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CANADA AND "YELLOW RAIN": TIME FOR RE-EVALUATION

1. A "Perfect Fit"

The United States government claims that the armed forces of Viet Nam, controlled by the Soviet Union, have been terrorizing the military rebels and civilian populations in Laos and Kampuchea with lethal toxic weapons:

For those directly exposed to this "yellow rain", its effect was quick and dramatic. They would experience an early onset of violent itching, vomiting, dizziness, and distorted vision. Within a short time, they would vomit blood-tinged material, then large quantities of bright red blood. Within an hour, they would die, apparently of shock and the massive loss of blood from the stomach ... These toxins have produced all of the symptoms ... mentioned, and they are not known to produce any symptoms not reported. The fit, in other words, was perfect.¹

According to Washington, trichothecene toxins, produced by species of fungi with genus name Fusarium,

were found in the urine, blood, and tissues of victims of "yellow rain" attacks in Laos and Kampuchea ... a common factor in the evidence is

Soviet involvement in the use of these weapons ... Our judgement is based both on our newly acquired information and on continued analysis of prior data about Soviet mycotoxin research and development, chemical warfare training in Viet Nam, the presence of Soviet chemical warfare advisers in Laos and Viet Nam, and the presence of the same unusual trichothecene toxins in samples collected from all three countries.²

Reports charging more than 10,000 "yellow rain" fatalities in Laos and Kampuchea (formerly Cambodia) were signed by Secretaries of State Alexander Haig in March 1982, and George Shultz in November 1982.³ The State Department condemns the U.S.S.R. for violating the 1925 Geneva Protocol prohibiting at least the initiatory use of chemical weapons, and the 1972 Convention banning the production, stockpiling and transfer of biological weapons.⁴

The U.S.S.R. categorically denies that it has ever used chemical weapons or transferred them to another country.⁵ Viet Nam, Laos, and the