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# The KGB's Deadly Weapons

The Soviet Union's pitiless testing of deadly weapons on native populations has evoked memories of the Nazis' still-unpunished arch-criminal, Dr. Josef Mengele. Some who have conducted autopsies on the victims say the comparison may not be farfetched.

The Soviets have tested and perfected bombs that look like toys in Afghanistan, umbrella-fired poison pellets in London, "yellow rain" in Indochina and sophisticated torture techniques in Latin America. Like their Nazi counterparts, the Soviet weapons-testers carry out their experiments on helpless human guinea pigs. And like the Nazis, the Soviets take meticulous notes on their experiments, sending experts out in the field where the "live testing" has been conducted.

A particularly appalling example of the Soviets' callousness was contained in a top-secret National Security Agency report reviewed by my associate Dale Van Atta. It told of the Soviets' effort to sell the Indian army a new artillery pieces. The Russians invited a delegation of Indian military officers to visit Afghanistan and to watch the new gun in action against Afghan guerrillas. The Indians declined.

For nearly five years now, Afghanistan has been the Soviet military's bloody proving ground. Except for an occasional skirmish with the Chinese or the quick suppression of civilian uprisings in Eastern Europe, the war in Afghanistan has offered the Soviet

high command its first opportunity to test men and weapons in combat since World War II.

The weapons tried out in Afghanistan range from trucks built with American technology at the Kama River plant in the Soviet Union to Mi-24 helicopter gunships, used in both combat and police actions. The high-speed choppers can fire 6,000 rounds a minute and carry sophisticated gear for spotting targets on the barren hillsides where the Afghan guerrillas hide out.

A top-secret CIA report notes that until the Vietnam War, Soviet helicopters were "somewhat crude and aerodynamically inefficient, [lacking] the speed and maneuverability required for armed combat assault." But the Soviets observed the deadly effects of U.S. helicopters in combat and came up with the Mi-24. Its crews began training in 1975, and have been perfecting their killing skills in Afghanistan.

But as they have become bogged down in Afghanistan, the Soviets have resorted to less conventional weapons to discourage the guerrillas and cow their supporters in the villages. They have used chemical weapons to kill the rebels and poison their water supply, and they have dropped so-called "butterfly" mines in fields and roads.

The air-dropped mines are usually disguised as animal manure or clumps of vegetation. But the Soviets' Mengelian scientists have also devised miniature mines that are imbedded in stuffed ani-

mals and other toys, the CIA reports. Such mini-mines are not always lethal, but they can blow away an arm or leg of an Afghan child who picks one up.

In Laos, more than 20,000 Hmong tribesmen have died in the relentless bombardment by Soviet chemical agents known as "yellow rain." For once, the Soviets knew the toxic effects of the chemicals before they used them on the Hmong. They had already tested them on their own people.

A secret CIA report describes the specific tests of yellow rain substances done on prisoners in Soviet prison camps since World War II: "Soviet toxicity studies in humans involved addition of various doses of the toxic material to ground meat which was then fed to political prisoners, and the course of development of toxic effects was monitored."

For its urban battlefields—the sites for political assassination and similar terrorist attacks—the KGB prefers reliable, well-tested poisons that leave the appearance of a heart attack. For example, Soviet scientists first tested a potassium cyanide spray on dogs tied to trees. When perfected, the deadly spray was used to assassinate a Ukrainian émigré in Munich; the spray gun was hidden in a rolled-up newspaper. In London, a Bulgarian émigré was killed in 1978 with a poison pellet injected by the tip of an umbrella. He appeared to have suffered a heart attack.

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