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## FW: [BWPP DF] 'Yellow rain' fuels chemical weapons fears

2 messages

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Milton Leitenberg <mleitenb@umd.edu>

Mon, Nov 28, 2011 at 9:41 AM

To: Matthew Meselson <msmeselson@gmail.com>, "Elisa D. Harris" <harrise@umd.edu>, Martin Furmanski <martinfurmanski@aol.com>

FOR YOUR AMUSEMENT

-----Original Message-----

From: [forum@bwpp.org](mailto:forum@bwpp.org) [mailto:[forum@bwpp.org](mailto:forum@bwpp.org)]

Sent: Friday, November 25, 2011 11:15 PM

To: Milton Leitenberg

Subject: [BWPP DF] 'Yellow rain' fuels chemical weapons fears

By: JP Zanders

On: 26.11.11 04:12

'Yellow rain' fuels chemical weapons fears

By NAW NOREEN

Published: 25 November 2011

<http://www.dvb.no/news/%E2%80%98yellow-rain%E2%80%99-fuels-chemical-weapon-fears/18917>

A mysterious yellow rain that has fallen on a township close to a conflict zone in Burma's northern Kachin state has triggered alarm among locals, some who fear Burmese troops could be using chemical weapons in their assaults on Kachin rebels.

Witnesses say the substance has burned holes through vegetation, sparking concerns that humans could also be affected.

The reports first emerged last week in a Kachin News Group (KNG) article that quoted residents of Mai Ja Yang village, close to the Kachin Independence Army's Brigade 3 headquarters near the border with China, as saying the "yellow rain" had fallen for two consecutive days.

Another Mai Ja Yang local told DVB yesterday that the mysterious substance had turned vegetables "yellowish around the parts affected but didn't completely kill them. We are afraid to eat them. Now we are just using water from wells," he said.

Other images carried by local media show leaves pockmarked with holes where the substance has burnt through. Droplets that landed on the ground have left a thick yellow stain.

A man from Prang Ngawn village near Mai Ja Yang, which lies west of an area of Kachin state where fighting has been ongoing for weeks, said in an email yesterday that more had fallen on Tuesday evening.

"Last night around 11pm one villager hears the plane noise and looked at the sky and saw the plane fly over Prang Ngawn village. After 10 [minutes] later she hears sound and drops the liquid. This morning all the leaves from vegetable farm have yellow drop and the hole on leaves. The leaves where the white liquid drop areas have a hole and burnt the corner."

It is not the first time this year that Burmese have alleged use of chemical weapons by the army: in June

soldiers from the Shan State Army claimed that shells fired at a military base during an assault by Burmese troops left them feeling dizzy and nauseous.

Although not independently verified, they mirror reports of alleged chemical weapons use elsewhere in Burma. A 2005 report by Christian Solidarity Worldwide found circumstantial evidence that the Burmese army had fired mustard gas shells as Karenni Army troops, leaving them vomiting and unable to walk.

Similarly the Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG) said that in both 1992 and 1995 during major offensives against the Karen National Union (KNU), "many [Karen] soldiers... spoke of suffering from 'dizziness, nausea, vomiting and unconsciousness' after inhaling the vapours emitted from shells".

Independent analysis of the recent reports of yellow rain has not been carried out. A team of environmentalists, including former Greenpeace staff member Faith Doherty, discovered a similar substance near to a base of the rebel New Mon State Party close to Burma's border with Thailand in 1993 that showed up after a propeller plane had flown overhead. Another member of that group, Steve Green, recalled that, "One of the soldiers in the camp said he had scraped up [the yellow substance] and put them on some food he gave one of the dogs, which he said died within a day after".

Chit Ko Ko Kyaw, the director of the Myanmar Department of Meteorology and Hydrology, told DVB in an interview that it could be due to a weather phenomenon caused when dust kicks up into the atmosphere. He said various infrastructural projects in India and Bangladesh may be unleashing quantities of dust, that when mixed with the cold temperatures found in the mountainous Kachin state creates a thick, slushy substance "leaving some sort of silt-like [stains] when they dry up".

The yellow rain phenomenon famously appeared in the 1970s when members of the US-backed Hmong army in Laos accused the Soviet-allied Laotian government of attacking them with chemical weapons that produced an oily, yellow substance that rained down on villages.

While many complained of neurological and physical problem resulting from the rain, a number of the samples sent for testing in the US turned out to be bee faeces. A subsequent UN investigation was inconclusive.

Interestingly, a number of locals in Mai Ja Yang have reported that thousands of bees left their hives when the yellow rain fell. "We went out and peered at the Intensive English Program (IEP) School where there is a bee hive behind the school," a local told KNG shortly after rain fell on Sunday last week. "After the rain stopped all the bees disappeared."

No confirmation that the Burmese army uses chemical weapons has ever been made, although a Defence Intelligence Agency survey in 1993 claimed that Burma has "chemical weapons and artillery for delivering chemical agents." A US intelligence official reported similar claims to Congress in 1988 and 1991.

Additional reporting by Francis Wade.

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