



The main chemical threat, says Prof. Matthew Meselson, is "to people like civilians, who don't have gas masks."

WAR WITH IRAQ COULD UNLEASH CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS, BUT ONE U.S. EXPERT SEES NO CAUSE FOR PANIC

Since the start of the Kuwait crisis last summer, experts have voiced fears that a full-scale war might entail the use of chemical weapons, which both sides possess. Last week, American officials reemphasized that they would never authorize the use of such weapons in the gulf. Iraq, on the other hand, used chemical agents repeatedly during its eight-year war with Iran and even against its own Kurdish minority. To assess

this threat, correspondent Gayle Verner spoke recently with Prof. Matthew Meselson, a biochemist at Harvard University and one of the world's leading experts in the field of chemical and biological weapons. A strong supporter of banning chemical and biological agents, Meselson, 60, has served over the past 28 years as a consultant to the State Department, the White House and the U.S. Army.

How do chemical and biological weapons work?

Both depend on poisoning or infection for their effect—not on blasts, heat or blowing a hole through you with a piece of metal. One example of a chemical weapon is nerve gas, which can kill within a minute or so if inhaled. It paralyzes your nervous system; your lungs fill up with fluid, and the diaphragm