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Arms Control Agency Is Concerned

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U.S. Nerve Gas Plan Challenged

Washington

The Arms Control and Disarmament Agency is challenging the Army's plan to go ahead with production of a new type of nerve gas on the grounds that such a step is militarily unnecessary and would complicate international attempts to control chemical warfare.

It is doubtful that the agency, with a \$7 million annual budget, can prevail against an Army which wants to spend at least \$200 million producing the new nerve gas for its larger artillery shells.

But in the debate now building the agency is staking out a new advocacy role on weapons planning and in the process is raising within the councils of government some questions that academic analysts have posed about the new nerve gas.

In the past it has not been the custom for the Defense

Department to consult the Arms Control Agency about new weapons or for the agency to raise any questions that were heard within the Pentagon.

When the Army decided recently to produce a new binary type of nerve gas, Defense Department officials said no attempt was made to consult in advance with the Arms Control Agency. The explanation offered by Pentagon officials was that it was strictly a military question of modernizing the Army's chemical warfare weapons and presented no arms control implications.

But within academic and some congressional circles, the question was raised as to whether the binary gases, because of their ease of production, would not increase the danger of proliferation of chemical weapons to other nations and thus complicate attempts to

Amazon Road Finished

Brasilia

Brazil's transportation minister, Mario Andreazza, announced yesterday the completion of the Transamazon Highway, which cuts through the dense Amazon jungle. It took more than three years to build.

The road stretches for 3150 miles from Joao Pessoa, on the Atlantic coast, to the Peruvian border.

President Emilio G. Medici plans to open the Transamazon Highway officially before March 15.

Associated Press

ban chemical warfare.

The same question is now being raised within the gov-

ernment by Fred C. Ikle, a social scientist who took over as director of the Arms Control Agency last July.

With the agency no longer directing major arms control negotiations, there has been some concern in government and academic circles that the agency was being turned into a "think tank" with little influence on policymaking. But to Ikle, his challenge on the nerve gas issue is an example of how the agency can play an independent, advocacy role in presenting the arms control implications of various weapons programs.

The binary nerve gas consists of two separate chemical agents which only become lethal when combined, such as in an artillery shell after it has been fired. The two agents—one consisting of a compound resembling insecticides used in the home and the other an al-

cohol compound which can be purchased in the commercial market—are relatively easy to produce.

For the Army, one of the principal advantages of the binary gas is that it should relieve some of the public and congressional concern about the safety of storing and transporting the present nerve gases.

This potential advantage is conceded by Arms Control Agency officials, although

they question whether it will be sufficient to overcome the reluctance of European nations to have nerve gases stockpiled on their soil.

But the counter-argument being raised by arms control officials is that such a move by the Army may stimulate even semi-industrialized nations to acquire the binary gases at a time when the United States is attempting to negotiate a treaty to ban the proliferation of chemical weapons by banning their production.

New York Times