

# U.S. Customs seizes chemical shipment to Iraq

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. Customs agents in New York impounded Friday a shipment to Iraq of 74 drums of potassium fluoride, a principal ingredient of a deadly form of nerve gas, the Customs Service said yesterday.

"It's going to sit at the airport until it's cleared and Customs will keep a close watch on it," said Michael Kaufman, a spokesman for the Customs Service in New York City.

The disclosure by Customs headquarters in Washington came one day after the State Department announced a U.S. ban on the export of a list of chemical agents to Iraq and Iran, which are engaged in a protracted war.

Potassium fluoride headed the list of five chemicals banned for shipment to the two countries.

Christine Frazer, a spokeswoman for the Customs Service, said that on March 2, agents at New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport "detained" the shipment of 1,100 pounds of potassium fluoride destined for the "Ministry of Pesticides" in Baghdad, the Iraqi capital.

Later, she said the shipment was

impounded on Friday, apparently after the announcement of the new U.S. export restrictions.

Ms. Frazer said the chemicals originally were detained after questions arose as to whether the shipment needed an export license.

Other information on the shipment was not immediately available.

On Friday, State Department spokesman John Hughes said the United States has evidence that Iraq has used nerve gas in its war against Iran.

Earlier, the department had accused Iraq of using mustard gas and

other potent chemical weapons forbidden by international agreements.

Hughes said an immediate ban had been slapped on the export to either Iraq or Iran of a list of chemicals, including potassium fluoride, dimethyl methylphosphonate, methylphosphonol difluoride, phosphorous oxychloride and thioglycol.

He said applications for the export of the listed chemicals would be considered on a case-by-case basis, but they would be "generally denied where there is reason to believe that these chemicals will be used in producing chemical weapons or

would otherwise be devoted to chemical warfare.

Potassium fluoride is said to be a principal ingredient in Tabun, one of the earliest forms of nerve gas, developed in Nazi Germany in about 1936.

A tiny amount of nerve gas can kill virtually instantaneously, by paralyzing the nervous system, thus preventing the heart and lungs from functioning.

Also on Friday, the United Nations Security Council condemned the use of chemical weapons in the Iran-Iraq war without naming Iraq

as the culprit. Iran said the action was "not strong enough" and vowed to keep fighting until Iraq's president is captured and tried as a war criminal.

Iraq repeatedly has denied Iran's allegations that it used chemical weapons.

In response to charges from Tehran, four specialists sent by the United Nations to Iran two weeks ago reported Monday they had found evidence during an on-site investigation in Iran that mustard gas and a nerve agent had been used. But they refrained from identifying Iraq as the culprit.

4/1/84

FOR FLUORIDATION  
THIS HAS LONG  
BEEN KNOWN

\* 15 lb drums

POTASSIUM FLUORIDE COULD BE USED  
FOR FLUORIDATION - SAME AS SODIUM FLUORIDE IS  
NOW USED.