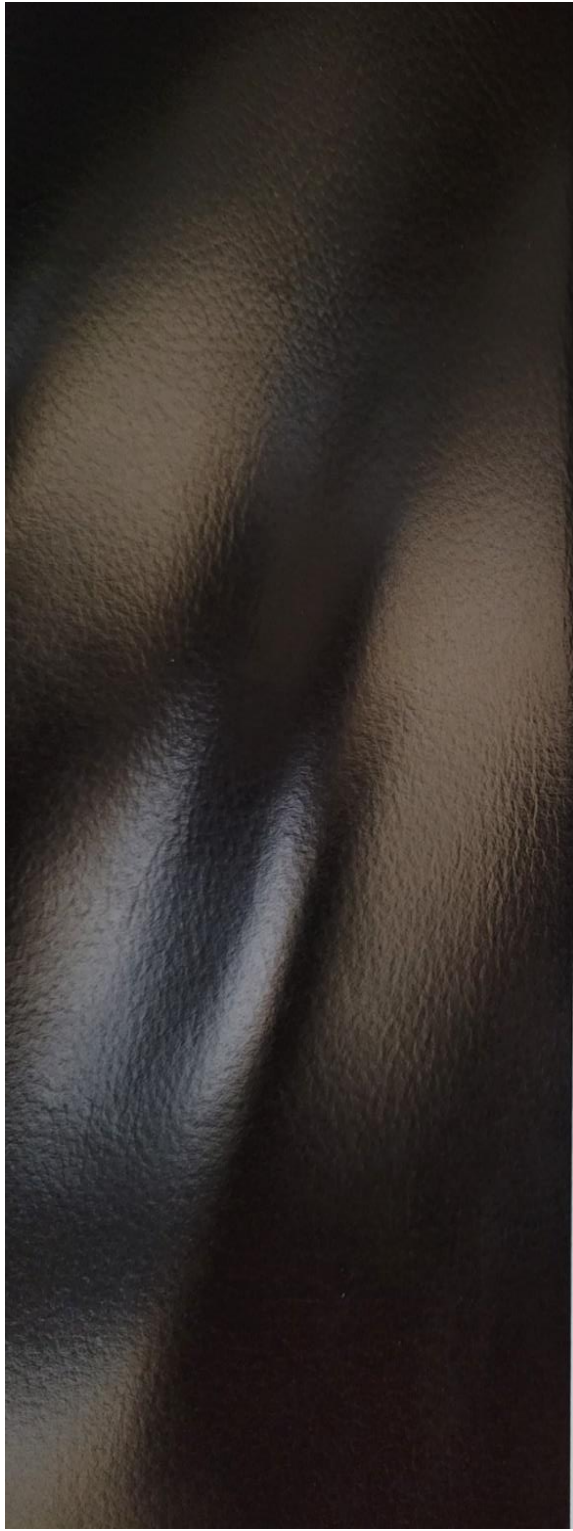


## 76<sup>th</sup> TRANSPORTATION COMPANY APPENDIX A



Above the Golden Python, Steel Box, 1990, challenge coin, Lindwurm, Germany 1990.

The posted articles below were donated by SFC (Retired) Robert Heizler and Veteran, Gloria (Stayrook) Heizler on 5 August 2023 for Operation Golden Python, Steel Box.



# Nerve gas safety plan explained

By JOSEPH OWEN  
and PEGGY DAVIDSON  
Staff writers

PIRMASENS, West Germany — Chemical weapons designed to withstand rumble seat rides will get the equivalent of limousine service when the Army removes them from West Germany this summer.

The 100,000 artillery shells loaded with deadly Sarin and VX nerve agents are already secure without special precautions, Army Brig. Gen. Dennis L. Benchoff told dozens of reporters Thursday at Musterhöf Casern in Pirmasens.

But the Army and West German officials are taking expensive and time-consuming steps to assure that no unsafe incidents occur between the removal of the weapons from the Army depot in Clausen in Rheinland-Pfalz state and their destruction on the Johnston Atoll in the Pacific Ocean.

