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Subject: Re: United States using chemical weapons in Iraq?

Posted by [Nukelt15](#) on Thu, 17 Nov 2005 07:17:37 GMT

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White Phosphorous works as a weapon because of simple combustion. WP+Oxygen=fire. Chunks of WP, when they strike a person, do have a nasty tendency to burn straight through the skin and any other flammable matter between it and the ground, but that's all it does- it burns. The end result is quite similar to what would happen if you used a cutting torch on, say, your arm or leg.

Yes, it's nasty stuff, but it does not affect the human body in the same way that, say, a nerve or blister agent would. Chemical weapons generally have far more specific and targeted effects on the human body- a nerve agent, such as sarin for example, attacks the central nervous system, disrupting and shutting down signals sent from the brain to various body parts (incapacitating, then killing the target person). Blister agents, such as mustard agent, adversely accept surface tissues which they are exposed to- which is why it is such a bad thing to inhale them, as they will completely wreck your lungs in very short order.

Phosphorous is a simple incendiary device. It burns. It burns, and continues to burn very hot for an extended period, while giving off a bright, intense light- which is why WP and RP have been used in signal and illumination flares for centuries (...and the rockets' red glare...). It is not a chemical weapon any more than gunpowder, C4, napalm, or TNT. Chemical weapons have specific, targeted effects on specific bodily functions and tissues; WP just burns anything that gets in its way. Phosphorous ordinance is not specifically designed to destroy human flesh; it just happens to do that pretty damn well in addition to everything else it is good for (lighting things on fire, illuminating an area, alerting a rescue chopper to the location of a downed pilot, etc).

WP is not a chemical weapon, it is conventional, and this is stupid- next thing you know, people will be bitching about bullets being chemical weapons because they might have lead in them. Just another case of somebody trying to demonize the US by attacking some weapon that your average person really doesn't have a clue about the inner workings of.

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