

Documents on Japanese Poison Gas Warfare in China

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Introduction

The US War Department file of confidential documents reproduced below was declassified on 15 August 1984, and was discovered at the United States National Archives in Washington D.C., by Yoshimi Yoshiaki 吉見 義明 a professor of contemporary Japanese history at Chūō 中央 University in Tokyo. Professor Yoshimi in turn donated photocopies of these rare source materials to the Ōkunoshima Poison Gas Museum 大久 野島毒ガス資料館 located in Takehara-shi 竹原市, Hiroshima Prefecture.

I gained access to this document file in February 1992 through the kind of assistance of Mr. Murakami Hatsuichi 村上初一, curator of the museum. Here, I have transcribed the file's contents for Sino-Japanese Studies. Although these primary sources are currently scheduled for translation and publication in Japanese, the originals themselves have never appeared in print.¹

These sources speak graphically for themselves, so little in the way of introduction really needs to be written. Interested readers are encouraged to study the present document file in conjunction with previous SJS articles written by Professor Awaya Kentarō 粟屋憲太郎 of Rikkyō 立教 University and by myself, for those earlier articles have a direct bearing on this topic of Japanese poison gas warfare.² The following brief introductory comments should be construed as forming part of on-going research about Japanese operations in the China theater during the Fifteen-Year War (or "Asia-Pacific War") from September 1931 to August 1945.

The US military intelligence file in question--"File I.B. 152-A" --bears the date "November 15, 1941." This means it was assembled three weeks before Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor which brought the United States directly into the Fifteen-Year War. The compiler of this confidential file, US Army Brigadier General Sherman Miles, was a high-ranking War Department officer. Thus he should not be confused with US Navy Commodore Milton Miles of SACO, who played an important role in achieving the October 1942 dismissal of General Joseph Stilwell as commander of US and Chinese armed forces in China.

The file contains field numerous dispatches by American, Chinese, and British government officials, military officers, and civilians stationed in China; and, as well, it incorporates memoranda drafted by civil and military officers in Washington. Some of the more important and well-known drafters of these documents are former US Ambassador to China Clarence Gauss, Ambassador Nelson Johnson who replaced Gauss in early 1941, the then Colonel Joseph W. Stilwell who in 1939 was serving as Military Attache to the US Embassy in Peking, and Columbia-educated Hollington Tong, who was KMT Vice-Minister of Information.

File I.B. 152-A describes the reputed use of mustard gas (iperito), chlorine gas, and lewisite gas by Imperial Armed Forces in China from the fall of 1937 to the fall of 1941. The file specifically mentions large-scale poison gas operations at Shanghai 上海, Matang 馬槽 in the Wuhan 武漢 campaign, Mahuiling (which I cannot identify), Anking 安慶, Fukien 福建, and I-ch'ang 宜昌, among other areas.

The overall reliability of these wartime American and Chinese sources is corroborated in publications by postwar Japanese and Chinese researchers. And, as noted below, the most recent Japanese documentary evidence was reported in August 1994 by the Asahi shinbun 朝日新聞, a highly influential nationwide daily in Japan.

For example, Japanese Kwantung Army documents discovered and analyzed in the mid-1980s by Awaya Kentarō and Yoshimi Yoshiaki support the Chinese allegations of Japanese gas attacks at Anking and I-ch'ang as levelled in File I.B. 152-A. These two scholarly authorities concur that only the last-minute use of poison gas averted a disastrous Japanese defeat and allowed Imperial forces to gain the upperhand at I-ch'ang in October 1941.³

In addition, archival work done in Canada by Professor Takemae Eiji 竹前栄治 of Tōkyō Keizai Daigaku 東京経済大学 lends further credence to the contents of File I.B. 152-A. Takemae--whose years of intense labor have left him blind--uncovered British Commonwealth documents containing papers composed in July 1942 by Wellington Koo, who was then KMT Ambassador to Britain. These Koo papers, submitted to the Pacific War Council proceedings held in London that month, duplicate the evidence and accusations tendered by Hollington Tong in File I.B. 152-A; but Koo's papers are more detailed and extensive.⁴

Furthermore, the Chinese scholar Chi Hsüeh-jen 紀学仁 , whose study is published by the People's Liberation Army, has uncovered new data to supplement and revise such wartime KMT accounts of Japanese chemical warfare. Chi's study, as reported by the Japanese news media, shows that Communist troops and civilians constituted almost eighty percent of the Chinese who fell victim to Japanese gas attacks.⁵

Finally, microfilmed Japanese Army documents currently scheduled for publication in Japan have been found to contain an order-- "Imperial Headquarters Army Directive Number 452"--dated 13 May 1939. (For some reason, the original directive cannot be located at the Self-Defense Forces Research Institute in Tokyo where these documents are housed.) According to the Asahi, which reported this finding, Japanese historians generally agree that directives of this type, called tairikushi 大陸指 , were normally issued with Emperor Shōwa's knowledge and approval. Directive Number 452 explicitly commanded field units to: "employ special material yellow and study its operational value on campaigns in occupied territory." The code name "special material yellow" designated either iperito or lewisite.⁶

Thus, this Japanese Army directive provides conclusive evidence to substantiate wartime Chinese allegations that Imperial Forces used lethal varieties of gas in addition to non-lethal types such as sneeze- or tear-gas, whose use has already been established. Furthermore, the directive proves that the Imperial high command ordered not just the deployment, but also the actual use, of those poison gases in China.