Benchoff, commander of the 59th Ord Brigade, said the Army has tested the durability of the airtight, moisture-proof shells by pushing them off trucks traveling 30 miles per hour and dropping them 12 times from a height of 40 feet onto a steel plate. No damage resulted, he said.

"These rounds were designed to be transported in wartime conditions without any special provisions," he said.

The Army plans to mount the 155mm and 203mm shells on specially built wooden pallets and to insert each pallet into a vapor-proof secondary steel container. The secondary containers will be packed in military shipping con-

See **GAS** on back page

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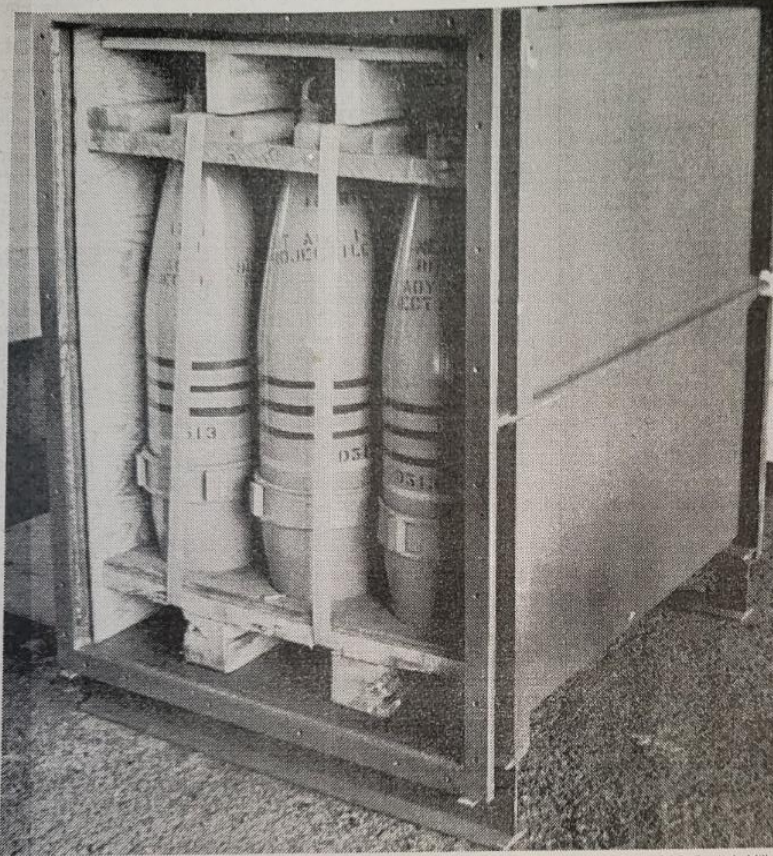
From Page 1

tainers and loaded onto trailers for transport by road and rail to the North Sea port of Nordenham.

Military spokesmen also cited other spe-

cial measures being taken for the operation, which will begin in July and end in September.

They pointed to an additional fence that has been built around the depot and cited a ban on air traffic below 1,985 feet over the facilities at Clausen and nearby Miesau and Nordenham during the entire summer transport period.



S&S: Scott A. Miller

Projectiles carrying deadly gas rest in their shipping container.

## Few details given on gas removal

By JOSEPH OWEN  
and PEGGY DAVIDSON

PIRMASENS, West Germany — Despite the torrent of detail being released about the plan to remove chemical weapons from West Germany, the Army made it clear Thursday that it still has plenty of secrets to keep.

None of the U.S. and West German military officials at a media briefing would release details about exactly when the weapons would be moved, what routes they would take and what kind of security arrangements had been made.

These issues would not be discussed because "that might endanger the security of the removal operation and the safety of the German people," said Brig. Gen. Dennis L. Benchoff, commander of the 59th Ord Brigade.

The military personnel also would not discuss operations at the Army's Fischbach storage depot, long a magnet for demonstrators who believe that poison chemicals are stored there. Benchoff said he knows of no history of such weapons there.

