

NEW YORK TIMES

9 MARCH 1982

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A-1

U.S. ACCUSES SOVIET OF POISONING 3,000

Says Use of Chemical Weapons on Afghans Violates Treaty

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, March 8—The Reagan Administration asserted today that Soviet forces had killed at least 3,000 people in Afghanistan with poison gas and other chemical weapons in violation of an international treaty the Soviet Union signed.

Deputy Secretary of State Walter J. Stoessel Jr. told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the information came from Afghan Army defectors who had been trained by the Soviet Union in chemical warfare and from refugees in Pakistan who purportedly were victims of chemical attacks.

"As a result of chemical attacks, 3,042 deaths attributed to 47 separate incidents between the summer of 1979 and the summer of 1981 have been reported," Mr. Stoessel said. He said the number was based on conservative analyses and was reliable.

A State Department intelligence official, Deputy Assistant Secretary Philip H. Stoddard, who accompanied Mr. Stoessel to the hearing, said, "We think the actual total of numbers killed by chemical weapons was considerably higher."

In his testimony, Mr. Stoessel said, "Analysis of all the information available leads us to conclude that attacks have been conducted with irritants, incapacitants, nerve agents, phosgene oxime and perhaps mycotoxins, mustard, lewisite and toxic smoke."

He said, "Afghan military defectors have provided information on chemical weapons containing lethal nerve agents, where they were stockpiled and where and when they have been used." Mr. Stoddard said some of the defectors were Afghan officers trained in chemical warfare by the Soviet Union.

Mr. Stoddard, in testimony and later in a telephone interview, said the sources of information included the defectors, refugees in Pakistan who said they had seen chemical attacks, doctors who said they had treated victims of chemical attacks, victims who said they had survived attacks and journalists who had been in Afghanistan.

He said, however, that they had no samples, no pictures and no cannisters or bombs. "Nobody can put on the table a projectile or bomb," he said, although the United States has been trying to obtain one.

Toll May Be Higher

"Since you don't have a sample," he said, "you look at the symptoms." He said that analysts took all the reports of chemical attacks, arranged them in clusters around an alleged incident, then checked the reports against each other in an effort to corroborate them.

Mr. Stoddard said reports not measuring up to stringent criteria were not used. He said further details would be made public later and the number of deaths might be twice the 3,042 reported today.

Mr. Stoddard also later cleared up confusion about Mr. Stoessel's testimony that the Soviet Union began the chemical attacks in the summer of 1979. The Soviet thrust into Afghanistan came on Dec. 27, 1979. Mr. Stoddard said that Afghan forces trained and equipped by the Soviet Union conducted the first few chemical attacks, but he said he did not know how many.

Mr. Stoessel said that the United States had brought up the issue of chemical warfare in Afghanistan with the Soviet Union several times at different levels, which he did not specify, and that Moscow had denied using the weapons.

A Change of Position for U.S.

The United States has several times accused the Soviet Union of using chemical weapons in violation of a pact signed in Geneva in 1925. But today's testimony, the officials said, was the most specific allegation made against the Soviet Union.

Publicizing information supporting the charges of Soviet use of chemical weapons in Afghanistan is a reversal for the Reagan Administration. Just last week officials in the Defense Intelligence Agency, in the International Security Agency in the Defense Department and in the State Department said they had no evidence that Soviet forces used chemical weapons in Afghanistan.

Why the position was changed was not clear. President Reagan has just decided that the United States will resume production of chemical weapons and has asked for a substantial increase in the military budget for such weapons.

To focus American attention on the Afghan situation, Mr. Stoessel said, President Reagan plans to sign a measure on Wednesday declaring the first day of spring Afghanistan Day. Afghans celebrate the day as the beginning of the new year.

Increase in Refugees Reported

Mr. Stoessel suggested that the number of Afghan refugees had increased from two million to three million in recent months. He said: "About three million Afghan refugees have fled their homeland seeking freedom, principally in neighboring Pakistan. Almost one-fifth of the pre-invasion population of Afghanistan—the largest group of refugees in the world—has so voted with its feet."

He also asserted, without citing a source, "There are thousands of political prisoners. We have frequent reports of torture, of summary executions and a long list of other violations which testify to the brutality of the Afghan regime and its Soviet masters."

Mr. Stoessel further testified, again without citing a source, that Soviet troops had recently subjected Kandahar, Afghanistan's second largest city, "to a savage artillery and air bombardment in which hundreds of innocent civilians lost their lives."

"After the bombardment," he continued, "Soviet forces entered the city and engaged in wanton looting and killing among the civilian population. Many of the city's buildings were severely damaged; two-thirds of its population fled."