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Bush Administration to Blue-State California: Drop Dead!

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In a joint action, the USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) and the CDFA (California Department of Food and Agriculture) have declared war on the home base of Senators Boxer and Feinstein, house speaker Pelosi, the founders of [Moveon.org](#), gay-marriage-friendly Mayor Gavin Newsom, Code Pink, and Congresswoman Barbara Lee.

Aerial spraying with a pesticide which has never been tested for human or environmental safety is planned starting this summer, month after month, year after year, in an area stretching from Carmel to Marin County, San Francisco to Berkeley, in pursuit of the eradication of the Light Brown Apple Moth (LBAM), a rather wimpy exotic pest originally from Australia.

A state of emergency was declared for this pest on paper, abrogating the need for any kind of environmental impact — when folks like James Carey, professor of entomology at UC-Davis and Dan Harder, director of the UC-Santa Cruz Arboretum, maintain eradication won't work; the LBAM is a nuisance at best; and this ill-conceived attack on the people, environment, and economy of California is about trade wars and not about actual threats to agriculture (Fodor's is already advising tourists to stay away from Santa Cruz, because of the spray).

The CDFA quietly admits that LBAM hasn't caused any actual damage to agriculture in California; what it doesn't cop to is the damage -it- and the USDA has caused to California growers and farmers through its quarantines, insistence on destruction of any plant showing any signs of LBAM, shut down of nurseries with LBAM, insistence on spraying in nurseries with highly toxic organophosphate chlorpyrifos, and the like.

Funny how there's not enough money in the budget to properly fund the USDA to screen properly for tainted beef, but there is plenty of money to fund an eradication program that could run into the hundreds of millions of dollars over the next five years, if allowed to continue — and funds the antics of longtime-government contractors Dynamic Aviation out of Bridgewater, Virginia, which counts "intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance" among its domains of expertise. What, there weren't any California-based cropdusters, with traditional skills in pesticide-spray and not geopolitics, available for the gig?

And, this eradication program is an earmark in Bush's budget, just the kind of questionable federal budgeting speaker Pelosi said she'd be looking into (her district is in the spray zone, too). Then there's the fact that much of the money for this comes from the Department of Homeland Security, about the only place you can find money these days. And for poor cash-starved California, always broke since Proposition 13, money for emergencies and eradications is there to be had from the Feds — who ever would want to turn down free money that might keep your agency partly afloat? Particularly when you know there is little to be had for monitoring and Integrated Pest Management?

California Secretary of Agriculture, A.G. Kawamura, part of the Orange County Republican New Majority that helped push Schwarzenegger into office and Gray Davis out of it, keeps repeating pernicious nonsense reminiscent of "heckuva a job, Brownie!" and "Mission accomplished!", talking of threats the LBAM would make to the coastal redwoods and monterey pines. Um, no, just to pick one tiny misapprehensions among all the other lies, Big and small, being cranked out by the USDA and the CDFA, the LBAM is a leafroller. It makes its home on leaves, munching only part-way through them. It can't eat things with needles, like redwoods and pines. But then, Kawamura has a degree in comparative literature, not in agroecology nor entomology nor public health —and has gone on the record as stating that regulation, not development, is the greatest threat to agriculture. He also fought to prevent annihilating pesticide methyl bromide from being outlawed. Hey, pesticide - drift into schoolyards? Aerially spraying millions of people and poisoning the watersheds of San Francisco and Monterey Bays? What's the diff?

The USDA and the CDFA keep saying the spray is safe. Never mind that known mutagens, carcinogens, lung skin and eye irritants, and compounds considered hazardous waste by the European Union, all micronized in plastic capable of remaining lodged in the deep lung, were in first round of spraying for the LBAM in the Fall of 2007 in Monterey and Santa Cruz counties. Then, hundreds of sea-birds died afterwards, accompanied temporarily by one of the worst red tides in 40 years — and hundreds of people had health complaints, even though the CDFA set up no reporting mechanism to monitor these adverse health effects. Not to mention how Santa Cruz and Monterey residents have kept telling stories of wheezing dogs and their puking, dying cats.