In sum, then, postwar Japanese and Chinese findings based on international archival research prove indisputably that Imperial Armed Forces received orders in the emperor's name to engage in lethal chemical warfare against Chinese military and civilian personnel during the Fifteen-Year War. Thus these findings confirm the contentions raised in File I.B. 152-A.

But this declassified War Department file is significant in yet another sense; for it raises important questions about Allied, and especially American, attitudes toward poison gas during the war. File I.B. 152-A shows that US intelligence officials had achieved a surprisingly accurate grasp of Japanese poison gas use in China on the eve of Pearl Harbor. In his "Brief" of November 1941, for example, Miles observed that: "since the autumn of 1937... the Japanese

have so employed gas either experimentally, for limited training purposes, or in emergencies [like I-ch'ang] where ground units were in extreme danger." And, in his longer "Memorandum for the Chief of Staff," Miles ventured to assert that Japanese forces in the future "will undoubtedly use gas whenever and wherever it seems necessary or profitable for them to do so."

As suggested above, recent historical research has disclosed that Japanese battlefield actions in truth coincided with Miles' assessments. The Kwantung Army documents unearthed by Awaya and Yoshimi show that Imperial Army units began using gas in China right after the Marco Polo Bridge Incident of July 1937, which is generally acknowledged to mark a decisive escalation of the war. These Kwantung Army sources reveal that Japanese forces initially used poison gas for test purposes and in order to gain experience for the presumed upcoming war against Soviet forces in northeast Asia.

Such limited and experimental exercises against the Chinese at first met resistance from many Japanese field commanders, who considered it demeaning to use poison gas and feared that relying on this weapon might prove addictive. True to Miles' appraisal, Japanese units in the first few months after July 1937 thought of poison gas as a weapon to be used for training and test purposes, or as a last resort. But by the spring of 1938, Imperial Armed Forces perforce discarded that attitude. Chinese resistance had become so intense that Japanese units resorted to chemical warfare as a commonplace necessity. So again, Miles' prediction that Japan would intensify its poison gas operations against China proved correct in general--although he was unclear as to when that intensification would occur.

Considering all of this, the most thought provoking issue emerging from File I.B. 152-A has to do with official American attitudes toward Japanese chemical warfare. Copies of this file were distributed to the President, the Secretary of War, the Chief of Staff, the State Department, General Headquarters, and other high state officials. Assuming that the file was read, many people at the highest levels of both the United States Government and military must have been privy to its contents.

In November 1941, then, American officials knew when, where, and to what effect Japan was using poison gas in China; and they projected that an escalation in this chemical warfare might take place at any time. Even allowing for a degree of skeptical detach-

ment and for the usual dryness of bureaucratic language, File I.B. 152-A discloses a remarkable lack of American concern for China's plight. The opening comments in Miles's "Memorandum for the Chief of Staff," for example, would hardly inspire a Frank Capra movie.

Hence, the overriding question posed by File I.B. 152-A is: How should we comprehend this seeming American nonchalance? It cannot be explained solely by the fact that the United States was not yet at war with Japan. Well before Pearl Harbor, the US Government was using the issue of Japanese aggression to justify imposing trade sanctions against Japan, and the American mass media were leveling intense moral criticism at other Japanese atrocities in China. Japanese chemical warfare would seem to present an ideal issue to be exploited for those purposes.

The British and other Commonwealth governments too displayed slight enthusiasm for taking up China's cause. At the Pacific War Council convened in London in July 1942, Britain, the US, the Netherlands, Australia, and New Zealand all ignored Wellington Koo's written appeal concerning Japanese chemical warfare. And, at the end of this conference, host Winston Churchill prophesized that "Japan is likely to attack the Soviet Union in the near future." From this statement, Takemae infers that Churchill may well have been hoping that Japanese forces would apply the lessons they had learned in China against the Soviets. But he is quick to add that there is no conclusive evidence to sustain such a hypothesis.⁷

The issue of Japanese chemical warfare against China was swept under the rug at the Tokyo War Crimes Trials despite ample evidence presented by US prosecutor Thomas H. Morrow. Morrow submitted a detailed report entitled "A General Account of Japanese Poison Warfare in China, 1937-1945"-- a report that incorporated the contents of File I.B. 152-A. His arraignments took place for two days in August 1946, but then he was suddenly returned to the United States without explanation; and the issue of Japanese chemical warfare was dropped from the proceedings. After the Tokyo War Crimes Trials ended, this issue received scant attention from historians; and, as a result, many general accounts of warfare in the twentieth century still mistakenly assert that poison gas was employed only in World War I.

