

Chemical Deterrence

—Is a treaty enough?

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The President of the United States has clearly defined one major policy goal as the attainment of a multilateral, verifiable ban on the production, storage, and use of chemical weapons. Achievement of this noble undertaking would unquestioningly benefit all mankind. The United States has remained steadfast in its continued drive toward this objective for a number of years.

The introduction of a draft multilateral proposal in Geneva in 1984 and the bilateral efforts initialed in 1989 and 1990 with the Soviet Union serve as clear indicators that this is one policy goal which is much more than simply idle rhetoric.

The ultimate question of whether any multilateral ban could ever be effectively verified remains an open question subject to much study and debate. It should not be totally inconceivable that diplomatic and political requirements could override purely military concerns. In order to attain even a modest degree of international acceptance, it may be that we will end with accepting something significantly less than total verification.

We may well have less than perfect assurance against undetected "treaty breakout" by another nation. Past efforts at international controls such as

the Biological Warfare Convention of 1975 and nuclear non-proliferation treaties are classic examples of agreements which, by realistic necessity, fall somewhat short of their ideal goal. This could also happen in an effort to achieve a multilateral chemical warfare ban.

Therefore, the United States must maintain a cautious approach toward implementing basic policy changes as a result of any such treaty. The defense establishment, in particular, must ensure that we do not, in our enthusiasm to conclude a multilateral agreement, blindly assume away any potential threat and thus, by default, place our forces at undue risk. For many years we have effectively based our approach to chemical warfare on a concept of deterrence relying on the two equally supporting tenants of a strong defensive posture and a viable ability to retaliate in kind.

As the international scene has continued to undergo tremendous change, we are starting to find, within those changes, challenges to what was previously unquestioned dogma. Our overall approach to chemical warfare deterrence is being affected by significant changes in political, diplomatic, and world events.

With the signing of a bilateral

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Soviet Union concerning the exchange of chemical stockpile information and the initialing of a bilateral destruction agreement in June 1990, the United States has taken major steps down the road toward changing our underlying approach to chemical deterrence. We had already made a commitment under Public Law to destroy our aging stockpile of unitary munitions. Our intent was to replace them with a smaller, safer, more versatile, and more effective binary stockpile.

However, efforts in that direction have been effectively terminated, at the direction of the Secretary of Defense, in the spirit of the bilateral agreement initiated by Bush and Gorbachev in June 1990. Our binary production efforts have been halted and facilities are being prepared for layaway and ultimately potential destruction, once a multilateral ban is achieved. This fundamental change in policy has shifted the major burden for chemical deterrence onto our chemical defense posture alone.

Reliance on a strong chemical defensive posture as our principal means of deterring chemical use against our forces is a difficult course to maintain. Our aim must be to clearly

demonstrate that our protective equipment and training are such that a potential enemy cannot gain tactical advantage by the use of chemical weapons against us. While many may question the validity of defense alone being an effective deterrent, none can challenge the need to strengthen emphasis on both training and equipping our forces.

Conflict in Southwest Asia has highlighted the potential risks in the world today from chemical weapons. While our television screens were filled with scenes of reporters wearing protective masks, experts literally sprang from every corner in their zeal to explain the peculiarities of chemical warfare to the American public. Too often this has had a tendency to alarm and confuse, rather than enlighten.

For the Chemical Corps, the mission remains very clear. Within the structure provided by the six underlying imperatives laid out by the Chief of Staff of the Army, a corps of experts must be developed and trained to ensure that the Army remains a ready and capable force, undaunted by the specter of the use of chemical warfare by an unscrupulous enemy. Adherence to these fundamental imperatives of quality personnel, realistic doctrine, appropriate force structure, tough, realistic training, continued modernization, and competent confident leaders has provided the foundation which allowed us to rapidly deploy a massive, capable force which can operate effectively, even in a contaminated environment.

These imperatives will not change simply because a multilateral chemical ban is achieved. Yet, the danger from complacency and unpreparedness, coupled with the relative ease with which an enemy could develop a chemical warfare capability, combine to reinforce our need for a strong and ready defensive posture. Simply stated, this translates into a continuing need for a strong and viable Chemical Corps.

