

Government Steps Out Of Mace Controversy

WASHINGTON — Do persons sprayed with the anti-riot device, Chemical Mace, suffer permanent eye or nerve damage?

The federal government, bogged down in a jurisdictional dispute, doesn't seem to be trying to answer that question.

Police departments throughout the nation at first thought Chemical Mace held great promise as a humane way to subdue rioters and attackers. But police hands are tied on using it because of a controversy that has developed over its possible long-range harmful effects.

Faced by another "long, hot summer," police want an answer on whether it is safe to use. Many departments meanwhile have stopped issuing it to officers. In Ann Arbor, use of Mace was suspended in late March to await a study and report from University of Michigan authorities.

POLICE AGENCIES had been looking toward the federal government to decide the issue. But it now appears to have been lost in the bureaucratic mazes of the U.S. Public Health Service and Food and Drug Administration.

Both agencies claim they have no jurisdiction because Chemical Mace is not sold to the public and indications are that preliminary tests made by the FDA may fall by the wayside.

Also wanting an answer on whether the anti-riot device is safe to use on humans are municipal governments, many of them in Michigan.

They are being deluged with complaints by local civil rights activists, many of whom are using the argument over Chemical Mace as ammunition in their charges of police brutality and limitation of civil liberties. Then there is Allan Litman, inventor of the device. With huge profits at stake, he is firing back at recent federal implications that his product may not be safe for use on humans.

Litman's firm, the General Ordnance Equipment Corp. of Pittsburgh, started selling the anti-riot device to police departments about three years ago.

It always has been a subject for argument. But this developed into a downpour about 10 days ago when Dr. William H. Stewart, U.S. Surgeon General, told state and local health officials in a letter that Chemical Mace was causing long-range damaging effects.

Stewart said the function of the sprays chief ingredient described chemically as "1,1,1 trichloroethane" — is unknown.

THE FOOD AND DRUG Administration, since April 1, an arm of the Public Health Service, has made limited studies of the effects of Mace. But its findings at this point are inconclusive. Tests on dogs and rabbits, the FDA said, showed that eye irritations caused by the chemical could be eased by flushing with plain water.

An also irritated Litman said that Stewart and FDA officials "don't know what they're talking about."

"Chemical Mace cannot be adequately tested under laboratory conditions — you have to measure the results when it is used under actual or simulated attack conditions," Litman said.

"You have to remember it is not a food or a drug which carries the correct dosage on the label," he added. "Chemical Mace is a weapon that is used as humane alternative to more damaging weapons such as a club or a gun."

Stewart's latest suggestion is almost a direct reversal from an earlier FDA position which contended that the riot control agent appeared to have no long-range effects.

As to new FDA studies asked by Stewart, there may not be any. "This really is not our

Supply Expedition

EDMONTON, Alta. — A Canadian military aircraft left with food and supplies for a "square mile of ice in the Arctic Ocean. The first man, 40-year-old expedition leader, veteran Arctic explorer Wally Herbert, 33, is on a 3,500-mile trek from Peled Barrow, Alaska, to Spitzbergen island in the Greenland Sea to measure ice and snow depths, make weather observations, study wildlife distribution and examine human environmental potentials in the north.

Off Color Joke

SMETHWICK, England — John Stanislaus lost his driver's license for a year and was fined \$120 because the story he told police after an auto accident was off color.

Police said he told them the other driver "came across the lights on blue."

bag," an agency official told this reporter, implying he wished the entire controversy would disappear.

The only way the FDA and PHIS could remain officially involved would be under the hazardous substances act — and only then if Chemical Mace were sold to the public.

THERE IS a civilian version or variant of Chemical Mace which is sold to the public. Produced by Defense Instruments, Inc., also of Pittsburgh, it is marketed under the name, The Preventor. Evidently

there is no corporate relationship between Defense Instruments, Inc., and General Ordnance Equipment Corp., although there was a suggestion that the Chemical Mace producer may be a supplier to the manufacturer of the civilian protective device. Some of the more potent ingredients of the police mixture are omitted from the civilian weapon.

A spokesman for the public health service said its interest is in "good health of individuals" and in whether there should be standards for treatment of persons subjected to the

chemical spray. But even if the anti-riot device is considered to have dangerous long-range effects, the PHIS would not have enforcement powers. It could only issue a warning. It would be up to individual police agencies to determine whether to continue use of Mace.

Another PHIS official said the agency is trying to encourage private institutions, such as universities, to make tests.

Litman, however, contends that his product has been adequately tested and found to be safe by several other sources, including private laboratories.

"The FDA has never seen positive data on the tests," Litman declared. "It has drawn all its reports from other government agencies."

Litman declined to name the "other government agencies" involved, implying that the PHIS has put the lid on their reports.

He contends that the latest report sent to local health agencies by the surgeon general "was favorable and only repeated what the FDA had said about Chemical Mace in the first place." But the covering letter sent out by Stewart was "misleading," Litman said.

He said that all reports received by his company so far show that Mace effects generally are "only temporary. The more transient effects, which may last a week or so, are skin to sunburn on the skin," he said.

IN REGARD to possible eye damage, Litman said: "It has never been classified even as an eye irritant."

About a fourth of a million cans of Mace have been sold to police agencies, Litman said that so far approximately 20,000 cans have been used by

police in quelling disturbances "without one single report of permanent eye damage."

He said a California surgeon has reported that he examined 125 people subdued by Mace and that the physician certified he had never seen a case of permanent eye damage resulting from its use.

Yet, two physicians, in an article in a national magazine, implied that Mace does cause permanent eye injuries. They also said that the "1,1,1 trichloroethane" irritates the lungs, produces apathy, confusion and dizziness and could

lead to central nervous system depression, liver damage and heart abnormalities.

According to Litman, the apathy and dizziness are a secondary, psychological effect of the temporary blinding pain in the eyes of a person hit in the face by the spray.

Meanwhile the argument rages on.

Ultimately, it may be up to the various police agencies to determine for themselves whether it is safer to take a chance with the chemical spray in a disturbance than use a club or a gun.



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