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*** Current Classification *** UNCLASSIFIED
*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

<<<<**** SAS DOCUMENT HEADER ****>>>>

DOC_NBR= 82STATE037114

FILM= D820075-0944

DATE= 11 FEB 82

TYPE= TE

FROM= STATE

DRAFTER= PC:SPS:FHESS

OFFICE= ORIGIN PA

TO= SECRETARY

CHANNEL= n/a

ORIGHAND= n/a

ORIGPHAND= n/a

ORIGCLASS= UNCLASSIFIED

ORIGPCLASS= n/a

EO= N/A

SUBJECT= ABC NIGHTLINE: "CHEMICAL WARFARE" - 2/10/82

REFERENCE= n/a

CONTROL_NBR= n/a

ENCLOSURE= n/a

LOCATOR= TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM

ERRORS= N/A

CONCEPTS= CHEMICAL WARFARE, PRESS COMMENTS, MILITARY TRAINING, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS, ALLEGATIONS

TAGS= SOPN, PARM, UR, US

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Dept. of State, RPS/IPS, Margaret P. Grafeld, *MPG*
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Date 2/22/99 Exemption _____

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E.O. 12065: N/A

TAGS: SOPN

SUBJECT: ABC NIGHTLINE: "CHEMICAL WARFARE" - 2/10/82

1. GUESTS ON TONIGHTS PROGRAM WERE: RICHARD PEARLE,
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE AND DR. MATTHEW MESELSON,
HARVARD U. BIOCHEMIST.

2. ABC'S BILL REDECKER: THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION IS
WORRIED ABOUT 80,000 SOVIET TROOPS SPECIFICALLY TRAINED
IN CHEMICAL WARFARE. THE KREMLIN MAINTAINS THESE TROOPS
ARE TRAINED TO WARD OFF CHEMICAL ATTACKS, THAT THEY ARE
DEFENSIVE IN NATURE. BUT THE U.S. GOVT HAS RECENTLY
CHARGED SUCH FORCES WITH BREAKING INTERNATIONAL TREATIES
BANNING CHEMICAL WARFARE. HAIG: "FOR SOME TIME NOW,
THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY HAS BEEN ALARMED BY CONTINUING
REPORTS THAT THE SOVIET UNION AND ITS ALLIES HAVE BEEN
USING LETHAL, CHEMICAL WEAPONS IN LAOS, KAMPUCHEA, AND
AFGHANISTAN." TO SUBSTANTIATE ITS ALLEGATIONS, THE USG
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RETRIEVED SAMPLES OF VEGETATION FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA WHICH
REPORTEDLY CONTAINED RESIDUE FROM AN ALLEGED CHEMICAL
ATTACK. REFUGEES FROM CAMBODIA AND LAOS CLAIM SOVIET-
BACKED FORCES HAVE SPRAYED THEIR VILLAGES WITH THE POISONS.
POISONS THEY DESCRIBE AS YELLOW RAIN. IN ADDITION TO
THE EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS, ABC NEWS FILMED SOVIET DECON-
TAMINATION UNITS IN KABUL. THE U.S. GOVT MAINTAINS THE
EQUIPMENT WAS OPERATIONAL, A CHARGE THE SOVIETS DENIED:
SOVIET COUNSELOR KAPROLOV: "THOSE LIMITED CONTINGENTS
OF SOVIET TROOPS WHICH WERE BROUGHT TO AFGHANISTAN, AT
THE REQUEST OF THE AFGHANI GOVERNMENT TO REPEL OUTSIDE
INTERVENTION, THOSE TROOPS ARE ORGANIZED ACCORDING TO

STANDARD ORGANIZATION." GARY CROCKER, STATE DEPT:
"WE THINK THAT THESE UNITS WERE THERE FOR MORE THAN JUST
COMING ALONG WITH THE UNIT, THAT THEY WERE OPERATIONAL IN
AFGHANISTAN."

THE U.S. CASE AGAINST THE SOVIETS IS ALSO SUPPORTED BY
INTERCEPTED ARMY RADIO TRANSMISSIONS AND SATELLITE SPY
PHOTOS OF CHEMICAL DEPOTS. IN ADDITION, ABC NEWS HAS
OBTAINED EXCLUSIVE PHOTOGRAPHS AND 8MM FILM RECORDED BY
A DUTCH JOURNALIST IN AFGHANISTAN. HE SAYS THIS SOVIET
HELICOPTER DROPPED POISONOUS GAS WHICH KILLED ONE PERSON
AND LEFT SEVERAL OTHERS INJURED. WHILE THE SEARCH FOR
MORE CONCLUSIVE EVIDENCE OF DIRECT RUSSIAN INVOLVEMENT
CONTINUES IN BOTH SOUTHEAST ASIA AND AFGHANISTAN,
AMERICAN MILITARY OFFICIALS CONCEDE THAT THE USE OF
THE NEW BIOCHEMICAL WEAPON "YELLOW RAIN" IS LIMITED.
NERVE GAS, THEY SAY, IS MORE POWERFUL, MORE EFFECTIVE,
AND MORE LIKELY TO BE USED IN CONVENTIONAL WARFARE.

