

Executive Summary

The purpose of this study is to identify, if possible, and to describe verification, handling, and assessment methods with respect to unusual events in relation to possible allegations of the use of novel chemical warfare agents, including toxins.

Novel chemical warfare agents may include a newly discovered or existing chemical used for the first time to produce casualties because of its toxic properties.

After a brief review of the relevant part of the "rolling text" of the chemical weapons negotiation in the Conference on Disarmament, the potential for developing novel chemical warfare agents is discussed. The discussion sometimes strays into areas which some might reserve for biological weapons, but this is because the receptor system (i.e., the mammalian body) has only a limited way to respond to injury and also because an unusual event needs to be examined from a variety of angles.

In order to provide examples of unusual events, which incidentally have nothing to do with chemical weapons (novel or old), some recent dramatic events are highlighted.

It is suggested that any investigation of novel chemical weapons has to go through the time-proven method of epidemiological investigation as a first step. Initial assessment of the situation, whether obtained through carefully conducted epidemiological studies or through critical evaluation of preliminary data, should not be handled by a large standing group of specialists, because it is not known what type of event, if any, might have occurred. Instead, a very small (3 persons maximum) standing national advisory committee should be established to monitor events and developments on a continuing basis. This