

Precursors of single-purpose agents. These are usually the substances corresponding to the last stage of the manufacturing process and can be used in bindery munitions. They may be much less toxic than the previous categories or even non-toxic.

Incapacitants. These are not generally used for industrial purposes.

Irritants. These non-lethal substances are used in police operations.

Selection of criteria for definition

In her report at our meetings with experts, Mrs. Freeman, the Australian expert, gave a perfect definition of the characteristic which a chemical compound must have to be used as a chemical warfare agent, and I will not, therefore, repeat what she said.

The number of substances which combine all these characteristics at once is relatively small. It would therefore be intellectually satisfying to draw up a formula whereby each characteristic would be given a weighted value and each new substance having the desired toxicity would be the subject of a study to determine whether it satisfied the other criteria. Once a compound's characteristics had been evaluated, its manufacture could thus be authorized or prohibited. The Federal Republic of Germany has proposed a system of this type (CCD/458).

However, this approach has a major disadvantage: each new compound requires an appropriate study which has much in common with the developmental studies for the chemical warfare agents which the convention is supposed to prohibit. Moreover, while monitoring and control under the convention could be limited because of the limited number of substances that would in the end be involved, the selection of substances to be considered would necessitate the establishment of too cumbersome an organization.

However, it should be noted that, of the criteria used to define a chemical warfare agent, the most important is, by definition, a high enough degree of toxicity, and the other criteria can be modified to a greater or lesser extent as appropriate.

In the absence of a more satisfactory method, it is therefore the toxicity criterion which must serve as the basis for defining chemical warfare agents, with an appropriate threshold value being established for each of the categories defined above.