

Interviews With Alleged Victims of Chemical Attacks1.0 Introduction

The UN team, in its report to the Secretary-General¹⁾, described the difficulties with respect to the evaluation of the alleged gas attacks in a very succinct manner. It was pointed out that it is difficult to judge second-hand information; without having access to the site of an alleged attack, without having the opportunity to examine victims or take samples, or having to rely on eyewitness reports.

For obvious reasons, this investigator was hampered by the same conditions when conducting interviews.

2.0 Interviews With Alleged Victims2.1 Khmer Rouge

Together with an officer from the Canadian Embassy in Bangkok, the principal investigator visited a Khmer Rouge camp on the Thailand-Kampuchea border, close to Nong Pru, on February 19, 1982.

Chemical attacks had been experienced by the Khmer in this region since 1979, we were told. The latest attack occurred on February 13, 1982, at 1800 hrs, about 30 km from the camp. A group of Khmer Rouge was shelled with 105 mm shells, and about 17 soldiers became ill. Symptoms described were "burning in eyes, with tears," vomition, dry throat, shortness of breath, burning sensations in the breast and abdomen, with swelling of the abdomen. The gas was said to smell "like perfume", and to cause "confusion".

The casualties were transported to the base camp hospital, treated with corticosteroids, antibiotics, atropine and fluids by 2200 hrs. Most victims recovered speedily. A group of 7 victims were in the hospital hut and we interviewed them. The Khmer Rouge said that it was too dark to see any color of the gas. Not all shells were gas-releasing ones, but all shells were said to have exploded in the ground. The victims did not have any skin reactions.

¹⁾ UN General Assembly, 36th Session. Chemical and Bacteriological (Biological) Weapons, Report of the Secretary-General, Nov. 20, 1981. A/36/613, paragraphs 48 & 49.