

# Neutron bomb inventor Samuel Cohen dies in LA

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(AP) -- Neutron bomb inventor Samuel T. Cohen, who designed the tactical nuclear weapon intended to kill people but do minimal damage to structures, has died, his son said Wednesday.

Cohen died from complications of stomach cancer on Sunday at his home in the Brentwood section of Los Angeles, his son Paul Cohen told the New York Times and the Los Angeles Times.

Cohen worked for the RAND Corporation and the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory when he developed the small neutron bomb in 1958, which used tiny particles that could zip through tanks, walls or buildings with minimal damage but kill humans, usually by attacking their [central nervous system](#). It also minimized long-term nuclear contamination.

Ethicists questioned a weapon designed to destroy only life, but Cohen spent much of his life advocating for its adoption, saying the bomb's limited effects were a more moral alternative to other nuclear weapons.

"It's the most sane and moral weapon ever devised," Cohen told the New York Times in September. "It's the only [nuclear weapon](#) in history that makes sense in waging war. When the war is over, the world is still intact."

The Reagan administration worked on developing the weapon in the 1980s, and other nations including France and Russia are believed to have possessed them. But the neutron bomb was never widely embraced

as Cohen had hoped.

Paul Cohen couldn't immediately be located by The Associated Press and a listed for Samuel T. Cohen's Brentwood home was disconnected.

Born in Brooklyn, New York, Cohen went to college at the University of California, Los Angeles, graduating in 1943 and joining the army.

The army trained him in physics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and assigned him to work on the Manhattan Project to build the atomic bomb during [World War II](#). He worked on the calculations for Fat Man, the bomb dropped on Nagasaki, Japan.

After the war in a 1951 trip to Seoul, South Korea for the RAND Corporation, he saw a city largely destroyed by the Korean War, and later said in his memoirs that it provided the inspiration for the small-scale neutron bomb.

"If we are going to go on fighting these damned fool wars in the future, shelling and bombing cities to smithereens and wrecking the lives of their inhabitants," he wrote, "might there be some kind of nuclear weapon that could avoid all this?"

Cohen is survived by his wife Margaret, sons Paul and Thomas of Los Angeles and daughter Carla Nagler of New Mexico.

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