It is fairly easy to understand why the US and other Allied Powers after 1945 were disinclined to condemn Japan for perpetrating

chemical warfare. The Americans themselves had already practiced atomic warfare and were contemplating the use of chemical defoliants against Japan when the war ended. Later, at the Tokyo Trials, US Occupation officials granted immunity from war crimes prosecution to the leaders of Kwantung Army Unit 731 in exchange for top-secret information on biological warfare. All of this made it awkward for Americans to cast the first stone. Furthermore, we now know that the Soviet Union deployed--and presumably planned to use--chemical weapons such as iperito on the Far Eastern front. Indeed, Soviet poison gas factories continued to operate in the postwar era; and the Soviet Navy, for lack of a better disposal method, dumped some 30,000 tons of these chemical weapons into the Sea of Japan.⁸

However, the question of why America and the other Allied Powers remained silent about Japanese chemical warfare against China during the war awaits a clear answer. Aside from raising this particular problem, the declassified US military intelligence file reproduced below may provide some preliminary clues for solving it.

Notes to the Introduction

1. Photocopies of the originals are available, and may be obtained from the editor of SJS at \$10 per set.
2. Awaya, "Japanese Mustard Gas in China: Then and Now," SJS 4:2 (April 1992), pp. 3-6; and Wakabayashi, "Research Notes on Japanese Poison Gas Warfare in China," SJS 5:1 (October 1992), pp. 4-10.
3. Awaya and Yoshimi, "Dokugasu sakusen no shinjitsu" 毒ガス作戦の真実 [The Truth about the Poison Gas Strategy], Sekai 世界 479 (September 1985), pp. 68-84; Awaya, "Senzen Nihon ni okeru kagaku heiki no kenkyū kaihatsu ni tsuite" 戦前日本における化学兵器の研究・開発について [On Research and Developments on Chemical Weapons in Prewar Japan], reprinted in Awaya, Tōkyō saiban ron 東京裁判論 (Tokyo: Ōtsuki shoten 大月書店, 1989), pp. 243-267.
4. Takemae Eiji, "Yahari dokugasu/saikin heiki wa tsukawarete ita" やはり毒ガス・細菌兵器は使われていた [After All, Poison Gas and Bacteriological Weapons Were Used!], Sekai 479 (September 1985), pp. 85-92.
5. For an account of Chi, see Wakabayashi.
6. Asahi shinbun, August 13, 1994.
7. Takemae, p. 91.
8. Asahi shinbun, May 11, 1993, May 23, 1993, and June 2, 1993.

DOCUMENTS

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MILITARY INTELLIGENCE

I.B. 152-A

JAPANESE USE OF POISON GAS IN CHINA

Record Section

**INTELLIGENCE BRANCH
MILITARY INTELLIGENCE DIVISION
WAR DEPARTMENT GENERAL STAFF**

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WAR DEPARTMENT
WAR DEPARTMENT GENERAL STAFF
MILITARY INTELLIGENCE DIVISION G-2
WASHINGTON

I. B. 152-A

Brief

Since the autumn of 1937 there have been persistent reports of the use of poison gas by the Japanese troops in China. There seems to be no question that the Japanese have so employed gas either experimentally, for limited training purposes, or in emergencies where ground units were in extreme danger. It is believed that in the future the Japanese will use gas whenever and wherever it seems necessary or profitable for them to do so.

S.M.

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I. B. 152-A November 15, 1941

MEMORANDUM FOR THE CHIEF OF STAFF:

Subject: Japanese Use of Poison Gas in China

1. During the course of the Sino-Japanese War, the Chinese have often alleged that the Japanese used poison gas, and recently announced a total of 876 gas attacks since July, 1937. There is, of course, no way to check the accuracy of such a figure, and in general there has been little or no confirmation of reports of Japanese use of gas. On a few occasions, however, the evidence has been conclusive.

2. In the fall of 1937, our Embassy at Nanking was notified that there were three or four mustard casualties, from the Shanghai front, in the Red Cross Emergency Hospital. The Assistant Military Attache, accompanied by two doctors, one from a United States and one from a British gunboat, visited the hospital and looked at the patients. Ten days had elapsed, however, since the alleged use of gas, and it was difficult to tell whether they were in fact gas casualties. As the British navy doctor said, "it might have been scabies." But the Austrian doctor who headed the hospital, and several Chinese doctors, including the Minister of Health, signed a certificate that these were actual mustard gas casualties.

