

CASE HISTORY

ARMIES OF FRUIT BATS FLEE FROM U.S. EMBASSY

For 17 years, fruit bats invaded the property of three U.S. Embassy officers in Mali, Africa. Hundreds upon hundreds of the giant bats, each with a wingspan of about 3 ft. wide, would infest the tall trees surrounding homes of the U.S. Ambassador, the Deputy Chief of Mission, and the Public Affairs Officer.

The bats' incessant chattering, night and day, disturbed the peace of the area. In addition, bat droppings caused unpleasant and potentially unhealthy conditions. The excrement can contain parasites which spread rabies, plagues, and other diseases to humans.

"Hundreds of people come to the Ambassador's parties," notes Karl C. Voiles, facilities manager for the Embassy, "and here we would have bat droppings falling on clothes, on heads, and in drinks."

The bat problem was also costly. Because of the excessive droppings, Embassy residences had to be repainted every year, at a cost of \$8,000 to \$10,000 a year for paint and labor.

To solve the problem, a prior facilities manager cut down the trees to discourage bats for roosting. However, in Mali's hot, humid climate, where daily temperatures routinely reach 115°, the trees grew back rapidly, and the bats returned in full force.

"Everything was tried—from loud music to bright lights," adds Voiles. "We didn't want to hurt the bats. We just didn't want them invading Embassy events."

Voiles then read about Transonic IXL, an ultrasonic device made by **Bird-X, Inc.**, Chicago, Ill. By emitting intense ultrasonic and sonic sounds over a 2,000-sq.-ft. area, the device drives away birds, rodents, skunks, and other critters, without harming them. Because pests cannot adapt to the high sound level, which bothers their nervous systems, they quickly flee from the site.

After purchasing 15 of the pest repellers, Voiles and his staff installed the devices at 100-ft. intervals, around perimeter walls encircling Embassy residences.

Although people couldn't hear the ultra-

sonic sounds emitted, results were instantaneous. "Like magic, the bats vanished," reports Voiles. "The trees were empty. The racket ceased. No more chitter-chattering."

Voiles then decided to use the pest repellers on another enemy—rats that were running rampant near an Embassy Compound.

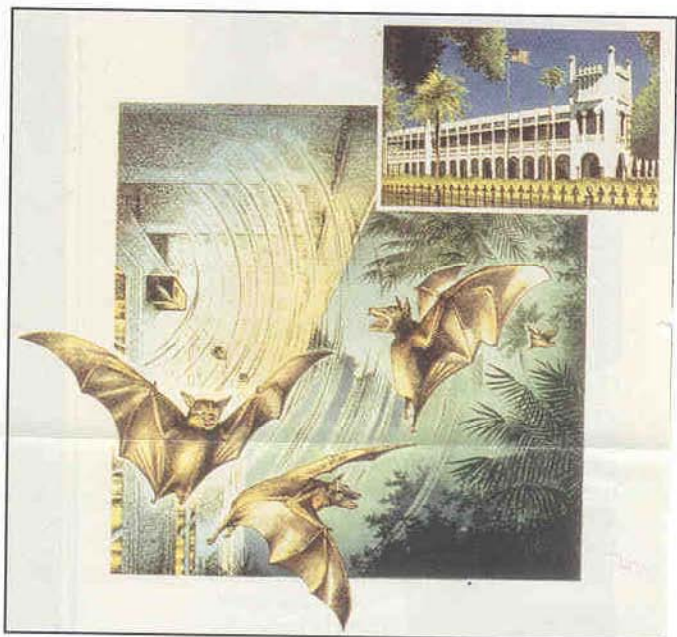
In much of west Africa, open sewers, drainage ditches, and visible garbage cause rat populations to thrive. The rats would often poke their heads up from ditches while Embassy employees ate their lunches outdoors.

Voiles opted for the ultrasonic devices because "we didn't want to do indiscriminate poisoning, with the risk of poisoning other critters as well."

Like the bats, the rats left the Embassy Compound as soon as the repellers were installed.

Voiles' efforts did not go unnoticed by officials. The Deputy at the Embassy proclaimed that Karl Voiles is now a "Legend of Africa—the first person ever to get rid of bats. □"

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An ultrasonic repeller drives bats away from a U.S. Embassy building in Africa.