

Yellow Rain: The Arms Control Implications

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Following is a statement by Ambassador Lawrence S. Eagleburger, Under Secretary for Political Affairs, before the Subcommittee on Arms Control, Oceans, International Operations, and Environment, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, February 24, 1983.

I appreciate the opportunity to appear before your subcommittee to discuss the arms control implications of the use of chemical and toxin weapons. Our goal is to see their complete elimination. Our seriousness and dedication was shown most recently during Vice President Bush's trip to Europe. While in Geneva, he addressed the Committee on Disarmament and spoke forcefully and persuasively of the need to rid the world of chemical and toxin weapons. He took the additional constructive step of announcing an important U.S. initiative to achieve that goal.

More than 12 years ago we unilaterally renounced the possession of all biological and toxin weapons. Subsequently, we played a major role in negotiating an international agreement banning these weapons. A large number of countries, including the Soviet Union, joined us in ratifying the treaty. We expected that the threat of this whole class of weapons would disappear. Yet, that turned out to be a false hope. Toxin weapons are being used right now in Afghanistan and Southeast Asia. Re-

peated calls to stop violating international agreements go unheeded. Outrages against the dignity of humanity continue. But the Soviet Union, Vietnam, and Laos continue to deny their acts which we and others have documented.

We cannot, and will not, remain silent about the death and suffering caused by chemical and toxin weapons since the mid-1970s. Yet, we know it is not sufficient merely to exhort the world to condemn those who supply and use them. Rather, we must constructively find a way to insure that these weapons are effectively abolished.

Evidence of Soviet Use

Toxins and chemical warfare agents have been developed in the Soviet Union and provided to Laos and Vietnam. The Soviets use these agents, themselves, in Afghanistan and have participated in their preparation and use in Southeast Asia. Neither the Vietnamese, Laotians, nor Afghans could have developed or produced these weapons. The Soviet Union can, however, and has extensively trained and equipped its forces for this type of warfare.

An incident which occurred in 1979, in Sverdlovsk, in the Soviet Union raised questions about Soviet compliance with the prohibition on production of biological weapons as well. A sudden major pulmonary anthrax outbreak occurred

near a suspected biological weapons facility. The Soviet explanation continues to be inconsistent with available evidence.

Nearly 8 years ago, the world first heard of the use of lethal chemical weapons in Laos. In 1978, similar reports began coming out of Kampuchea, and in 1979 from Afghanistan. We now have accumulated a large body of evidence on the use of these weapons and the plight of their victims. The judgments are well documented, and the facts do not support any other conclusion. The United States has raised this issue publicly in the United Nations, with Congress, and elsewhere. We have issued a series of reports providing extensive evidence of these attacks and the agents used. The most recent report was submitted to the Congress and United Nations by Secretary Shultz on November 29, 1982.

Canada, Thailand, and the United Nations have produced documentation. Other nations have also voiced their concern through their votes in the United Nations and individual and collective statements. Private individuals and organizations are also being heard. Some of these individuals are here today.

It is not as if we were dealing in an area in which civilized standards are vague or international law inadequate. To the contrary: There are two principal international agreements which place restrictions on chemical, biological, and toxin warfare. The first is the 1925 Geneva protocol, one of the oldest treaties on weapons still in force, which prohibits the first use of these types of weapons. The second treaty is the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention which bans the development, production, stockpiling, transfer, and possession of biological and toxin weapons. Both the United States and the Soviet Union are parties to this treaty as are Afghanistan, Laos, and Vietnam. Not only are both these treaties being violated in Southeast Asia and Afghanistan but so are universally accepted standards of international law and respect for humanity.

Implications for U.S.-Soviet Relations

The continuing use of chemical and toxin weapons in Southeast Asia and Afghanistan has obvious implications for U.S.-Soviet relations. It does not mean that we can no longer work with the

Soviet Union to build a more stable and secure world, for as the two superpowers we have a special responsibility. It does mean, however, that the policies of our nation cannot be based on a benign or naive view of the Soviet Union and its intentions. The President has noted the responsibilities we carry and the need for strength and preparedness. With a realistic appraisal of Soviet goals and an appreciation that they are not constrained by some of the values we espouse, we can proceed, with caution and prudence, to help build a world eventually free from chemical, biological, and toxin weapons.

