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PRIME MINISTER

From: Nicholas Cannon

Date: 15 March 2003

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IRAQ: CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS

You asked for a note on the types of CBW developed by Iraq. The following points are drawn from open source material, but Porton Down endorse their accuracy.

VX is one of the most toxic nerve agents which attacks the human nervous system producing muscular spasms, paralysis and death. As little as 10 milligrams of VX on the skin can cause death within minutes of exposure. One round from a multi-barrelled rocket launcher can contain 3 kilograms of VX which could contaminate up to a quarter of a square kilometre. Once deposited on the ground VX can remain a hazard for several days to weeks and contaminate anybody who comes into contact with it. *"Documentation available to UNMOVIC suggests that Iraq at least had had far reaching plans to weaponise VX... Given Iraq's history of concealment with regard to its VX programme it cannot be excluded that it has retained some capability with regard to VX"* (Blix "clusters" report).

Mustard is one of the oldest chemical warfare agents and can be manufactured with ease within hours. It is a liquid agent which gives off a hazardous vapour causing burns and blisters to exposed skin. It attacks and damages the eyes, mucous membrane, lungs, skin and blood-forming organs. If a few milligrams of mustard comes in contact with the skin extremely painful blisters ensue which can remain for weeks. A SCUD missile can carry 500 kilograms of mustard and could contaminate an area up to 1 square kilometre. Once deposited it can remain active in the environment for many decades. *"Mustard constituted an important part (about 70%) of Iraq's CW arsenal... 550 Mustard filled shells and up to 450 Mustard filled aerial bombs unaccounted for... additional uncertainty with respect to 6526 aerial bombs, corresponding to approximately 1,000 tonnes of agent, predominantly mustard"*. (Blix "clusters" report).

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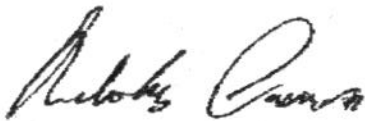
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Anthrax is an acute bacterial infection. Inhalation anthrax results from the deposition of the bacterial spores in the lungs. There are 100 million potentially lethal doses in a gram of Anthrax. It can remain viable in soil and water for years, even decades. *"Based on unaccounted for growth media, Iraq's potential production of anthrax could have been in the range of about 15,000 to 25,000 litres...Based on all the available evidence, the strong presumption is that about 10,000 litres of anthrax was not destroyed and may still exist".* (Blix "clusters" report).

Ricin is a plant toxin that can be easily recovered from castor beans which are readily available throughout the world. A few milligrams ingested are lethal. Ricin can easily be introduced into water or the food chain. Ricin was used in 1978 to assassinate Bulgarian dissident Georgii Markov in London: a pellet no bigger than a pinhead was sufficient to kill him.

Plague is extremely infectious by inhalation and if untreated is usually fatal. As few as 1000 plague particles are lethal to man, many millions of plague particles being contained in a litre. The technology to disseminate plague into the atmosphere is relatively simple.

Botulinum Toxin is one of the most lethal toxic compounds known to man and is extremely toxic when ingested. It is resistant to treatment and the ingestion of botulinum toxin can produce fatality rates of at least 60%. A lethal dose to man is less than one microgram. *"Botulinum toxic type A was weaponised in the Al Hussein warhead and R-400 bombs...not possible to verify an exact number".* (Blix "clusters" report).



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