

as long as Israel possessed a presumed nuclear capability. Both superpowers rejected such arguments.

During the past year, a number of events drew attention to the development and production of chemical and biological weapons in the Third World. For example, on 19 August 1989, the *New York Times* reported that Iran had tried to obtain toxins from Canada and the Netherlands, probably for a research programme on the production of biological weapons.¹ The newspaper went on to explain that in December 1988, an Iranian researcher had contacted Dr. Bruno Schiefer, Director of the University of Saskatchewan's Toxicology Research Laboratory, in order to negotiate the purchase of toxins which could be used to produce biological weapons. The *New York Times* reported that Dr. Schiefer informed the Canadian Government and rejected the transaction. Canada then alerted the members of the Australia Group (comprising nineteen countries manufacturing chemical products, including Canada, which are trying to impose tighter controls on the export of chemical agents which could be used to produce poisonous gas).

On 17 March 1990, the US Government again commented on the facility at Rabta, Libya. The White House spokesperson, Marlin Fitzwater, said: "There is evidence to suggest that Rabta is producing chemical weapons.... The facility is dangerous and becoming increasingly so." When questioned about the possibility of a military operation, Mr. Fitzwater simply stated: "We are not ruling anything out."² One week later, several sources reported that a fire had destroyed the Rabta facility, and Libya immediately accused the United States, Israel and the Federal Republic of Germany of being involved.³ However, on 7 April, Washington said that it had satellite photos proving that the fire had been staged.⁴ Just over one month later, the United States stated that activities had resumed at the chemical facility, which was suspected of being used to produce weapons.⁵

On 2 April 1990, President Saddam Hussein of Iraq acknowledged for the first time that his country possessed binary chemical weapons (composites which, when combined, become toxic). The Iraqi President added: "We shall ensure that fire ravages half of Israel if that country

¹ "Iran Is Said to Try to Obtain Toxins." *New York Times*, 13 August 1989, p. 11. See also "Harmful Fungi Requested by Iranian, Scientist Says." *Globe and Mail*, 14 August 1989, p. A1 and A2; and "Armes chimiques: l'Iran aurait tenté d'acheter des toxines au Canada." *Le Devoir*, 14 August 1989, p. 2.

² "Washington et Bonn accusent la Libye de produire des armes chimiques." *La Presse*, 8 March 1990, p. B7.

³ "L'usine de Rabta aurait été dévastée par un incendie." *Le Monde*, 16 March 1990, p. 8.

⁴ *The Arms Control Reporter* (1990), pp. 704: E2.6. See also "L'usine chimique de Rabta à subi très peu de dégats." *Le Monde*, 21 March 1990, p. 6; and "Damage in Libyan Fire Reassessed as U.S. Sees Possible Hoax." *The Washington Post*, 31 March 1990, p. A23.

⁵ *The Arms Control Reporter* (1990), p. 704.E2.8.