And we're supposed to trust an administration where the EPA won't support the state of California in request to set its own carbon dioxide emissions standards, and dismisses, under pressure from the chemical industry, one of its staff members concerned with the health effects of a flame retardant widely used in electronic equipment

New Zealand, where the LBAM has been for more than a century, has a climate similar to California's and grows many of the same things (from chardonnay grapes to apples — and monterey pine as a timber-crop, exported from California years ago). There, the LBAM is managed by letting natural predators take over, and washing fruit with water to ready it for export. That's right, no aerial spraying, nothing. And the European Union has no ban on LBAM whatsoever.

It looks and feels a classic move by Bush Administration: an aerial attack against an enemy posing no real threat; a program which can't work and wastes the taxpayers' money; a toxic boogodoggle which benefits occluded political goals and cronies; acts of state-sponsored terror; and is ultimately a case of fighting the the last century's war with outdated strategies.

It's faith-based (as in, don't complicate with facts), bad science, even worse public policy — and an environmental disaster.

Can you spell chemical trespass? Violation of the state constitution of California?

And Governor Schwarzenegger, who boasts about wanting California to take the lead in green sustainability, could end this enormity with stroke of his pen.

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What we could learn from other countries if we'd only listen!!!

New Zealand sets a fine example and we're too foolish to follow it.

Mr. Kawamura has ties to the Western Growers Assoc. so common sense is once again trounced by money.

Take a look: <http://www.santacruzlive.com/blogs/video/2007/10/02/video-state-secretary-of-food-and-agriculture-ag-kawamura-talks-about-safety-of-moth-spraying/>

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So, what's the plan? How do we stop this?

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I live in this area.

People were ill after the initial spraying.

They company would NOT release the list of chemicals used.

If they think people are going to allow those plane to fly this time around, they are sadly delusional.

Schwarzeneger is going to be hounded. Literally.

No one understand WHY this is happening. PERIOD.

Last time we had this little fascist "father knows best" moment was that infamous MedFly spraying in the Santa Clara county.

That stopped quickly, when one evening, in the middle of a High-Society soiree being held in the outdoors at a well-known art center in the area, the chemical was dumped by helicopter on and those Mercedes, BMW, Porsche valet-parked outside. Lots of ruined paint jobs THAT evening, I tell you... They ended the spraying that night.

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i agree that getting the wealthy and connected engaged/enraged about this issue will be the only way to stop it.

and yeah, one is told the spray is harmless, but garage your car and keep your pets inside and washdown your deck and children's playthings afterwards.

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WOW. Now the Republicans are just out and out poisoning the population. I just thought they were greedy and corrupt. Now it looks like they are genocidal as well. I guess they couldn't send the entire state to Iraq so this was the next best method. Kind of like the death chambers in Germany, yes?

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hmm, to me it seems more like

'hey, get the democrats!' remember how the bush administration totally colluded in the energy-trading/enron mess of 2002? which had terrible effects on blue-state california?

and wasnt katrina an expedient way to um absent-mindedly get rid of a huge democratic block in the south?

not saying katrina was the republican's doing, obviously.
 just saying, the post-storm neglect/response was a fine bit of opportunism.

contrast with fema's reponse to mostly republican san diego, with last yr's wildfires...

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I appreciate the tone of this post, for you are protecting my health, but there's no way the spraying will be allowed to go on.

The uproar is just getting started.

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i hope, altohne, you are correct. but what's needed is pressure put on the governor and calif state legislators (there are multiple bills pending at the moment) and money donated to pesticide watch (a fiscal pass-through for activists on this issue --- just mark your check 'lbam!').

people in santa cruz and monterey thought no way they'd get sprayed --- but they did.

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