



News Release

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Scientists Identify Pathogens That May Be Causing Global Honey-Bee Deaths

Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD — Researchers have identified potential culprits behind the wide-spread catastrophic death of honey bees around North America and Europe. A team of scientists from Edgewood Chemical Biological Center and University of California San Francisco identified both a virus and a parasite that are likely behind the recent sudden die-off of honey-bee colonies.

Using a new technology called the Integrated Virus Detection System (IVDS), which was designed for military use to rapidly screen samples for pathogens, ECBC scientists last week isolated the presence of viral and parasitic pathogens that may be contributing to the honeybee loss. Confirmation testing was conducted over the weekend by scientists at the University of California San Francisco. ECBC scientists presented the results of their studies yesterday to a United States Department of Agriculture working group, hastily convened to determine next steps.

For the past year, experts have observed a marked decline in the honey bee population, with entire colonies collapsing without warning. Approximately 50 percent of hives have disappeared and researchers around the country are scrambling to find out why. Scientists have termed this phenomenon "Colony Collapse Disorder" and fear that without honey bees to pollinate crops like fruits, vegetables, and almonds the loss of honey bees could have an enormous horticultural and economic impact around the world.

ECBC is one of many academic, commercial and government concerns studying the honey bee population decline. ECBC's role will be to identify the extent of the problem and conduct ongoing detection activities.

ECBC is the Army's principal research and development center for chemical and biological defense technology, engineering and services. ECBC has achieved major technological advances for national defense, civilian needs and industrial competitiveness, with a long and distinguished history of providing the Armed Forces with quality systems and outstanding customer service. ECBC is a US Army Research and Development Command laboratory located at the Edgewood Area of Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland. For more information about the Edgewood Chemical Biological Center, please visit our Web site at <http://www.ecbc.army.mil> or call the Public Affairs Office at (410) 436-3610.