3. A well-authenticated case of Japanese use of gas was reported by the U. S. Embassy, Hankow, July 29, 1938. (Tab A). Mustard was apparently the agent, which was used in the Japanese attack on Matang during their drive up the Yangtze on Hankow.

4. In September, 1938, the British Military Intelligence Officer, China Command, Hong Kong, obtained what he called a "gas cylinder" - probably a candle - which the Chinese had taken from the Japanese on the Yangtze front near Mahuiling. On analysis at Hong Kong, the contents proved to be:

Diphenyl cyano arsine (C₆ H₈)₂ CN As - 26 os., which was mixed with pumice stone forming a slow burning compound which gave off a toxic smoke, very volatile, with lung irritant and sternutating effects.

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The Chinese asserted that this sort of gas was frequently used by the Japanese in the later stages of their advance on Hankow.

5. In 1938 the Chinese Government filed with the Secretariat of the League of Nations evidence of use of gas by the Japanese. Included were copies of an order for the attachment of gas units in an attack near Anking. (Tab B).

6. Another case of the use of gas, probably mustard type, was reported to the Embassy in July 1941, by an American missionary who personally observed gas casualties in a hospital in Fukien Province. (Tab C).

7. When the Chinese military spokesmen first announced that the Japanese had used gas at Ichang on October 6, 9, and 10, 1941, our Military Attache at Chungking stated that the reports were vague, unreliable, and unconfirmed, and that the Russians in Chungking also seriously doubted that gas had been used. On October 27th, however, the military spokesman gave details of the gas attacks, which he called the severest of the war, based on information (Tab D) obtained by an American newspaper correspondent, Mr. Jack Belden of IMS, who had just returned to Chungking after visiting the Ichang front. Belden formerly represented United Press during the early part of the war (1937 and 1938), and is known to members of our Embassy, including the Military Attache's office, as a shrewd and competent observer. Because of the fact that he actually accompanied Chinese front line troops during the Hsuechow-Lunghai operations, the fighting in Shansi, and elsewhere, he is on the best possible terms with the Chinese Army, is allowed to go almost anywhere he chooses, and is afforded assistance in his quests for information. His report, therefore, is believed to be essentially accurate, although, since he was not present at the time of the attack, he bases it on observation of casualties, conversations with Red cross doctors (including at least one foreigner), and with military personnel who were engaged. The situation appears to be as follows:

The Chinese were attacking the belt of Japanese strong points surrounding Ichang, and finally broke through, whereupon the Japanese "poured in gas shells from the rear and flanks", as a last resort to prevent a Chinese victory.

The Office of the Chief of Chemical Warfare Service has studied the reports and concludes that the gas used was lewisite. (Tab D).

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8. From the evidence, therefore, it appears that the Japanese army has, from time to time, used gas against Chinese troops. In general, their gas attacks appear to have been experimental, or for limited training purposes, or in emergencies like that at Ichang, to get themselves out of a tight spot. In the opinion of G-2, they will undoubtedly use gas whenever and wherever it seems necessary or profitable for them to do so.

SHERMAN MILES,
Brigadier General, U. S. Army
Acting Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2

Incls.:

 Tabs A, B, C and D

Distribution:

 THE PRESIDENT+
 Secretary of War+
 Under Secretary of War+
 Assistant Secretary of War+
 Assistant Secretary of War for Air+
 Chief of Staff+
 Chief of the Army Air Forces+
 Director of Naval Intelligence+
 Assistant Chief of Staff, W.P.D.+
 Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3+
 Assistant Chief of Staff, G-4+
 State Department+
 G.H.Q.+
 General Embick+
 Chief of the Air Corps+
 Chief, Chemical Warfare Service+

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TAB A

No. 64

Hankow, July 29, 1938

Subject: Suspected Cases of Gas Poisoning
Among Chinese Troops.

The Honorable
The Secretary of State,
Washington,

Sir:

I have the honor to transmit, as of possible interest to the Department, a copy of a memorandum prepared by Captain Frank Dorn, Assistant Military Attache to this Embassy, which incorporates a report prepared by Dr. H. Talbot, a British doctor on the subject of his investigation at Nanchang, Kiangsi, of a number of suspected gas cases occurring among Chinese troops who participated in the hostilities at Ma Tang on the Yangtze River between Anking and Kiukiang. Captain Dorn and an American missionary accompanied Dr. Talbot on his tour of investigation.

The Embassy is of the opinion that Dr. Talbot's report of his diagnosis of the cases examined can be accepted without question. Dr. Talbot's report, as quoted in Captain Dorn's memorandum, was released for publication by the Central News Agency, the Chinese official new agency, on July 19, 1938.

