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E.O. 12066: GDS 4/21/86 (ARCHARD, F.) OR-M  
TAGS: MOPS AF, UR SHUM, PK  
SUBJECT (C) USE OF CHEMICAL AGENT IN AFGHANISTAN

1. (C) - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SUMMARY. CONSUL AND PRESS CORPS HVE TALKED WITH MANY ALLEGED VICTIMS OF CHEMICAL WARFARE. IT APPEARS LIKEL THAT SOVIETS HAVE BEEN USING NON-LETHAL CHEMICAL AGENT IN BORDER AREAS NEAR PAKISTAN. USE SEEMS TO ACCOVPNY ATTACKS ON INSURGENTM CREDIBLE DESCRIPTIONS OF EFFECTS ON VICTIMS ARE DIFFICLT TO OBTAIN, BUT THOSE ONE CAN EXTRACT STRESS TEMPORARY LOSS OF SCONSCIOUSNESS AND INCAPACITATION. MAJOR LOCAL HOSPITAL REPORTS NO GASSING VICTIMS. I HAVE COME UP WITH SEVERAL POSSIBLE LEADS ON PHYSICAL EVIDENCE OF CW, ALTHOUGH EACH DOULD EASILY RELATE TO SOMETHING ELSE. TWO SEPARATE UNKNOWN SUBSTANCES ARE BFING POUCHED TODIA BY SUPPORT FLIGHT APRIL 24. END SUMMARY.

3. ACCOUNTS OF THE USE BY SOVIET TROOPS OF CHEMICAL AGENTS AGSINST AFGHAN INSURGENTS PERSIST HERE. IN THE PAST FEW WEEKS, I HAVE TALKED PERSONALLY TO MANY INDIVIDUALS WHO CLAIM TO HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY GAS. OTHER AFGHANS SAY THEY HAVE SITNESSED THE EFFECTS OF GAS ON OTHERS. FURTHER,

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

REVIEWED BY Swlook DATE 4/17/88

( ) RELEASE ( ) DECLASSIFY  
( ) EXCISE ( ) DECLASSIFY in PART  
( ) DELIV ( ) Non responsive info.

FOI, EO or PA exemptions (b)(6)  
CIA (u)(3)(G)(3) TS authority to: OADR

( ) CLASSIFY as \_\_\_\_\_  
( ) DOWNGRADE TS to ( ) S or ( ) C, OADR

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A LARGE CORPS OF FOREIGN JOURNALISTS HAVE BEEN ACTIVELY PURSUING THE MATTER ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BORDER. COLLECTIVELY, THEY HAVE INTERVIEWED A GREAT MANY PERSONS, AND SEVERAL HAVE PASSED ON THE GIST OF THEIR TALKS.

4. WHAT EMERGES FROM ALL OF THIS IS THE STRONG IMPRESSION THAT, OVER THE PAST MONTH OR MORE, THE SOVIETS HAVE BEEN USING A NON-LETHAL CHEMICAL AGENT AGAINST INSURGENTS IN THE BORDER AREAS. CURRENTLY, FIGHTING IS TAKING PLACE IN KUNAR AND NANGARHAR PROVINCES, AS IT HAS SPORADICALLY SINCE LAST FEBRUARY. COMBAT GENERATES REFUGEES, WHO TALKS TO ESTERNERS HERE, OR IT PULLS JOURNALISTS ACROSS THE BORDER WHERE THEY MEET THE NATIVES. ALL THOSE WHO ALLEGE THE USE OF CHEMICAL AGENTS COUPLE IT WITH COMBAT SITUATIONS.

5. ACCOUNTS HAVE AN AMAZING CONSISTENCY -- THAT SOVIET ATTACKS ON INSURGENT-HELD AREAS ARE ALWAYS BLITZES BY COMBINED ARMS -- ATTACK AIRCRAFT, HELICOPTERS, ARMORED ELEMENTS, ARTILLERY AND (SOMETIMES) PARACHUTE TROOPS. THE FIREPOWER SOUNDS OVERWHELMING. OFTEN, INSURGENTS AND NON-COMBATANTS SAY, CHEMICAL AGENTS ARE USED AS PART OF THE ASSAULT.

6. I FIND IT MADDENINGLY DIFFICULT TO EXTRACT CREDIBLE DESCRIPTIONS OF THE EFFECTS ON INDIVIDUALS. IN PART, I SUSPECT, THIS OWES TO CULTURAL HABITS, WHICH DO NOT TEND TO PRODUCE GOOD OBSERVERS. IN PART, IT OWES TO INDIVIDUALS BEING SO OVERWHELMED BY THE ATTACKS THAT THEY WERE MUCH TOO DISTRACTED AND BUSY TO PAY ATTENTION. IN SOME CASES, ALLEGED VICTIMS ASSERT THAT GASSING IS ONLY A MINOR MATTER, AND ASK THAT I CONCENTRATE ON IMPORTANT AFFAIRS, SUCH AS PROVIDING THEM WITH GUNS. ONE MAN, WHO HAD JUST LOST MUCH OF HIS FAMILY TO A RUSSIAN ATTACK, WAS ENRAGED THAT I WOULD PERSIST ON THIS UNIMPORTANT THEME. SO IT GOES.

