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## MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

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23rd September 1983

Prime Minister

I should prefer not to carry this delicate paper to the U.S.

Dear John perhaps you could read above we go.

A.S.C. 23/9

PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO CANADA  
AND THE UNITED STATES

One of the remits from yesterday afternoon's briefing for the Prime Minister was, I understand, the production of a background note on the present United States' chemical warfare capability and their modernisation plan.

I attach a note on these topics. Copies of this letter and of the attachment go to Roger Bone (FCO) and to Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever,  
Barry Neale

(B P NEALE)  
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq



UNITED STATES OFFENSIVE CHEMICAL WARFARE CAPABILITY: BACKGROUND NOTE

Present Capability

1. All US chemical weapons pre-date 1969 when they took a unilateral decision to stop production. They are becoming increasingly obsolescent. The total stockpile is some 30,000 tons of agent of which only some 6500 tons are serviceable. The majority of the stocks are held in the United States. Only some 400 tons are held in the Central Region of Europe, in the form of artillery shells. These stocks are not assigned to NATO and are held under strict national control. Their use by SACEUR in support of non-US units would require Presidential approval.

Congressional Position on Funds for Modernisation

2. The US Administration sought Congressional approval in February 1982 to recommence production of chemical weapons with a view to encouraging the Soviet Union to negotiate an arms control agreement banning such weapons completely or to providing an effective deterrent capability should negotiations fail. Approval has proved difficult though we believe some R&D work has proceeded in the interim.

3. Congress has just authorised \$114.6M for the production of binary chemical weapons as part of the Defence Authorisation Bill for FY 1984. (This decision was due almost entirely to the KAL incident.) \$18.1M is for the procurement of components for 155mm artillery binary projectile and \$96.5M for the procurement of facilities for the manufacture of the Bigeye bomb system. There are also Congressional stipulations attached. A serviceable 155mm round must be withdrawn from the existing stockpile for each new round brought into service. (Initial assembly would probably start in 1985.) The actual production of Bigeye bombs must not start until 1985 and only then if the President certifies that production is in the national interest.

4. However, the issue is not yet finally resolved. Key opponents of CW can be expected to resume the battle during the appropriations stage which is just starting.





23 SEP 1983