Respectfully yours,

Nelson Trusler Johnson

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Enclosure No. 1 to despatch No. 64 of July 29, 1938, from the Embassy, Hankow, to the Department of State, Washington, on the subject of "Suspected cases of Gas Poisoning among Chinese Troops."

Hankow, July 17, 1938

The following is a true copy of the report of Dr. H. Talbot on the examination of suspected gas poisoning of Chinese troops.

"CONFIDENTIAL. Report on suspected cases of gas poisoning, all cases coming from the Matang area following the hostilities there about the 2nd to the 5th of July, 1938.

In all 19 men were examined, 6 at No. 3 Hostel, and 13 at the 90th Military Base Hospital. At the latter hospital I was accompanied by Rev. Johnson, senior member of the Methodist Mission at Nanchang, and by Capt. Dorn, Ass't Military Attache to the American Embassy at Hankow.

Those at the No. 3 Hostel were examined on July 10th, where the day previous, July 9th, four men suspected of having been gassed were so seriously ill that they died before having been examined. The 13 cases at the 90th Base Hospital were seen on July 11th. This report is based on the whole 19, and after grouping them according to severity of affection, the various organs affected will be tabulated according to degree of involvement.

Six were very seriously ill, and it appeared almost certain that five of these six would die. In examining the 19 men it became obvious that the more seriously ill exhibited the greater number of involvements.

Six were only moderately ill, but sufficiently so to give cause for anxiety unless they were able to receive adequate care (rather better than was the rule in the military hospitals).

Five were only slightly ill, both objectively and subjectively, and there did not appear any doubt but that they would make a good recovery, unless some unexpected or unfortunate complication occurs.

Two appeared to be better, and one of these men proffered the information that he was better and had nothing to complain of, though on examination he showed some of the undermentioned signs.

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Eyes: Nine had very acute conjunctivitis, whilst those six who were very seriously ill had some corneal involvement, one had already lost both eyes, and two had lost one eye each. Whether any of those with corneal involvement could be saved was a very doubtful point. The above man who said that he was better had a mild conjunctivitis.

Lungs: In all except two men there was a varying degree of lung involvement. This varied from a mild bronchial catarrhal condition with some moist sounds and wheezing (not unlike an asthmatic condition) to a gross involvement of the lung tissue with severe bronchiolitis and patchy bronchopneumonia. The six severely ill all had bronchopneumonia, and in the five above mentioned the condition was very advanced.

Heart: Four of the 19 had evidence of myocarditis, marked swelling of the feet in two of them, enlargement of the heart in two (one to beyond the left nipple line) and a soft systolic murmur in all four. Three of these were in the severely ill cases; one in the moderately ill.

Nervous System: The symptoms were mainly subjective, all complained of giddiness, the latter being very marked in eleven of the men, less so in five, and still less in the remainder; but every one of them complained of it. There was a spastic paralysis in five of the cases, and these were all in the first two groups. Some of the others complained of some stiffness (probably in the recovery stage.) Two of the men had rotatory nystagmus.

Skin: Eight had ulceration of the skin from above the knees down, and two of them were quite emphatic that they had had no such ulceration before they fell sick.

Amongst all the cases of wounded soldiers seen in all the hospitals visited, and this number was between four and five thousand, I only saw one single case of eye trouble, and this was a case of trachomatous pannus with a secondary conjunctivitis.

A feature noted amongst the soldiers was the absence of skin ulceration such as one so frequently sees amongst the civilian population.

These cases were all seen in Nanchang, and in my opinion, were all caused by gas poisoning, of the Mustard Gas type.

(Signed) H. Talbot
H. Talbot

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Nanchang
July 12th, 1938

(NOTE by the undersigned -- It is possible that at least in certain of the above nineteen cases the involvement had been caused by Chlorine Gas. The yellowish color of the skin might indicate the use of this gas; though Mustard Gas is a derivative of chlorine and might have been the only type used.)

Frank Dorn
Captain, F.A.

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WAR DEPARTMENT
Office Chief Chemical Warfare Service
Washington, D.C.

August 24, 1938

Memorandum for Major William Mayer, G.S.,
Room 512 Winder Building
Washington, D.C.

The report prepared by H. Talbot dated Nanchang, China, July 12, 1938 has been read with interest.

The symptoms reported and the injuries described could have been produced by a mixture of several gasses but in my opinion they were produced by one of the arsenical vesicants. It might have been true lewisite or ethyldichlorarsine. So far as I know true lewisite is the only material which normally would produce all of the results described by Dr. Talbot. Crude lewisite, you may remember, is composed of three substances, all of similar nature, but only one of these has the properties of a strong vesicant. In the open literature on lewisite the mixture of these three substances is also called lewisite and apparently foreign nations have not discovered that our process extends beyond that described in the literature and that what we call lewisite is a material different from that substance as known in the literature.

