
Defense Report

AUSA



Chemical Warfare—We Have No Credible Deterrent

Because the United States has a long-standing policy of “no first use” of chemical weapons, we maintain a chemical stockpile only to deter enemy use of this most abhorrent form of warfare. To be effective in this deterrent role, the stockpile’s retaliatory capability must be modern, sufficient and credible. Unfortunately, this is not the case today when:

- The United States has not manufactured any new chemicals to maintain its stockpile since imposing a unilateral freeze on manufacture in 1969.

- Most of the chemicals in our stockpile are in bulk containers with no existing means of either loading them into munitions or delivering them to targets.

- Most of our stock is highly corrosive and presents a steadily growing problem, both in terms of safety and reliability.

- Only *ten percent* of the total chemical agent in our stockpile is packaged in useful munitions; even then the Army must conduct a continuous program to destroy defective weapons and neutralize bulk chemical agents stored in leaking containers.

In short, the American chemical warfare stockpile, already too small and obsolete to represent a credible deterrent in the face of massive Soviet superiority, is steadily shrinking.

The Army has requested funds to permit the manufacture of binary chemical munitions, which consist of two industrial chemicals in separate containers that are mixed to produce a lethal chemical agent only after the munition has been fired at the enemy. Their shelf life is very long, and they present no hazard while in storage because they are no more toxic than normal commercial household insecticides. They will provide the modern, effective and credible retaliatory capability we require with a smaller overall stockpile.

As long as the Soviet Union has large stockpiles of chemical weapons and the very apparent intent to use them to further their military goals, the United States must do whatever is necessary to reconstitute a deterrent which is credible to both our allies and our enemies. A facility to produce binary munitions is the irreplaceable first step in meeting that national need.