

# NERVE GAS TESTS CURBED BY ARMY

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## Safety Restrictions Imposed After Deaths of Sheep

WASHINGTON, Dec. 20 (AP)

The Army adopted today stiffer safety measures for testing lethal nerve gases and other persistent chemical agents at its Utah proving ground.

The tighter safeguards were recommended by a nine-man committee of experts after 6,300 sheep died last March following Army tests of a chemical nerve agent at Dugway Proving Ground.

The Army has said investigations failed to turn up any conclusive evidence that the sheep died because of the gas. However, it has paid a claim of more than \$376,000 for the loss of the sheep.

The Army made public a 39-page report in which the special committee recommended restrictions on release height and particle size of chemical agents. It called for more reliable weather forecasting and consideration of wind speed in planning tests.

### Area Is Specified

"Large-scale testing of persistent lethal agents should be designed and executed in a manner which insures the depletion and dilution of the cloud within the controlled salt-flats area" northwest of the major test site, the report said.

"This restriction should remain until studies of vegetation, soils and wildlife and an increased Dugway meteorological capability indicate this restriction can be modified safely," the panel commented.

The committee of experts found that "current procedures and practices are sound and adequate for field-testing certain classes of chemical agents and munitions."

It recommended that testing of riot control, incapacitating and nonpersistent lethal agents and munitions be resumed without modification of current practices and safety procedures.

These are chemicals that either have low toxicity or dissipate into the air in minutes. They contrast with the persistent lethal agents that are highly toxic and remain effective for days.

### Wind Danger

The long-lived chemical agents and nerve gases cause concern because of the possibility that winds might carry them to populated areas or farmland beyond the test range.

The Army said earlier this year that large-scale testing of lethal chemical agents had been suspended.

While calling for tighter restrictions on testing big quantities of such agents, the report said testing in small amounts "not to exceed the equivalent of one artillery round, rocket or mine" should be resumed under existing safety practices.

In the Utah tests, the report said, the test-gas cloud should be confined to a specified sector and not cross U.S. Highway 40 for at least three hours.

It said no test should be conducted when thunderstorms were present or predicted in a 100-mile radius of the test path for at least eight hours.

The committee was headed by Dr. William H. Stewart, Surgeon General of the Public Health Service. Members included representatives of the Agriculture, Commerce and Interior Departments, the State of Utah, and the Surgeon General of the Army.