a preface to the report.

The symptoms experienced by U.S. diplomats and intelligence officers posted in Cuba began in late 2016 and caused a rupture in relations between the two countries, which had begun a delicate rapprochement under then-President Barack Obama after decades of Cold War-era tensions.

President Trump publicly blamed Cuba for the incident, a charge that Havana denied. U.S. diplomats in China later experienced other symptoms, and similar symptoms were reported by intelligence officials working on Russia-related operations around the world.

The scientific panel examined other possibilities, including exposure to chemicals, infectious diseases or that the symptoms were primarily caused by psychological or social factors. However, it concluded that radio frequency energy exposure was the most likely culprit.

The paper published Saturday validates earlier findings by a different medical team. Douglas H. Smith, who published a study on the issue in a medical journal,

said in 2018 that exposure to microwaves, a type of radio frequency energy, were the most likely culprit.

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Appeared in the December 7, 2020, print edition as 'Energy Attack Cited in Diplomat Illnesses.'