7. NONETHELESS, A COMMON PATTERN DOES EMERGE FROM THE RESPONSES. INDIVIDUALS AFFECTED BY CHEMICAL AGENTS ARE OFTEN REPORTED AS BEING INCAPACITATED FOR HOURS, IF NOT FOR DAYS, BY THE LOSS OF THE USE OF THEIR LIMBS. OFTEN, THEY REPORT LOSS OF CONSCIOUSNESS FROM TWO TO

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EIGHT HOURS. EYES ARE ALMOST ALWAYS SAID TO TEAR AND  
NONSENSES TO RUN. FEW INDIVIDUALS REPORT SENSATIONS OF  
CHOKING. NO ONE CLAIMS THAT HIS SKIN HAS BEEN AFFECTED.  
EFFECTS OF THE AGENT ARE NEVER SAID TO PERSIST FOR  
MORE THAN A WEEK, AND, IN MOST CASES, SEEM NOT TO LAST  
MORE THAN 24 HOURS. MANY PERSONS CLAIM TO HAVE COUNTERED  
THE EFFECTS BY PLACING A WET CLOTH OVER THEIR FACES, OR  
JUMPING INTO STREAMS.

8. I HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO LOCATE ANY GASSING VICTIMS WHO  
HAVE BEEN HOSPITALIZED IN THIS AREA. I DISCUSSED THE MATTER  
ON APRIL 16 WITH BRIGADIER NAWAB KHAN, DIRECTOR OF THE  
LEADING PROVINCIAL HOSPITAL, KHYBER TEACHING, KHYBER HAS  
BEEN TREATING A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF WAR CASUALTIES SINCE  
THE INSURGENCY BEGAN. CURRENTLY, THE BRIGADIER REPORTS,  
35 PCT OF THEIR OUTPATIENTS ARE AFGHANS. STILL, HE KNEW OF  
NO GAS VICTIMS AMONG THEM. HE TURNED ME OVER TO A  
SUBORDINATE WHO TOOK ME AROUND THE WARDS TO MEET WOUNDED  
AFGHANS, WHOM THE SUBORDINATE THOUGHT MIGHT INCLUDE GAS  
VICTIMS. NONE, HOWEVER, OF THE PERSONS I TALKED WITH HAD  
BEEN SO AFFECTED.

9. I HAVE DISCUSSED THE SUBJECT IN DETAIL WITH MANY  
JOURNALISTS OVER THE PAST FEW WEEKS. MOST SEEM TO HAVE

CONCLUDED THAT NON-LETHAL CHEMICAL AGENT IS CURRENTLY  
BEING USED IN EASTERN AFGHANISTAN. USE WOULD APPEAR  
TO BE TACTICAL -- TO INCAPACITATE INSURGENTS FOR LONG  
ENOUGH TO OVERRUN THEIR POSITIONS. POSSIBLY, SOME  
NEWSMEN THINK, PERSONS WHO ARE TRAPPED IN CLOSE QUARTERS  
MAY GET AN OVERDOSE AND DIE. MOST OBSERVERS CONCLUDE  
THAT OUTWARD EFFECTS OF CA DISAPPEAR WITHIN A FEW HOURS,  
OR AT MOST A FEW DAYS. AS CONCERNS THE MOST RECENT  
FIGHTING NEAR THIS BORDER, MY FINDINGS AGREE WITH THE  
JOURNALISTS.

10. THESE FINDINGS ARE, OF COURSE, AT ODDS WITH THOSE  
REPORTED EARLIER, WHICH FOCUSED ON BADAQSHAN, WHERE  
NUMEROUS DEATHS WERE SAID TO HAVE OCCURRED. IT WOULD  
SEEM POSSIBLE, THOUGH, THAT AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT AGENT  
WAS USED IN THAT RELATIVELY INACCESSIBLE AREA. THE

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SOVIETS KNOW, HOWEVER, THAT THE KUNAR-NANGARHAR AREA IS SO ASWARM WITH FOREIGN NEWSMEN THAT USE OF LETHAL CHEMICAL AGENT COULD NOT BE CONCEALED.

