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ALLEGED USE OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Mark MacGuigan, announced today that Canada is submitting to the UN Secretary General an independent report on the alleged use of chemical weapons in Southeast Asia.

This report has been prepared by Dr. Bruno Schiefer, Chairman of the Toxicology Group, University of Saskatchewan, who was invited by the Department of External Affairs in February 1982 to undertake a scientific study of the alleged use of chemical weapons in Southeast Asia, in particular the use of mycotoxins as a lethal agent. Dr. Schiefer is recognized as one of the foremost experts on toxicology (mycotoxins) in Canada. Dr. MacGuigan made his announcement in Bangkok, Thailand at the conclusion of a two-day official visit during which the subject of the alleged use of chemical weapons in Laos and Cambodia was discussed with Thai authorities.

Canada has been concerned with the alleged use of chemical weapons in Laos and Cambodia since reports of the use of some sort of lethal or incapacitating agents began to be received from Laotian refugees in Thailand in 1976. In addition to humanitarian concerns, Canada has been concerned with the credibility of the 1925 Geneva Protocol which prohibits the use of chemical weapons. To ensure that the extensive reports of the use of chemical weapons in Southeast Asia were investigated, Canada co-sponsored a UN General Assembly resolution in 1980 which established an international group of experts to investigate these reports, and a subsequent resolution in 1981 which extended the group's mandate. In March 1981, Canada had submitted to the UN Secretary-General information volunteered by refugees in Thailand on the alleged use of chemical weapons.