The crude lewisite compounds produce all the lung symptoms described. They produce ulceration of the skin rather than true blisters such as are produced by mustard gas. These arsenical compounds also have the peculiar property of causing paralysis of the fingers and of the feet as well as of the muscles surrounding the heart when any considerable amount of this material has been absorbed into the body.

Mustard gas and the eye irritants seldom or never produce blindness although they do produce acute conjunctivitis. From the loss of eyesight reported I am strongly of the opinion that the compound used must have been lewisite, for in the World War, while the Germans used about 1,000 tons of ethyldichlorarsine, there were comparatively few losses of eyesight among the Allied troops who were fired upon by this material.

Taken all in all I am strongly of the opinion that the Japanese have been conducting a fairly small field test with the crude lewisite using the Chinese for test animals.

/s/ M. E. Barker

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TAB B

Office of Military Attache
AMERICAN EMBASSY
Peking, China

February 9, 1939

No. 9730

Subject: Chemical Warfare in China

Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, Washington, D. C.

1. The enclosed letter and documents, the latter with translations, are forwarded in connection with reports of use of gas by the Japanese Army in China.

2. I doubt the assumption that the Japanese have used chlorine, although my opportunities for investigation have been very limited, I am satisfied that they have used tear and sneezing gas on many occasions, and also some kind of an irritant smoke.

3. Analysis by the British of a sample of gas used by the Japanese on the Yangtze front showed that it was a very volatile toxic smoke with a lung irritant effect. The chemical name is DI-PHENYL-CYANOARSINE, formula $(C_6H_5)_2AsCN$. It is mixed with pumice stone to get a slow-burning effect. In the sample analyzed, twenty-six ounces of chemical were mixed with one pound and ten ounces of pumice.

/s/ Joseph W. Stilwell,

Joseph W. Stilwell
Colonel, Infantry

Military Attache

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THE CENTRAL PUBLICITY BOARD

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Hankow, September 8, 1938

Col. Joseph W. Stilwell
U. S. Military Attache
U. S. Embassy

Dear Colonel Stilwell:

The Chinese Government has filed with the Secretariat of the League of Nations among other evidences two secret documents captured from the bodies of Japanese officers during the fighting in the vicinity of Anking in the middle of last June, which prove conclusively that chemical warfare units have been attached to Japan's fighting forces throughout China and that chemical projectiles have been used regularly and frequently.

For your information I am enclosing photostats of the two documents with explanatory notes. Document I reveals that the right flank under the command of Colonel Sato has attached one squad of chemical warfare unit; and that the left flank under the command of Colonel Takahashi-Ryo [Makoto] has attached one company of chemical warfare units. Document II reveals even more precisely one of the attacking plans of the Japanese using so-called special projectiles, including lethal gases like chlorine. The minute directions and the remarks leave no room for doubt as to what the unnamed projectiles are and the readiness of the Japanese commanders to employ them to carry their point.

The original documents are in my possession which may be viewed at any time.

Your sincerely,

/s/ Hollington K. Tong

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Explanations:-

Document I. marked "strictly confidential".

(A) Classification and position

(a) Right flank:

(1) Composition of right flank

% Chemical warfare units, one squad.

(b) Left Flank:

(1) Composition of left flank

% Chemical warfare units, one company

(B) Transport fleets

(C) Name of ships

(D) Landing motorboats

(E) Points of Landing

Special remark: names of transports preceded by o to sail under the escort of cruiser Futami.

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Document II. marked "secret" and "burn after use".

(A) Attacking plan of the Left Flank using special projectiles, issued by the commander on June 8.

(B) Directions: use a portion after landing and in neighborhood of Singhukuo; use on a large scale east or north of Naking [sic] [Anking].

(a) Time:

(1) dawn or before dawn or emergency

(b) Places:

(1) Singhukuo (creek) (2) Tawan[g]miao

(c) Items:

(1) Types of projectiles and (2) quantity

a. at (b)-(1) and (b)-(2); 50 cylinders each for gas release; and 10 cylinders each of oo "unnamed gas".

(3) Operating unit:

a. the first line of the Left Flank

(4) Fundamentals governing use:

1. organizations of two sections of five each under a commander; when time comes for operation[,] sections to be transferred under command of a captain at the first line;

2. in case of large quantities of projectiles, transportation may be put in hands of other selected personnel;

3. if necessary, projectiles may be used at night;

4. strict coordination with advancing units should be maintained when projectiles used.

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(5) Essentials:

a. When landing[,] members of selected sections should carry 5 cylinders plus 1 cylinder unnamed gas.

