Sea-dumped Chemical Weapons and the Chemical Weapons Convention

EASTLANT Coastal Maritime Operations Seminar
Riga, 17-19 October 2000

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Chemical Weapons in the CWC

• 3 categories of CW
  (Art. 2 of CWC)
  – Chemical weapons
  – Old chemical weapons
  – Abandoned chemical weapons
Chemical weapons

- Toxic chemicals and their precursors
- Specifically designed munitions and devices
- Any specifically designed equipment for use with the munitions and devices
Old chemical weapons

- CW produced before 1925
- CW produced between 1925 and 1946, which have been verified to be no longer usable
Abandoned chemical weapons

- CW abandoned by one state on the territory of another state
- After 1 January 1925
- Includes OCW
Destruction of CW

- CW: stringent destruction requirements according to treaty-specified timetables and under international supervision

- OCW:
  - < 1925: destroy as toxic waste after confirmation
  - 1925<>1946: detailed declarations; stringent destruction requirements (Art. IV), some flexibility possible

- ACW
  - Does not apply to < 1925
  - Bilateral resolution, if possible
  - Otherwise, help from OPCW
Prohibited destruction methods

- Dumping in any body of water
- Land burial
- Open-pit burning

- Otherwise, a state party determines how it will destroy CW

(CWC, Verification Annex, Part IV(A), C)
Sea-dumped chemical weapons

• No declarations required for CW dumped at sea before 1 January 1985

• No need to retrieve these CW

• Consequently, no need to destroy them
Recovery of sea-dumped CW

• Recovered sea-dumped CW must be destroyed

• Determination of
  – OCW, produced before 1925
  – OCW, produced between 1925 and 1946
  – CW, produced after 1/1/1946

• Determination of ACW status for CW (>1/1/46) and OCW (25<>46)
Some issues

- Sea-dumped CW cannot be destroyed under water
- Can they be moved under water, without being ‘retrieved’, e.g., for purposes of destroying explosive munitions at same site?
- ACW status of recovered sea-dumped CW
- Host-nation support => OPCW determination
- Contact OPCW via National Authority