

# Aerial Spray 'BIG GUNS' kill skeeters in Williston

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A young woman sits outside at a picnic on a warm, summer night. She is enjoying the company of friends and good eats, as the sun sets in the picturesque backdrop. Suddenly, she feels a pinch on her arm. She glances down to see a mosquito enjoying itself on her blood supply. The rest of her night will be spent scratching mosquito bites and she will be left itchy for several days.

These mosquito bites are the result of an overpopulation of breeding mosquitoes in Williston, N.D. The 757th Airlift Squadron (AS) here was prompted to have their first aerial spray mission there from May 27 to June 5 to help control the problem.

Maj. Phillip R. Townsend, the assistant chief of aerial spray assigned to the 757th AS here, said that the Williston region has long had mosquito problems because the Missouri River often floods low-lying areas in the spring.

"This creates more than 80,000 acres of moist areas that are the perfect breeding ground for a mosquito problem," Maj. Townsend said.

"The area is so huge that the problem is overwhelming," said Maj. Karl Haagsma, chief research entomologist in charge assigned to the 757th AS here.

According to Maj. Townsend, this mosquito infestation has created a hazardous living environment in Williston.

"Williston was trapping about 10,000 mosquitoes a night," said Maj. Townsend. "The residents can't even go outside in the summertime without being swarmed."

As a result of this problem, the Williston Army Corps of Engineers called in the big guns.

"The senator marked funds for the spray mission and the corps called us for help," he said. "This is the first time we have sprayed in Williston."

Maj. Townsend said that spraying in Williston presented challenges for the 9-day mission.

"Winds were our biggest factor," he said. "We did early morning flights so we could get the most spraying time in."

"One of the biggest challenges is locating areas out there where the larvae are breeding and translating that into a spray block that is treatable with a C-130," said Maj. Mark Breidenbaugh, a research



Photo by Maj. Mark Breidenbaugh

A Youngstown Air Reserve Station's C-130H cargo aircraft, flown by Maj. Phillip R. Townsend, the assistant chief of aerial spray assigned to the 757th Airlift Squadron, sprays part of 80,000 acres of wet lands that serves as a mass breeding ground for mosquitoes during a mission to Williston, N.D., May 27 to June 5.

entomologist with the 757th AS.

Maj. Breidenbaugh also explained the use of larvicide for the spray mission.

"VectoBac is a bacterial larvicide," said Maj. Breidenbaugh. "It's good news because it is non-toxic to mammals. It has an endospore that (directly) affects the stomachs of the mosquitoes. It's highly effective when put in the right spot (of the spray area)."

Although the crew only sprayed approximately 6,700 acres of the region, Maj. Townsend said that the Williston area is already seeing positive results.

"Before the mission, a dip-check sample of a pint sized amount of water contained about 150 to 200 mosquito larvae," he said. "After the application, the same amount of water only contained zero to three larvae."

Maj. Breidenbaugh expressed that there was a possibility of the squadron returning to the region for a future mission to combat the adult population of mosquitoes.

"I'm optimistic for us to be able to help them, but it won't solve the mosquito problem," said Maj. Breidenbaugh.

Thanks to the efforts of the 757th AS, this young woman can now enjoy a picnic on a warm summer night, the great company of friends and good eats and watch the beautiful sunset without the worry of mosquitoes ruining her night.