YET IT IS BECAUSE OF THE ADMINISTRATION'S BELIEF THAT
THE SOVIET UNION IS ALREADY ENGAGED IN CHEMICAL WARFARE
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THAT THIS GOVT IS NOW CONVINCED THAT THE BEST DEFENSE
IS THE BEST OFFENSE---IN OTHER WORDS, MODERNIZATION OF
AMERICA'S CHEMICAL WARFARE PROGRAM. (BILL REDECKER)

3. PEARLE: SAID THE PROBLEM THE USG FACES IS THAT THE
ADVANTAGE THE U.S. ONCE POSSESSED IN NUCLEAR WEAPONS HAS
UNFORTUNATELY BEEN LOST AND HE THOUGHT, LOST PERMANENTLY.
SO, WE HAVE CONCLUDED THAT WE BE IN A POSITION TO RETALIATE
IN KIND, IF NECESSARY, WITH WEAPONS AT ALL LEVELS ACROSS
THE SPECTRUM AND THAT INCLUDES CHEMICAL WEAPONS. HE SAID
WE WERE SERIOUSLY BEHIND IN THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS PROGRAM.
THE FACT IS THAT THE SOVIET UNION TAKES CHEMICAL WARFARE
VERY SERIOUSLY, AND WE UNTIL NOW HAVE NOT DONE SO.

MESELSON: AGREED THAT WE MUST ASSUME THAT THE SOVIETS
HAVE A FORMIDABLE CHEMICAL THREAT, BUT WE DO NOT KNOW
FOR SURE IF THEIR STOCKPILES ARE BIGGER OR SMALLER THAN
OURS OR WHETHER THEY HAVE OR HAVE NOT MADE ANY CHEMICALS
IN THE LAST DOZEN YEARS. HE BELIEVED THAT THE ADMINIS-

TRATION'S PLAN TO REPLACE OUR EXISTING PROJECTILES
WITH BINARY ARTILLERY PROJECTILES IS EXPENSIVE AND
BUYS US LESS CAPABILITY. THE BINARY ARTILLERY IS
BULKY, EXPENSIVE TO STORE AND SHIP, AND IS COMPLEX
IN DESIGN WHICH REQUIRES ASSEMBLY IN THE BATTLE
THEATRE.

PEARLE: COUNTERED THAT BINARY WEAPONS HAVE SIGNIFICANT

ADVANTAGES OVER OUR PRESENT STOCKPILE IN TERMS OF SAFETY AND IN TERMS OF LOGISTICS AND HANDLING.

MESELSON: BELIEVED THAT OUR EXISTING ARTILLERY STOCKPILE IS ADEQUATE AND INDEED SUPERIOR TO THE BINARIES. HE SAID THAT THE BINARIES HAVE NEVER BEEN TESTED IN THE FIELD WITH LIVE AGENTS.

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PEARLE: GAVE ASSURANCES THAT WE WILL NOT FIELD A WEAPON THAT HAS NOT BEEN ADEQUATELY TESTED BEFORE IT IS DEPLOYED. IN ORDER TO HAVE A CREDIBLE DETERRENT, ONE HAS TO HAVE WEAPONS WHICH CAN IN FACT BE EFFECTIVELY USED IN THE BATTLEFIELD. MUCH OF THE STOCKPILE OF WEAPONS WE HAVE NO LONGER MATCH UP WITH DELIVERY SYSTEMS. EVERYTHING WE KNOW ABOUT SOVIET TRAINING, DOCTRINE, TACTICS, THE DEPLOYMENT OF THEIR FORCES, SUGGEST THAT THEY TAKE CHEMICAL WARFARE SERIOUSLY. WE HOPE TO DETER THE USE OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS, WE HAVE TO BE PREPARED TO RETALIATE IF NECESSARY, AND HOPE THAT WE CAN PERSUADE THE SOVIETS TO ENTER INTO A COMPREHENSIVE AND VERIFIABLE AGREEMENT BANNING THESE WEAPONS. STOESSEL

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