

GI a Victim of Chemical Weapon

Dugway, Utah

Exposure to a chemical warfare agent at Dugway Proving Grounds caused an army specialist to suffer yesterday from hallucinations of "colored beasts, butterflies and boxes." He was reported to be in serious condition.

Army officials said the incident was "an isolated case, an occupational hazard" and they would

continue disposing of the weapons at the Utah desert base.

SP-5 Ronald Mutchko was hospitalized after coming in contact with the agent BZ. He and another soldier were opening cluster bombs Thursday to determine what chemical agent was in them so they could be "demilitarized." Both men were wearing protective gloves.

Mutchko and Staff Sergeant

Richard Mahan were treated at the base hospital and then flown to University Medical Center in Salt Lake City. Mahan was released after 24 hours' observation. But Mutchko was listed in serious condition, suffering from hallucinations and periodically rapid heartbeat.

Dr. Tony Temple, director of the Intermountain Regional Poison Control Center, said BZ, which the

Army describes as a psycho-chemical incapacitating agent, caused hallucinations different from those caused by such drugs as LSD.

But he said Mutchko was "hearing voices of people who are not there" and seeing "colored beasts, butterflies and boxes."

Temple said the drug is chemically known as 3-guainundial-benzo-

late. If the soldier had gotten enough of the drug its effect could have been lethal, he said.

A nerve gas accident at Dugway in 1968 killed about 6500 sheep in remote Skull Valley. The Army later paid for the sheep, but never admitted responsibility for the accident.

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