

10 Jun 44

Chiefs of Staff Committee
(through MGO)

Canadian Chemical Warfare Policy

1. The purpose of this submission is to review and restate Canadian Chemical Warfare Policy, as a whole, in the light of the progress of the war, and in a form which may, if approved, be forwarded for consideration and decision by the Cabinet War Committee.
2. At their 247th Meeting held on 3 Sep 43, the Cdn Chiefs of Staff referred back to Cdn CW Inter-Service Board a proposed programme for providing a strategic reserve of CW weapons in Canada, with the instruction that such programme be held in abeyance until it was established, after study of British and United States stocks and sources of supply, whether a strategical reserve in Canada was likely to be required and whether there was a further operational requirement by Cdn Forces for such weapons, not likely to be provided for out of British or United States sources of supply.
3. In conveying this decision, CGS further instructed that a review of Cdn CW Policy, as a whole, should be prepared, and recommendations thereon forwarded for consideration of the Chiefs of Staff Committee. This review, in comprehensive form, with appended relevant documents is annexed hereto, together with Minutes of 29th and 31st Meetings of the Cdn CW Inter-Service Board.
4. In the following paragraphs are noted the proposed revised Cdn Chemical Warfare Policy, with brief comments in support of each clause.

(1) Canada will continue to provide and maintain adequate facilities for the design and production of such Chemical Warfare defensive equipment as may be necessary for the protection of Canadian forces against any form of chemical warfare attack. In times of peace, these facilities should be capable of rapid expansion to meet the contingent requirements of war.

Comments: This confirms a long-recognized principle that anti-gas equipment of the armed forces is a special responsibility of each government within the British Commonwealth.

Although basic British design has been consistently adhered to, it is well to bear in mind that a new war gas may render present equipment obsolete, through reduced or cancelled protection, almost overnight. This would call for immediate modification of new and existing equipment.

Sudden demands from their own forces, in such circumstances, would wholly pre-occupy the design and supply facilities of the United Kingdom and the United States. Canada would then necessarily be dependent on her own resources.

The foregoing is therefore merely a reiteration of policy which has been operative in Canada even prior to the present war. From 1938, as a result of the establishment of a small technical CW organization in Canada, practically all of the modern respirators available in this Dominion to the Armed Services, were manufactured in assembly plants operating under Department of National Defence.

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Minutes and Documents of the Cabinet War Committee,
Volume XVI, July - December 1944, (R.G. 2, 7c, Volume 16)

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