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A Mass Poison, Linked to C.I.A., Reported Found at Army Base

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 8—Two containers of a mass poison developed by the Central Intelligence Agency have been discovered hidden in a warehouse at Fort Detrick, Md., apparently in violation of a Presidential order, sources familiar with the matter reported today.

The poison material—apparently a toxin developed from shell fish—was preserved from destruction by a middle-level C.I.A. employe who disagreed with the Presidential order of 1969, these sources said.

When the C.I.A. reported the discovery to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, the committee adjudged it of such importance that it scheduled

public hearings beginning next Tuesday to examine why procedures for handling such material were apparently so lax. Senator Frank Church, chairman of the committee, announced the hearing last week, but has declined to disclose what the subject matter would be.

The committee reportedly also will seek to discover why the C.I.A. had been involved in developing the mass poison in the first place.

President Nixon ordered the

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limitation of chemical-biological warfare production, and research in November, 1969, and the destruction of stockpiles of certain toxins and biological agents and nerve gas and other chemical weapons. The military conducted the destruction with some fanfare. Privately, these sources said, the orders included materials held by intelligence agencies.

However, according to the sources familiar with the episode, a decision made by a middle-level C.I.A. employe preserved the two containers from destruction. These sources declined to say precisely how dangerous the material was, but did say that it could kill "masses of people." One source said that it could destroy the population of a small city.

The containers, these sources said, were discovered earlier this year by C.I.A. officials. The C.I.A., the sources said, reported the discovery to members of both the Senate committee and the House panel looking into the intelligence services and requested permission to destroy the material.

The Senate committee asked the agency not to destroy it until the committee could conduct hearings to determine why the "command and control" structure over such highly sensitive materials had broken down. The committee is expected to investigate also what role the C.I.A. had in research and production of toxic chemical and biological agents.

These sources said that Carl Duckett, the chief of the C.I.A.'s science and technology division, outlined the problems to the Senate committee in closed session last Friday.

Toxin Is Defined

A toxin is a poison generated by bacteria. Unlike a biological agent, it would affect only people who were directly exposed to it. It is not known what toxin is involved in this instance.

Neither officials of the C.I.A. nor a spokesman for the Senate committee had any comment on the reported discovery.

Earlier today, Senator Richard

S. Schweiker, Republican of Pennsylvania, who is a member of the committee, called for the Senate to reinvestigate the assassination of President Kennedy because of what he said was the possibility that Lee Harvey Oswald, Mr. Kennedy's assassin, and Jack Ruby, who killed Oswald, had connections with the C.I.A. and Federal Bureau of Investigation.

This afternoon, Senator Church and Senator John G. Tower, Republican of Texas and the committee's vice chairman, issued a joint statement in which they said that they had seen no evidence that undermined the conclusions of the Warren Commission.

"We do not think there is sufficient evidence to justify reopening the commission," they said.