

Chemical-Biological Warfare (CBW)

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT IT

by Derek Norcross

WASHINGTON, D.C.
One evening several months ago Congressman Richard McCarthy, 42, a Democrat from Buffalo, N.Y., was sitting with his attractive, honey-blond wife Gail in the living room of their suburban Maryland home.

They had just succeeded in putting to bed the last of their five children and were intently watching an NBC television program on chemical and biological warfare.

Gail McCarthy was horrified to learn that the U.S. was manufacturing poison gas and breeding germs that could annihilate entire populations.

After the program, Gail fixed her husband with an accusative look and said, "You're a Congressman. What do you know about all this?"

"Nothing," admitted McCarthy, a five-year veteran of Capitol Hill. "But I'll see what I can find out."

Next morning Dick McCarthy phoned two colleagues from New York—Reps. Otis Pike and Samuel Stratton, both members of the House Armed Services Committee—but they, too, admitted somewhat sheepishly that they didn't know very much about CBW (the official terminology for Chemical and Biological Warfare). They suggested that he check with the Army.

"I pursued the matter," McCarthy says, "because I represent half a million Americans, and I believe they're entitled to know how the Army is spending their money, what the Army is developing in the way of new weapons,

especially germs and gas."

Nowhere in the annual posture statement by the Secretary of Defense is CBW mentioned. Pentagon policy, in recent years, has been one largely of silence and secrecy.

Last summer, however, University of Colorado scientists complained that hundreds of tanks, filled with enough nerve gas to destroy the world, were stored dangerously above ground at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal near Denver. Supported by Denverites and their Congressman, they pressured the Army into moving the tanks. Most of the gas was shipped to Utah, whose Rep. Sherman Lloyd is "personally satisfied" that whatever dangers there may be are "remote dangers."

In October the CBS network telecast a two-parter on chemical and biological warfare. NBC then followed with a similar program. In April, *The New York Times* reported that the U.S. was spending hundreds of millions of dollars annually on the chemical and biological weapons program and keeping it a closely guarded secret.

'Changing public's mind'

In response to the public's growing concern with CBW—the concern is particularly evident on university campuses—the Pentagon has embarked on carefully arranged disclosures designed to curb potential anti-CBW feeling.

"We're in the process of changing the public's mind," one Pentagon spokesman informed a reporter. "We're

trying to acculturate the public to deal with reality. This is the government's responsibility."

In line with this new policy, the Army responded to McCarthy's inquiry by arranging for Brig. Gen. James A. Hebbeler, chief of CBW operations, to speak with interested Congressmen. On March 4th, Gen. Hebbeler briefed 19 members of the House.

"Frankly," says McCarthy, who served with the Navy in World War II and with the Army in the Korean War, "I didn't find the briefing very helpful. It didn't answer the questions of public policy."

McCarthy thereupon sent a list of questions to Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird, Secretary of State William Rogers, Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency Gerard Smith, Ambassador to the UN Charles Yost, and Dr. Henry Kissinger, Presidential Assistant for National Security Affairs.

He then made a speech about CBW on the floor of the House.

"I believe," he states, "that chemical and biological warfare activities are shrouded in unnecessary secrecy. I get the impression that the security curtain is parted only when it serves the advocates of the programs. I found the replies to my letters heartening in some respects but deeply disturbing in most others."

First, it is important to know that "the U.S. is not a party to any treaty, now in force, that prohibits or restricts the use in warfare of toxic or non-toxic gases,



Rep. Richard McCarthy and wife. He spearheads campaign to rip "shroud of secrecy" off U.S. CBW activities.

or smoke or incendiary materials or of bacteriological warfare."

In 1925 at a Geneva Disarmament Conference we suggested that the nations of the world join us in signing the Geneva Protocol outlawing the use in war of poison gas and death-dealing bacteria.

Most Americans, however, don't realize that the U.S., because of Senate obstruction, never signed the treaty. Nevertheless, American Presidents have repeatedly declared that the U.S. would not be the first to use poison gas and bacteriological warheads.