(C) Directions: as (B)

(a) Time:

(1) dawn or twilight or emergency

(b) Places:

(1) Tahukwan and east[,] School of Agriculture

(2) East of Anking city walls

(c) Items:

(1) Types of projectile and (2) quantity

a. at (b)-(1): 1000 small gas ejectors; 100 cylinders oo "unnamed gas"; 100/200 green gas (chlorine) cylinders;

b. at (b)-(2): 100 small gas ejectors; 200 cylinders oo "unnamed gas"; 200 green gas (chlorine) cylinders;

(3) operation unit:

a. the first line and the 13th company of the reserve unit.

(4) fundamentals governing use:

1. six sections of five each to be selected from two battalions manning the first line plus two sections picked from the reserve unit totaling eight sections.

2. every section to be led by an officer of no less than a colonel's rank.

3. separate orders will be given the 13th ooy.

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(5) Essentials:

a. projectiles to be carried like military supplies; on reaching destined points[,] each of the selected sections to carry 10 cylinder "unnamed gas", small gas ejectors 60, and green gas (chlorine) 20 cylinders.

Remarks:-

(1) All sections to note carefully the above-mentioned plans and make all the necessary preparations regards supplies and personnel.

(2) Every section must make weather study: hourly reports of directions of wind and velocity must be made.

(3) The above-mentioned attacking plan may be applied only when the wind is blowing from east, northeast and south-east.

(4) The remnants of green gas (chlorine) may also be used inside the city in "mopping-up" processes.

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TAB C

No. 115. Chungking, September 3, 1941

Subject: Report of the Use of Poison Gas
by Japanese Forces in China.

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,

Washington, D. C.

Sir:

I have the honor to enclose a copy of a letter dated July 30[,] 1941 from Charles E. Winter, a missionary of the Methodist Episco [sic] Church (American) at Putien (Hinghwa) Fukien, reporting his examination of a number of Chinese soldiers whom he believes to be casualties of poison gas used against them by Japanese. This letter was forwarded to the Embassy by the recipient, Bishop Carleton Lacy.

Respectfully yours,

C. E. Gauss

Enclosure:

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Enclosure no. 1 to despatch no. 115 dated September 3, 1941 from
American Embassy at Chungking, China

(C O P Y)

Methodist Episcopal Church
Putien (Hingwa), Fukien, China

July 30, 1941

Bishop Carleton Lacy,
Nanping, Fukien,

Dear Bishop Lacy:

Yesterday I went over to the C.M.S. (St. Luke's) Hospital in this city to see some soldiers that had been wounded in fighting near Futsing. Dr. M. K. Yue, physician and surgeon in charge of the hospital, and Miss Ethel Simpson, R.N. concur in stating that these are all cases of poison gas (probably mustard vapor).

The soldiers report that their position, a few li from the village of Tong Chang () near Futsing () was attacked on July 24th and shelled from a distance of a few li (less than a mile). The shells were not demolition type but small gas shells which exploded a few yards from them. The first effect was smarting of the eyes. Later there was a burning sensation of the skin and vomiting. The soldiers did not leave their positions which, they say, the Japanese made no attempt to occupy.

A few days later the worst of these cases came to Futien for treatment. There are no bullet or shrapnel wounds among this group of nineteen. (One more has come in since, making twenty). The wounds are all burns some still in the blister stage, some raw and open and suppurating. The areas involved vary in size from half inch square sore on legs, arms, face and body to patches as big as a square foot. The skin surrounding the burns is of a peculiar purplish red color, feverish looking and tender to the touch. These men are still suffering intensely and some will probably die. One had evidently breathed more of the gas than others. His voice was almost gone and he talked with much pain and difficulty. The wounded soldiers report that the gas was of a yellowish color and smelled, they said, like pepper.

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In view of international agreements against the use of poison gas in warfare to which Japan, I understand, is a signatory, I think this should be called to the attention of our State Department. I am not sending this to Foochow or Amoy Consulates for obvious reason. I wonder if you could forward it from there to the Ambassador at Chungking or to some nearer consulate from where it can be safely forwarded.

With best regards,

Sincerely yours,

/s/ Charles E. Winter

Charles E. Winter

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COPY

TAB D

WAR DEPARTMENT
OFFICE CHIEF CHEMICAL WARFARE SERVICE
WASHINGTON, D. C.

CWS 470.6/1445

November 7, 1941

MEMORANDUM FOR THE ASSISTANT CHIEF OF STAFF, G-2, WAR DEPARTMENT:

Subject: Japanese Gas Attack against Chinese at
Ichang

Attention: Major Roberts, Far Eastern Section.

