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# Services Want to Make New Poison Gas Bomb

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The Navy and Air Force want to develop a "binary bomb" containing deadly nerve gas to be used in retaliation for any similarly lethal chemical warfare attacks on U.S. military forces.

The so-called binary munitions—in which two non-toxic chemicals become a deadly combination when mixed together—have been a source of controversy in Congress for the past year.

That controversy, however, revolved around the Army's efforts to start production of artillery shells loaded with the new binary nerve gas.

Though Congress killed the Army's request for funds last year, the new military budget that went to Capitol Hill this week contains not only a renewed Army request for money but a Navy and Air Force request to start development of bombs that would also carry the gas.

First disclosure of the new bomb request came in a 202-page annual report on the overall U.S. military posture submitted to Congress Wednesday by Gen. George S. Brown, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

"The Navy has included a budget request for the development of a binary bomb which also will be used by the Air Force," Brown reported. Military sources say about \$2

million is included in the new budget for the project.

Another \$12.3 million is included to support renewed Army plans to begin building a production facility for the gases and to continue research work.

Under the 1925 Geneva Protocol, which the U.S. Senate ratified only last December, the United States joined with the other militarily important countries of the world in renouncing the "first use" of deadly chemical weapons. This, however, does not make it illegal to continue research and production of these weapons as means to retaliate against a chemical attack or, as the Pentagon argues, as a means to deter such an attack.

The United States, according to unofficial estimates, over the years has stockpiled some 50 million pounds of chemical munitions, much of it conventional nerve gas, which kills instantly.

The existing type of nerve gas is essentially a single chemical, and the Pentagon has argued that this gas—both in storage and contained in artillery shells—is much less safe than the new binary chemicals would be.

In the binary technique, two relatively harmless chemicals are kept separate, inside the artillery shells. They only become lethal when they are at the spinning of an artillery shell in flight.

In the newly proposed bomb, project sources claim, the two chemicals would be mixed only as the bomb fell from an airplane and not by the motion of planes taking off.

The Pentagon contends that the Soviet Union is the most well equipped military force in the world when it comes to chemical warfare, and the United States needs to keep pace in order to deter a chemical attack or be able to respond in kind.

But opponents have thus far stymied the Pentagon with a variety of arguments. They point out that any nation, such as the Soviet Union, that has a heavy investment in such weapons also has equipped her forces with defensive equipment against counter-attack, which makes chemicals a poor choice for retaliation.

It is argued that U.S. funds should go into defense equipment—masks, vaccines and special battlefield ponchos—rather than weapons.

Aside from the unlikelihood of a nerve gas attack, opponents argue that any use of such weapons would be a sign of desperation, quickly leading to the use of nuclear weapons.

Finally, a key argument of opponents of the Army plan was that it would probably cost \$250 million to produce the new shells and almost as much to destroy the old ones.