There is controversy over the use of various non-lethal gases in Vietnam such as CS, a powerful tear gas; CN, a milder tear gas, and DM, an irritant known as Adamsite gas. Some contend these are no more dangerous than the tear gases used for mob control and to rout out criminals by American police.

Soviet Russia, China, France, Germany, Great Britain—all signed and ratified the Geneva Protocol of 1925. By signing the treaty, however, none of these nations abdicated its right to establish research and development programs.

Pentagon explains

Pentagon spokesmen point out that

the military has the mission of protecting the U.S. against chemical and germ warfare. In order to develop antidotes to these lethal gases, the spokesmen said, they must keep up with Russians in researching CBW. They also claim there's nothing sinister in the secrecy, that CBW preparations are no more classified than nuclear and other military developments.

There is no doubt that Russia and China are both well equipped with CBW arsenals, although each country has declared it will never use such weapons offensively.

As for the U.S.—information is hard to come by. Reportedly the Pentagon has entered into CBW research arrangements with at least 40 universities in this country as well as with universities and laboratories in West Germany, Great Britain, Japan, and Belgium.

The London Times reported recently that the Pentagon had established 27 contracts with universities in Japan.

Le Tribune des Nations in France claimed that the Pentagon is working closely with German scientists in secret laboratories at Marburg, Oberpfaffenhofen and Hamburg.

The U.S. has a joint research agreement with Canada and Great Britain on the testing of poisonous gas and deadly bacteria, supposedly in the vicinity of

Suffield, Canada.

Our Army is known to be field-testing CBW agents in Panama, Hawaii, Greenland and Alaska. Chemical defoliation agents are field-tested in Thailand before use in South Vietnam.

Seymour Hersh, a former Pentagon reporter for the Associated Press, pro-

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PHOTO BY ANDREW SCHNEIDER



Maryland women in gas masks picket the White House to protest the work going on at Ft. Detrick. Their action reflects the public's growing concern with U.S. program.

vides an up-to-date report on CBW installations in the U.S. in his book, *Chemical and Biological Warfare: America's Hidden Arsenal*.

The major CBW bases in the U.S. are:

FT. DETRICK, MD. Located 50 miles northwest of Washington, D.C., this base is headquarters for the nation's biological war research program. The fort was set up here during World War II, cultivated brucellosis bacteria which causes undulant fever in man, gradually expanded to the point where it now reportedly employs some 500 researchers who experiment with viruses and various bacteria on animals. A large share of the nation's military experimentation on anti-crop agents and defoliants is conducted in a corner of the base where, behind high-wire fences, groups of scientists work industriously in a cluster of greenhouses.

PINE BLUFF, ARK. Opened in 1942, the base serves as packager and producer of smoke bombs, incendiary munitions, and riot-control agents. It is also the main center for the massive production and processing of biological agents. Germs are brewed, then loaded

into bombs, shells, and other munitions, then stored in more than 250 earth-covered vaults called "igloos." A few of these germs which are developed through mutations could wipe out the population over a wide area if they ever got loose. Yet there have been more than 720 accidents at Pine Bluff, at least half of them involving infectious organisms.

DUGWAY PROVING GROUND, UTAH. This base serves as a testing ground for nerve gas, other gases, many CBW agents. In March 1968, 6000 sheep perished on ranges near the Dugway test area. Until last month, the Army had never admitted that its nerve gas killed the animals, though it had paid hundreds of thousands of dollars in claims.

EDGEWOOD ARSENAL, MD. Oldest of the CBW bases, it dates back to World War I. Formerly used for the production of gas munitions, it changed over to a research and development center after World War II. Its scientists performed outstanding work on a German-developed nerve gas called Sarin, but are now hard at work on a variety

of chemical weapons. These, according to *The Detroit News*, are "tested on mice, animals and eventually human volunteers." Edgewood is now the final inspection center for all chemicals and chemical weapons, including such psycho-chemical incapacitants as LSD and others of similar nature.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN ARSENAL. This 17,750-acre base ten miles from Denver served as the main production facility for Sarin until 1957, when production was halted. The arsenal stays busy, however, filling rockets and bombs with the deadly nerve gas.