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As we try to look beyond immediate requirements and project needs on toward the turn of the century, the Army will need to define some type of "avenue of approach" to ensure that all its various elements reach the same ultimate objective. It will not serve the soldier well if our efforts in chemical defense are developed totally in isolation from changes taking place elsewhere in the Army. The six imperatives provide us with clear guidelines defining the attributes we want maintained for our Army, but how do we get there? The Chief of Staff has identified three essential characteristics, serving as road signs, to direct the Army's evolution toward the year 2000.

The Chief has stressed that the Army of the future must display versatility, deployability, and lethality. For the Army as a whole to display these characteristics, so must each and every element. With our shift toward defense as the cornerstone of our chemical deterrence policy, it is more important than ever we ensure our chemical defense program also follows these guidelines. Failure to do so could have grave impacts on the Chemical Corps and the Army as a whole.

Versatility

Versatility refers to an ability to respond to a range of challenges, in a variety of locations, and under many situations, most involving joint operations. For chemical defense this means we must not be lulled into focusing only on what we know from the past. We must be alert to the development of new and novel approaches to chemical

warfare, either from terrorist and insurgency organizations, or emerging Third World military powers.

Lacking a guarantee of a perfect verification scheme, we must maintain an aggressive development program. We need to ensure that our troops are provided with the very best defensive equipment available. We need to aggressively seek technological breakthroughs in the areas of individual and collective protection in order to minimize the operational degradations we would suffer if chemical weapons were ever used against our forces. We must not neglect any element of our focus, either heavy or light.

We must make a determined effort to find a detection system which is simple to operate, simple to maintain, and simple to interpret. And we must not do this in isolation. The likelihood of the Army commencing combat operations without our sister services is zero. We must increase our level of cooperation and commonality of equipment, still recognizing full well the unique requirements of each service.

Deployability

The second characteristic, deployability, applies most directly to our force structure. We must make sure that we have the right types of units and the right types of equipment. It is not realistic to assume the support necessary for a heavy division will automatically be equally effective for a light force. Dual- and tri-purpose units will become the norm rather than the exception.

The major benefit would be to make chemical forces more deployable by removing many of the problems of setting priorities to allocate space to unique single-mission units. A unit that can either make smoke or do decontamination is much more likely to find itself early on the TPFDL (Time-Phased Force Deployment List).

We also must concentrate on ensuring that our equipment is developed with an eye toward deployability. Chemical equipment that is large and heavy would be forced to compete with major combat systems for transportation space, and can be expected to lose that priority battle every time. Furthermore, we must review our balance between active and reserve forces. We must ensure that we have at least adequate representation of each type unit in the active structure, and at the same time ensure that our units in the reserves will be fully equipped. For the chemical defense community, a Total Army concept is the only way to go.

Lethality

Finally, we must focus on lethality, for chemical defense that translates into effectiveness. We have done an excellent job of explaining the impact of chemical defensive measures on heavy forces through the CANE (Combined Arms in a Nuclear/Chemical Environment) tests. We need to make sure that our equipment, as it is developed, offers a significant "value added" to the force.

Thus, in an indirect way, we can make our contribution to lethality. We must look hard at our decontamination capability and find ways to improve it by reducing the time required to accomplish that mission, or have protective equipment which

will allow us to "fight dirty." If we are successful, the chemical forces will have increased their "lethality" and we will have taken a major step toward establishing a meaningful deterrence based on a defensive posture alone.

Our national goal remains to continue our efforts toward the attainment of a multilateral ban on chemical weapons. This is a moral ideal that clearly deserves our utmost efforts. Unfortunately, a ban which can be fully monitored and verified and will preclude violations or cheating may be a far too idealistic goal. We cannot rely on an international treaty alone to deter the use of chemical weapons against our forces.

The fact that these weapons are within the capability of virtually every nation, para-military organization, or terrorist group in the world forces us to be aggressive in maintaining a strong

defensive posture. We must never permit the near-sighted to force us to allow our defensive posture to atrophy. The risks are simply too great. We must push forward the boundaries of technology. We cannot be satisfied with only what has worked in the past. We must seek new methods, new materials, new ideas, and new concepts.

Only with a visible and aggressive program, highlighted by a strong and healthy chemical defense establishment, can we hope to maintain a meaningful deterrence and continue to hold the hope that no American soldier will ever be placed at undue risk by chemical weapons. Both the military and industry must work together. The requirements must be clearly defined and the best efforts must be put forth. We owe this to our soldiers, our Army, and our Nation.

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