We have all heard the charges that the continuing Soviet defiance of international norms through the use of chemical and toxin weapons proves that arms control cannot work. Further, if the Soviets would so blatantly violate two important international treaties, what will keep them from violating other arms control agreements as well? We would contend that Soviet actions lead to a different conclusion—real, equitable, and fully verifiable arms control is an absolute necessity. It is not that arms control is pointless; it is that we have to do a better job of it.

Effective arms control is necessary if we are to reduce the number of destructive weapons in the world and reduce the risk of war. As the President has said, arms control is not an end in itself, but a vital means toward insuring peace and international stability.

Effective Procedures for Compliance With Treaties

Yet, if arms control is to work, agreements of this kind must be fully and effectively verified. The Soviet Union will not feel compelled to live by its international agreements if it knows that digression from those agreements will go undetected and unchallenged, and it is not obliged to pay a political cost. To sign agreements which lack tough verification standards would be not only misleading but also a disservice to all who want real arms control. To refuse to sign equitable agreements with strong verification procedures which are in our own interest would be equally misguided.

The Geneva protocol and the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention do not contain verification provisions or adequate measures to address questions of compliance. We are seek-

ing, with others, to remedy these shortcomings and to establish Soviet compliance with both agreements. In December, the U.N. General Assembly recommended by an overwhelming vote to call on the states that are parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention to hold a special conference as soon as possible to establish effective procedures for compliance with its provisions. In December the U.N. General Assembly also requested the Secretary General to establish procedures to investigate promptly possible violations of the 1925 Geneva protocol. We believe it is important that both resolutions be implemented promptly, and we will continue to participate in follow-on actions.

The United States strongly supported the adoption of both resolutions. The Soviet Union and a number of its allies did not. Soviet cooperation is necessary if we are to achieve the goals embodied in the resolutions which are directed at making these two treaties effective. Opportunities are available to the Soviet Union for such cooperation.

Impartial Verification

We have taken steps to achieve a comprehensive ban on chemical weapons. On February 10 we tabled, in the 40-nation Committee on Disarmament in Geneva, our detailed views on the content of a complete and verifiable chemical weapons convention. In presenting this initiative, we reiterated our commitment to the objective of a chemical weapons ban and stressed its urgency.

We propose that any activity to create or maintain a chemical weapons capability should be forbidden. Existing chemical weapons stocks and production and filling facilities should be promptly declared and destroyed over a specified time period.

Our proposal emphasizes the importance of mandatory on-site inspection. An independent, impartial verification system observed by, and responsive to, all parties is essential if we are to be confident that the provisions of the convention are faithfully observed. National technical means alone are insufficient, as they are available only to a few and have only a limited verification usefulness. Systems of "national verification," or self-inspection, are not the answer.

We have proposed that the following be subject to mandatory on-site inspection:

- Declared chemical weapons stocks and the process of their elimination;

- Declared chemical weapons production and filling facilities and the process of their elimination; and

- Declared facilities for permitted production of chemicals which pose particular risks.

We have also proposed an obligation to permit inspections on a challenge basis when questions of compliance arise. The verification approach we have proposed is tough but fair and practical. Although no one can guarantee absolute verification, we believe that our security and that of all other countries would be safeguarded. We are insisting on a level of verification which meets that objective, and we are prepared to explore seriously any alternative suggestions by other nations to achieve effective verification.

Conclusion

Our views are not fixed but subject to further refinement. The possibility of resuming bilateral negotiations with the Soviet Union remains open. Such negotiations occurred earlier but lapsed in deadlock in mid-1980, principally over the issue of verification. We have repeatedly stated that for bilateral negotiations to be fruitful, the Soviet Union would need to demonstrate, rather than simply profess, that it is ready to accept effective provisions to verify compliance with a chemical weapons prohibition. We must also be assured that the Soviet Union is willing to abide by existing agreements.

The focus of negotiations should be on the difficult issues which are impeding progress, especially verification and compliance. Such issues must be resolved if genuine achievements are to take place. Concentrating on the less contentious issues, or even drafting treaty texts, would be a fruitless exercise if

an effective verification framework cannot be built.

We hope that our arms control initiatives regarding these weapons will succeed. We do not have any illusions. Agreement will require a major revision of Soviet military strategy which accepts use of these weapons. We must also overcome longstanding Soviet aversion to effective on-site monitoring. Therefore, conclusion of an acceptable agreement cannot be guaranteed.

This Administration remains dedicated to the goal of completely eliminating all chemical, biological, and toxin weapons. Success in this enterprise would enhance not only our security but that of the whole world. ■

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