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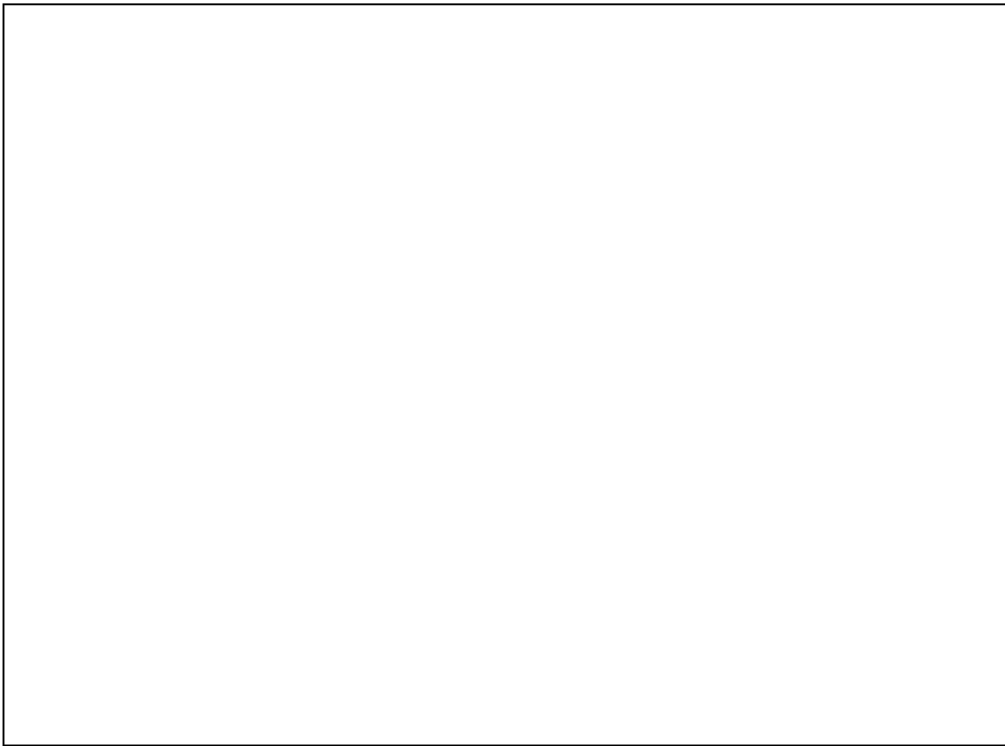
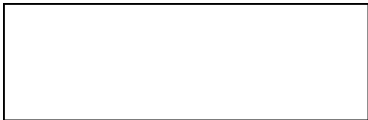
ETHIOPIA: USE OF CHEMICAL WARFARE AGAINST INSURGENTS

Ethiopian forces may have used lethal chemical agents against the Eritreans.

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ETHIOPIA: USE OF CHEMICAL WARFARE AGAINST INSURGENTS

Numerous reports concerning chemical warfare (CW) use in Ethiopia have been received since the late 1970s.

about 100 selected Cuban personnel were sent with CW reconnaissance and decontamination equipment on a CW training mission to Ethiopia.



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[redacted]  
[redacted]

Reporting [redacted] of Asmara, Ethiopia indicates that in 1977 the town was surrounded with CW-agent disseminators that could be activated from a central control point in case of an Eritrean attack. Also in 1977, the Somalians accused the Ethiopians of planning to use gas, but we do not know whether CW agents were used during this period. In [redacted] 1978, unconfirmed reporting indicated the Soviets had shipped nerve agents into Ethiopia. [redacted]

[redacted]  
[redacted]

reported that the Ethiopian Minister of Defense met with four Soviet generals in mid-1980 to discuss an extremely effective lethal chemical. The chemical was to be used only on remote camps of the Tigrean People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and in Eritrea. Ethiopian pilots were to be trained by the Soviets to fly MI-24 helicopters on offensive CW-dissemination missions. The helicopters and chemical agents reportedly were located in Mekele. The presence of the MI-24 helicopters at Mekele was confirmed [redacted]. During a major engagement in November 1980 in which the MI-24 helicopters were used against TPLF forces, no CW was reported. In September 1980, despite press reports that the Ethiopians were preparing to use toxic gas, Eritrean leaders reported there was no evidence that gas was used against their forces. Photographs taken by a Dutch photographer of a victim from an alledged CW attack in December 1980 or January 1981 showed skin lesions that appeared similar to those produced by trichothecene toxins. [redacted]

During a large-scale offensive by the Ethiopian military against the Eritreans in early 1982, the Eritrean People's Liberation Force (EPLF) charged that the Ethiopians fired nerve-gas-filled shells against the civilian population living in Tirukruk. The attack reportedly occurred on 15 February 1982. Other attacks using the same agent allegedly occurred in many areas on 16 February 1982. [redacted]

[redacted] a high-level Soviet official, Maj. Gen. Petrov, Chief of Soviet Ground Forces, met with Ethiopian officials in April 1982.

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[REDACTED]

Consultations reportedly were held on ways to strike at Somalia and to step up the faltering Ethiopian campaign in Eritrea. Discussions may have included the use of CW agents in Eritrea.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] there have been many chemical attacks using mainly irritant agents, such as tear gas, since February 1982; accordingly, many EPLF personnel are equipped with gas masks. [REDACTED] EPLF soldiers were exposed to a CW agent in the fall of 1982. Several soldiers were affected and one died even though they were equipped with gas masks. [REDACTED] the described symptoms and the post-mortem report indicated poisoning by lethal gas.

[REDACTED] Eritrean and European doctors treated [REDACTED] Eritrean gas victims. The symptoms included problems with eyesight, sleepiness, vomiting, and diarrhea, which were incurred by inhalation of a smoke-like gas cloud. No deaths were reported.

[REDACTED]

There have been numerous conflicting reports on the planned and actual use of CW agents by Ethiopians against Eritrean insurgents. Eritrean claims of lethal chemical attacks all have been denied by the Ethiopian Government, as well as by military officer deserters. Chairman Haile-Mariam Mengistu said in 1980 that he would never use chemicals against his own people. There are other examples of conflicting reports. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Some Sudanese officials have stated they were unaware of any CW use in Eritrea, contradicting other Sudanese charges that nerve-gas mortar shells were used. International Red Cross observers generally state that they do not believe lethal CW agents were used; however, the Norwegian Red Cross representative in Addis Ababa visited Eritrea to review conditions and did not reject the possibility of Ethiopian use of CW against Eritrean rebels. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Comment:

Ethiopian forces aided and supervised by Soviet advisors admittedly have used riot-control agents that produce eye irritation and vomiting. We believe it is possible, based on unconfirmed reports, that lethal chemical agents have been used against selected targets in the area controlled by the EPLF. We do not believe lethal CW agents have been employed against the Tigreans or the Somalians. [redacted]

The Soviets apparently are involved heavily in all aspects of CW in Ethiopia. We believe the Ethiopians do not have an in-country CW-production capability; however, they may have Soviet-supplied lethal chemicals and munitions, which probably would remain under Soviet control. Soviet and Cuban troops have provided CW training. [redacted]

[redacted]