

U.S. protective gear may not ward off some Iraqi chemical weapons

WASHINGTON (AP) — Iraqi scientists know how to make chemical weapons that can penetrate military protective clothing, and Iraq imported up to 25 metric tons last month of a powder that is a crucial ingredient to such "dusty" weapons.

Iraq told the United Nations the powder was destined for a pharmaceutical company that a former weapons inspector says was ordered by President Saddam Hussein before the 1991 Persian Gulf War to work on chemical and biological weapons.

The powder, sold under the brand name Aerosil, has particles so small that, when coated with deadly poisons, they can pass through the tiniest gaps in protective suits.

Experts inside and outside the U.S. government say they are not certain Iraq has dusty chemical weapons. Declassified U.S. intelligence documents say Iraq produced a dusty form of the blister agent mustard in the 1980s and used it during its eight-year war with Iran.

If Iraq made and used a powdered form of its deadliest nerve agent, VX, it could kill U.S. troops dressed in full protective gear, according to a 1990 Defense Intelligence Agency assessment. Although the military's protective

suits have been improved since then, experts say dusty weapons could penetrate the new suits.

Pentagon officials refused to discuss the permeability of the new suits or whether Iraq has weapons that could pass through them. Such information is classified, they said.

The 1990 DIA document said soldiers could protect themselves by throwing rain ponchos over their chemical suits, which would reduce the fatality risk to near zero. One expert wrote later: "One gets the sense that this was recommended in the face of few other options."

The researcher, Eric Croddy of the private Center for Nonproliferation Studies, said dusty VX would be a serious danger to U.S. troops. VX is so toxic that, in its liquid form, a drop on the skin can kill within minutes.

"The effects of dusty VX, depending on how it gets in the body, would be somewhat faster," Croddy said. "It's certainly much more injurious and much more of a severe threat."

Dusty chemical weapons are formed by mixing a liquid chemical agent with a fine powder to coat the powder's tiny particles with the deadly poison. The particles' small size allows them to pass through the fabric of a pro-

CHEMICAL WARFARE

Under-protected

The suits available to U.S. soldiers may not protect against some chemical and biological weapons known as "dusty" weapons. Made with a powder called aerosil, these weapons have particles so small they can sift through the protective gear of the current gear.



SOURCES: U.S. Army Soldier Systems Center; Associated Press

tective suit and any tiny gap around the seal of a gas mask.

The latest U.S. military protective suits have a layer of charcoal in the fabric to trap poisons that might penetrate outer covering, but particles small enough could pass through even the charcoal layer.

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Sbisa, Thursday, Nov. 21, 5 p.m.
- How to Survive in an International Workplace
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- International Music Festival
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- International Opportunities Brown-Bag Luncheon and Panel Discussion
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- Empirical Research on Democracy and Democratization Seminar
Room 2115 Allen Building, Friday & Saturday, Nov. 21 & 22

For more information on these and other activities go to
<http://international.tamu.edu/> and
click on International Education Week

Missouri

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Aggies back into the game. Ironically, all three touchdowns came on the ground, as the Aggies only mustered 36 yards rushing on 31 carries in the game against a rushing defense ranked No. 80 in the nation.

On their first drive, the Aggies were able to get a touchdown in just 1:26. A 55-yard pass from Long to Johnson to the Missouri three-yard line set up senior Joe Weber who pounded it in from one-yard out two plays later to bring the Aggies within seven.

"In the second half we came out with emotion," Johnson said. "We really weren't emotional enough in the first half and we talked about that in the locker room."

The Aggie offensive line seemed to calm down and time again during the ballgame. After putting together its most complete game of the season against Oklahoma, the Aggie line allowed 11 sacks for a loss and one sack against Missouri.

"They were getting a lot of guys up in the box," said A&M head coach R.C. Slocum. "As the game goes on we just have to throw the ball and let them up some."

Despite the troubles the Aggies were having moving the ball on the ground, the Aggie attack continued to be a threat. McNeal was four of six for 80 yards before he left the game. Combined with Long, the Aggies gained 350 yards through the air.

Missouri freshman quarterback Brad Smith gained 264 all-purpose yards in the game as the Tigers to their most impressive victory of the season.

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