NEWPORT CHEMICAL PLANT, IND. This installation in peaceful farm country on the western edge of Indiana near Danville, Ill., is the Army's main production plant for VX, an imported nerve gas more effective than Sarin.

How much do these installations cost the American taxpayer? The Pentagon says \$350 million for fiscal year 1969; Congressional sources indicate the figure is closer to \$700 million.

A few questions posed by Sen. Gaylord Nelson (D., Wis.):

1. What are the official policies for

the use of CBW weapons in the event that they are used by a foreign aggressor against us?

2. Who makes the decision to deploy anthrax, the plague, or a lethal nerve gas?

3. What are the ground rules?

4. What have they been in the case of Vietnam?

5. What are the deterrent factors in a program of chemical and biological preparedness?

6. How do we militarily defend against a CBW attack?

7. If the purpose of our preparedness is to prevent surprise, what specific steps have been taken to detect a surprise?

8. What commitments have we taken toward a resolution of the chemical and biological arms race?

At the start of World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt delineated the American policy on chemical and biological warfare.

"Use of such weapons," he declared, "has been outlawed by the general opinion of civilized mankind. This country has not used them, and I hope we will never be compelled to use them. I state categorically that we shall under no circumstances resort to the use of such weapons unless they are first used by our enemies."

During World War II, in preparation for a possible threat by Nazi Germany, the U.S. began a research program on biological agents. In the atmosphere of the Cold War that followed, CBW research and stockpiling were accelerated.

In 1967 Cyrus Vance, then Assistant Secretary of Defense, told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee: "As long as other nations such as the Soviet Union maintain large chemical and bio-

logical warfare programs, we believe we must maintain our defensive and retaliatory capacities."

One of Senator Nelson's vital questions, unanswered by the government, is whether CBW agents are actual deterrents.

Aren't nuclear weapons a sufficient deterrent to prevent any nation from attacking the U.S. with chemical and biological weapons? Moreover, if the U.S. maintains CBW only in "defensive and retaliatory capacities," what is the explanation for the use of gas and

chemicals in Vietnam?

"Although we state that we adhere to the principles of the Geneva Protocol," says Congressman McCarthy, "we are using tear gas to help in killing the enemy in Vietnam, and we are using chemicals as an anti-food weapon and in such a way that they may well have a long-term destructive effect on the Vietnamese countryside. This latter policy seems unlikely to win the battle for the minds of the uncommitted in Vietnam.

"I ask: who is responsible for this change in our chemical and biological warfare policy? Did the President of the United States decide to use tear gas and defoliants? Did the military decide? Has Congress agreed to this change of policy? Do the American people accept this new policy as one in keeping with the principles and moral precepts of our Republic?"

A quart of death

The truth is that the American people know precious little about chemical and biological warfare. They do not know, for example, that the gas from a single bomb at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal, the size of a quart fruit jar, could kill, as one chemical warfare colonel explains, "every living thing in a cubic mile."

They do not know that between 1954 and 1962 there were more than 3500 accidents, minor and major, at Ft. Detrick. About 400 men were infected as a result. In one instance a worker caught pneumonic plague, a highly infectious disease. He also happened to work as a lifeguard at a swimming pool.

The public is woefully ignorant, and the Congress has been alarmingly negligent about CBW. Thanks to Rep. Richard McCarthy, however, and Sen. Gaylord Nelson, the Congress seems to be coming alive on the subject.

Says Nelson: "We... need to review the entire scope of chemical and biological warfare. What is significant is the cloak of secrecy which has surrounded our actions in CBW work. This cloak of secrecy must be removed."

If such efforts to clarify American policy on chemical and biological warfare prove successful, the nation will owe a debt of gratitude to Gail McCarthy, who said to her husband one night, "You're a Congressman. What do you know about all this?"