11. I AM STILL TRYING TO COME UP WITH PHYSICAL EVIDENCE OF CA USE. SEVERAL OF MY CONTACTS AMONG THE INSURGENTS KNOW OF MY INTEREST, AND I KEEP HOPING THAT THIS WILL LEAD TO WHAT WE WANT. LAST WEEK, A FRENCH PHOTOGRAPHER ON CONTRACT TO AP TOOK PICTURES OF A CYLINDRICAL OBJECT WITH CYRILLIC CHARACTERS IN KUNAR PROVINCE. UNFORTUNATELY, HE LEFT THE OBJECT WHERE IT WAS FOUND. HE DESCRIBES IT AS ABOUT A FOOT IN LENGTH AND THREE INCHES IN DIAMETER. AS ONE END WAS IRREGULAR, IT APPEARED TO HAVE BEEN A PIECE OF A LONGER OBJECT. THE DEVICE WAS MADE OF WHITE PLASTIC LINED WITH ALUMINUM. IT WAS FILLED WITH AN UNKNOWN POWER. I WONDER IF IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN PART OF AN AIR-TO-GROUND ROCKET? POSSIBLY, THOUGH, ITS USE RELATES TO CW.

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13. [ ] WAS TO LEAVE FOR KUNAR ON APRIL 20, USING SAME GUIDE WHO ACCOMPANIED THE FRENCHMAN. I HAVE ASKED THAT THE AMERICAN RETRIEVE THE CYLINDER, IF HE CAN LOCATE IT.

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14. ANOTHER POSSIBLE LEAD IS A CHEMICAL SUBSTANCE WHICH I GAVE ME APRIL

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[ ] REGARDS HIMSELF AS AN AUTHORITY ON MILITARY SUBJECTS. SUBSTANCE HE GAVE ME IS A SMALL CYLINDER ABOUT 1/4TH INCH IN DIAMETER, WITH A HOLLOW CORE. MY PIECE IS ONLY ONE INCH LONG BUT IS SAID TO HAVE COME FROM ONE ABOUT A FOOT IN LENGTH. ACCORDING TO A BRITISH PHOTOGRAPHER WHO BROUGHT THE

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BROWN-COLORED SUBSTANCE ACROSS THE BORDER, THE OBJECTS  
ARE DROPPED BY THE THOUSANDS FROM AIRCRAFT, THEN  
IGNITED BY BOMBS OR ROCKETS. COULD IT BE THAT THIS  
IS THE SUBSTANCE WHICH FUNCTIONS LIKE NAPALM WHICH WE  
HAVE HEARD ABOUT POSSIBLY. REPORT  
HAVING BECOME ILL AS A RESULT OF HIS EXPERIEMENTS WITH  
THE SUBJECT. HE GINITED A COUPLE OF SMALL PIECES WHICH  
BURNED WITH A DISPROPORTIONATELY LARGE FLAME. SUBSEQUENTLY,  
BOTH HE AND HIS COMPANION BECAME ILL WITH NAUSEA AND  
DIARRHEA. WONDERS IF THE  
SUBSTANCE COULD BE A CHECMICAL AGENT WITH A FUNCTION  
SIMILAR TO THAT OF CS GAS. I HAVE TURNED THE SAMPLE OVER  
TO THE DEFENSE ATTACHE'S OFFICE IN ISLAMABAD FOR SHIPMENT  
TO DIA, WASHINGTON. IT SHOULD LEAVE ISLAMABAD BY  
SUPPORT FLIGHT APRIL 24.

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15. EARLIER, I AME ACROSS ANOTHER CHECMICAL SUBSTANCE  
WHICH MAY RELATE TO CW. THIS IS A SET OF SPLIT RINGS,  
ABOUT THREE INCHES IN DIAMETER AND ABOUT 1/64TH INCH  
THICK. COLOR IS LIGHT BROWN. THE OVERALL APPEARANCE IS  
THAT OF MACHINERY GASKETS. HOWEVER, THE OBJECTS ARE  
STITCHED INTO LIGHT CLOTH BAGS, ABOUT FIVE PER BAG.  
SEVERAL BAGS ARE CONTAINED IN A BROWN, ROUND, CARDBOARD  
CONTAINER WHICH HAD BEEN SEALED WITH BLACK PITCH.  
A DUTCH PHOTOGRAPHER WHO PICKED UP MATERIAL IN  
NANGARHAR PROVINCE, SOLD IT TO ME. HE SEEMED TO  
THINK IT WAS USED AS AN INCENDIARY, AND BURNED A  
PIECE TO DEMONSTRATE (IT BURNS VERY EASILY). I WNDER,  
HOWEVER, IF IT COULD POSSIBLY HAVE SOME FUNCTION AS A  
GAS MASK FILTER. I HAVE ALSO TUNED MATERIAL OVER TO  
DAO FOR SHIPMENT TO DIA ON SUPPORT FLIGHT.  
ARCHARD

END OF MESSAGE

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