1. Reference is made to a series of recent radiograms from the Military Attache, Chungking, China, in regard to the gas attack of the Japanese against the Chinese in the Ichang area October 8-9-10. Radiogram in clear from the Military Spokesman, Chungking, China, October 28, 1941, states as follows:

"Severest gas attack of China War occurred in Ichang fighting October 8, 9, and 10 in which total of three hundred and forty gas shells were fired into the city. Shells weighed twenty to fifty pounds and after explosion gave off dark fluid which emitted gray, white, and orange smoke. Odor like flowers or decaying fruit. Wind velocity three meters per second and temperature around twenty degrees centigrade. About one thousand three hundred fifty gas casualties of which seven hundred and fifty died. Some casualties became unconscious at once, some died within few minutes of half hour, some developed large blisters and died hours later. Some suffered watering of eyes, sneezing, bleeding at nose. Fatally gassed turned black and blue. Gassed area two thousand yards long by fifteen hundred yards wide. Gas used was tear, sneezing and mustard."

Subsequent radiogram, dated October 29, 1941, states that 300 air bombs and over 1,000 gas shells were used.

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2. While it is possible that a number of different gases as referred to were used in this attack, the one chemical agent which would likely produce all of the symptoms described is the substance known as lewisite, chemical name, Beta-chlorvinyl dichloroarsine (ClCH:CHAsCl₂-2). Crude lewisite, the substance that would probably be used in munitions, is an oily liquid dark-brown in color. It has a strong irritating effect on the eyes and is a severe vesicant on the skin. In addition, it is a systemic poison, exposure to the liquid resulting in absorption of arsenic in the blood stream. Its action is generally much more rapid than mustard gas, and in this respect is more in accord with the description of the casualty effect in the Ichang attack than normal results of exposure to mustard gas. Explosion of shell or bombs loaded with lewisite would produce clouds of vapor and fine liquid particles of the substance which, mixed with dust, might possibly account for the orange colored smoke described. However, it is believed that in the absence of more definite data, no reliance should be placed on reported colors noticed as positive identification of the agents used. There have been several recent reports of dud Japanese air bombs found to contain a mixture of mustard gas and lewisite. It is possible that such a mixture was used in this attack. However, as stated, the casualty effect described might be accounted for by lewisite.

3. While there are a number of related compounds all referred to as lewisite, much information including the true formula, and chemical and physical characteristics of true lewisite has been published. From the severity of the effects from this gas used as described, it is the opinion of this office that true lewisite was probably the substance used.

4. The considerable extent of the area covered by gas in this attack and the large number of casualties seem to indicate that more than 340 shells were used as stated by the military spokesman referred to above. The statement in the radiogram of October 29, 1941, reporting 300 air bombs and 1,000 gas shells used, seems to be more nearly correct.

For the Chief of the Chemical Warfare Service:

/s/ John C. MacArthur
John C. MacArthur
Lt. Colonel, C.W.S.,
Assistant

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1st Ind.

11-16-41 (10-15-41)

G-2, War Department General Staff, Washington, D.C., November 12,
1941

To: Office of Chief of Chemical Warfare Service, War Department,
Washington, D. C.

Besides the information contained in copies of radiograms already forwarded to the Chief of Chemical Warfare Service, there is no additional data available except the following, which is quoted by China News Service from the American correspondent's report:

"In the hills outside Ichang the Japanese have built elaborate defenses protecting the city with sixty to seventy interlocking fire, reported Beldon. The Chinese, he said, were forced to make an uphill fight attacking slopes. When the Chinese finally broke through, the Japanese poured in gas shells from the rear and flank. Mr. Beldon talked with a foreign doctor working for the Chinese Red Cross. One of the names of the gases the Japanese used, as given by the doctor, was iperito which was believed to be a mustard gas."

For the Acting A. C. of S., G-2:

RALPH C. SMITH,
Colonel, General Staff,
Executive Officer, G-2

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CWS 470.6/1445
(10-31-41)

November 6, 1941

MEMORANDUM FOR THE ASSISTANT CHIEF OF STAFF, G-2, WAR DEPARTMENT:

Subject: Gas Attack at Ichang

1. This office appreciates the prompt response to its request for verification of press accounts regarding the recent gas attack by Japan against the Chinese in the Ichang area.

2. Reference radiogram from Chungking dated October 31, 1941, copy of which was furnished this office, all available information about the gas attack at Ichang October 8-9-10 would be appreciated; information covering the immediate tactical situation, time and circumstances of the attack; statement as to whether it is directed primarily against Chinese military forces or civilian population; identification of gases used; protective measures, if any, adopted by the Chinese; and statement as to how long the gas persisted in the area.

3. Any information available as to Chinese preparations or intentions for retaliations is also desired.

For the Chief of the Chemical Warfare Service:

JOHN C. MacARTHUR
Lt. Colonel, C.W.S.,
Assistant.