

## **CIA REPORT CITES IRAQ'S TEST OF POISON**

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Summary: Rep. Peter DeFazio says use of the poison that he had tried to have banned underscores loose U.S. controls on lethal agents

A highly lethal coyote poison that an Oregon congressman asked the Bush administration to ban has turned up in Saddam Hussein's chemical laboratories in Iraq.

U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Ore., last year had asked the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to halt sales and production of Compound 1080 due to terrorism concerns. They "basically blew me off," he said this week.

But buried in a 1,000-page report to the CIA publicly available at the time was a photograph of a can of Compound 1080 -- manufactured in Alabama, and used to kill coyotes and wolves in the West -- that coalition forces recovered in Iraq.

Informants, reports and a lab notebook showed the Iraqi Intelligence Service had tested the poison on animals, and mixed it with food to see if it affected the appearance or smell, possibly for political assassination, the report said.

The same service was known for testing poisons on political prisoners and apparently continued its basic chemical research in the few years prior to the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

The report, by the chief U.S. weapons inspector in Iraq, was widely publicized late last year for disproving Bush administration claims that Saddam was rebuilding a nuclear weapons program, and had harbored chemical and biological weapons.

It also details Iraq's crude chemical research, such as schemes to send sarin and mustard gas to the United States and Europe in perfume bottles, and the testing of Compound 1080, or sodium fluoroacetate, and other poisons on mice, rats, rabbits and pigs. Compound 1080 has no known antidote.

DeFazio, a member of the House Committee on Homeland Security, said Compound 1080's presence in Iraq underscores the loose controls on the tasteless, odorless, colorless poison. He said he will draft a bill next month to outlaw production, possession and import of Compound 1080.

"Now that we know it's something that cropped up in Iraq, it's extraordinary we would allow this to continue," he said.

He said it reminded him of the people sickened in 1984 when followers of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh contaminated salad bars in The Dalles with salmonella bacteria.

"If they had had 1080, maybe a lot more people would have been hurt," he said.

DeFazio said he also would ask federal agencies to try to trace the poison found in Iraq to determine how it got there.

Compound 1080 was developed to control rats. But scientists later described it as "so generally and highly toxic that it is too dangerous for general distribution."

#### A tool for terrorists

The FBI, Air Force and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service have publicly listed Compound 1080 as a chemical agent terrorists could use to poison water supplies. The Canadian agency reported that the poison "could be bought or stolen."

It is legal in the United States only in a special sheep collar used in some states. Coyotes attacking domestic sheep puncture the collar and contact the poison, which kills them. Oregon Gov. John Kitzhaber in 1998 prohibited the use of such 1080-filled collars in Oregon.

The Predator Defense Institute, based in Eugene, has pushed for years to ban the poison and had asked the administration to halt its use shortly after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

"If anyone is under the illusion that the administration is protecting them, this is a wakeup call," said Brooks Fahy, the group's executive director. "Nobody really knows how much 1080 is out there or where it is, and this proves it."

The Iraq discovery highlights the rudimentary state of Saddam's weapons program, said George Smith, a senior fellow at GlobalSecurity.org, a policy think tank, who discussed the find on the group's Web site. Absent actual chemical weapons, Iraq was investigating an off-the-shelf poison well-known in the scientific world.

"I don't think it qualifies as a (weapon of mass destruction), but it can certainly be used to kill someone," Smith said.

#### A brief mention

He questioned why the find received only brief mention in the report to the CIA and whether authorities tried to find out how the poison got from the United States to Iraq.

The poison is manufactured by one U.S. company, Tull Chemical Co. in Oxford, Ala., and much is exported to other countries such as New Zealand for pest control. The can pictured in Iraq bears a Tull label.

A CIA spokesman referred questions about the Iraq find to the Defense Intelligence Agency, where a spokesman said he could not answer further questions because the group that produced the report has been disbanded.

Charles Wigley, owner of Tull Chemical, on Friday said he has not been contacted by any government officials seeking to track the poison found in Iraq. He said he did not know it had been recovered there but was not surprised.

"The fact that there's one can doesn't shock me," he said. "It's been used for pest control purposes all over the world."

He said it could be used against large populations only in very large quantities, and he would be surprised if large quantities had been found in Iraq. Most Compound 1080 sold in the Middle East has gone to Israel for rat control, he said.

It is dyed black, so its presence would be obvious if it were added to food or water supplies, he said.

Wolves poisoned

Federal officials have discovered Compound 1080 being spread illegally in the West. A Fish and Wildlife Service forensic laboratory in Ashland found that at least two and possibly four gray wolves were killed in 2001 by the poison in Idaho.

Authorities publicly warned at the time that poison baits could endanger children and pets. They fear hidden stockpiles of the poison may remain from prior to 1972, when President Nixon signed an order banning its use.

It later was reauthorized for the sheep collars.

DeFazio asked U.S. Environmental Protection Agency administrator in March 2004 to halt production of Compound 1080, saying "the opportunity for abuse is staggering and entirely unnecessary." EPA responded that the poison was "tightly regulated" and said it would follow the lead of the Homeland Security Department.

DeFazio made the same request in October to the department, which gave him a classified "risk assessment" and said it could not prohibit or recommend the prohibition of chemicals.

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