

Poison Gas – A Terror Weapon

Overview

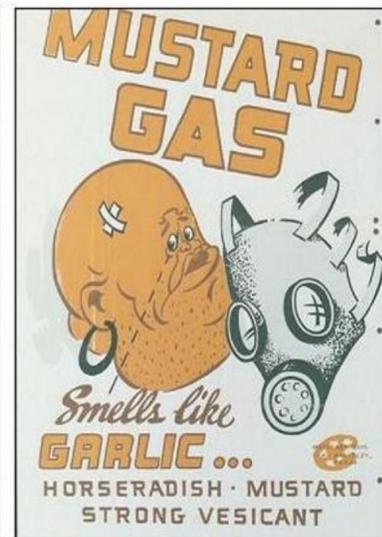
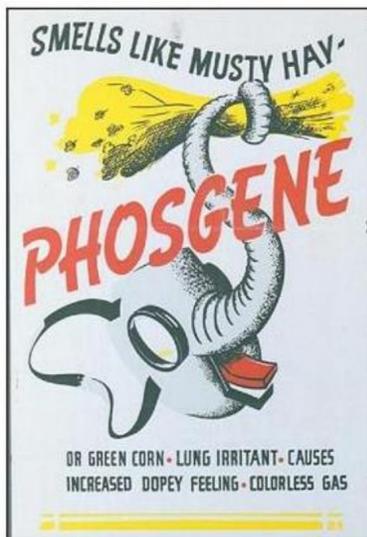
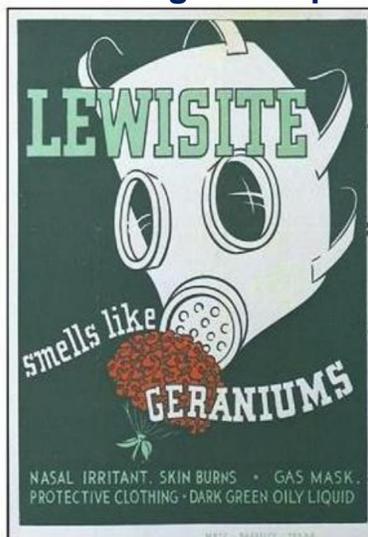
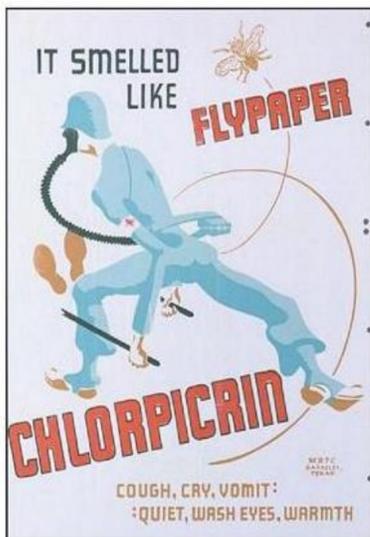
World War I is seen as the birth of chemical warfare, with a variety of different chemical agents being used on a very large scale. Approximately 1.25 million soldiers were affected by these attacks, including around 91,000 fatalities. Although fatalities of poison gas were far lower than that of other weaponry, such as machine guns, it was still one of the most feared weapons of World War I.

Not all gases were designed to kill, many were designed to reduce the ability of the individual to fight. An example of this is Tear gas, this gas was designed to cause the victim's eyes to stream and cause him to sneeze violently. The image to the right shows several soldiers whose eyes have been damaged by gas. They are finding their way around by holding on to the soldier in front of them.



Common Gases

Phosgene (chemical name: Carbonyl dichloride), Mustard Gas (chemical name: Bis(2-chloroethyl) sulfide), Lewisite (chemical name: 2-chloroethenylarsonous dichloride) and Chlorpicrin (chemical name: trichloro(nitro)methane) were common gases used in World War I. To help the soldiers and civilians identify these gases many posters were produced, some of these are shown below. These posters often included additional information on the effects of the gas and precautions that should be taken if encountered.



<http://www.thehistorypress.co.uk/index.php/updates/Chemical-Warfare/>

Delivery

Some of the ways in which gas was delivered to the enemy are shown below. [A] Gas being released from 'no man's land' and carried on the wind to the enemy [B] A British gas bomb [C] Men loading a Levins projector, these were used to fire gas canisters at the enemy.



Protection

As gas attacks became more common there was a need to protect the soldiers. The most common protection was the gas mask. When these were not available men often used rags over their faces that had been made wet with their own urine. As the picture below shows, it was not only soldiers that needed protection.

