



U.S. ARMY PHOTO

Rats filled every nook and cranny of a huge underground bunker near Baghdad, Iraq.

## Rats

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could easily escape the bunker and go to ground level, where there were hundreds of rodent burrows that would provide them harborage.”

Sherwood said the last thing he wanted to do was to take away the food supply and water or do anything that would drive the rats out of the bunker to the base camps to forage for their next meal.

The creatures had devoured most of the military rations — they ate everything but the salt and pepper and Tabasco sauce — and shredded everything else except the spoons to use for nesting material. The cases looked intact, except for one or two small holes in each.

“I think that was the most surprising thing,” Sherwood said. “The boxes looked fine, but when you picked them up they were empty except for the

ones that had nests built in them.”

Another surprising thing was the consistency with which the rats emptied the water bottles, which were almost all chewed through at the same height on the bottle with the holes all being very similar in size.

Sherwood decided to place poison near the now-empty pallets, which still contained ample food for the thriving rodent population, to rid the area of the problem. He said after placing the poison, his team returned and picked up dead adult rats by the hundreds and estimated many more may have died in their nests or in underground burrows.

The body count of the dead vermin did lead Sherwood to believe the problem had been solved and shouldn't happen again.

“Absolutely,” he said. “Once we got rid of the population and cleaned out the food and water, there was nothing down there that would make a rat want to go there.”



SGT. 1ST CLASS SAM MCLARTY

Only an occasional snake, like this sand boa, kept Saddam Hussein's command bunker from being a total rat heaven.



SGT. 1ST CLASS SAM MCLARTY

U.S. Army Lt. Col. Van Sherwood, preventive medicine officer for Task Force 3rd Medical Command, developed and executed a plan to rid Saddam Hussein's bunker of rats.



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