The soldiers who demonstrated the re-

However, Rheinland-Pfalz Interior Minister Rudi Geil said he has asked the federal government to immediately institute the flying ban over Clausen.

But Benchoff said the weapons are safe even from plane crashes when stored in their concrete igloos.

Benchoff added that none of the 30 convoys from Clausen to the railhead in nearby Miesau will operate during thunderstorms or weather similar to the hurricane-strength wind storms that have ravaged Western Europe this winter.

Each convoy will have about 70 vehicles. Twenty vehicles will be military trucks carrying the weapons, while the remainder will carry police, firefighting teams and other emergency personnel.

A West German Defense Ministry spokesman, army Maj. Gen. Klaus Naumann, said planners chose the road-rail-ship transport route because statistical evidence suggests it entails the least risk. Air transport of hazardous cargo does not have as good a safety record as rail transport, he said.

The plan also involves seven overnight train shipments from Miesau to Nordenham, and two ships to carry the weapons to the Pacific.

In light of safety measures, Naumann said the cargo could be jeopardized only if the temperature of the weapons were raised to more than 392 degrees Fahrenheit.

The Army performed several tests on the artillery shells in the United States using extreme heat and succeeded in raising the contents' temperature only to 220 degrees Fahrenheit, military spokesmen said.

Hannelore Höbel, a peace activist involved in Rheinland-Pfalz protests against chemical weapons, said the weapons removal appears to have been planned well. However, she also urged a flight ban over Clausen until the weapons are removed.

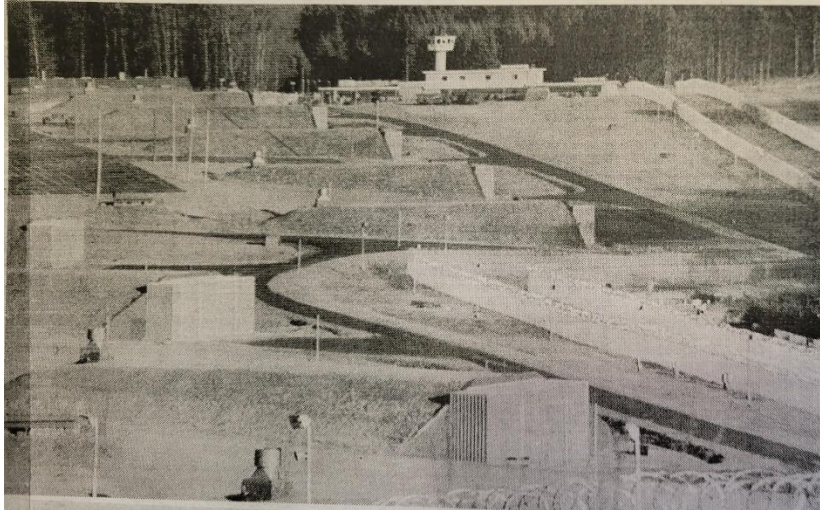
In Bonn, the opposition Social Democrats characterized the transport plan as a "solid foundation" for carrying out the weapons removal. But they criticized the government's ruling coalition for withholding information on the 1986 weapons removal agreement between Chancellor Helmut Kohl and then-President Reagan.

removal equipment at the media conference would not say which units they worked for below the brigade level, the 59th.

The units are classified, said Lt. Col. Robert A. Flocke, 21st Theater Army Area Comd public affairs officer. Flocke said security planners want to avoid making units and individual soldiers targets for terrorists.

The Army also has not said what it plans to do with the Clausen depot after the chemical weapons are gone. West German officials said no cleanup would be needed for civilian use of the site.

# Removal of nerve gas scheduled



The U.S. artillery shells loaded with nerve gas are stored at this depot near Clausen, West Germany.

From staff and wire reports  
 BONN, West Germany — The U.S. and West German military will begin the delicate task of removing more than 100,000 artillery shells loaded with nerve gas this summer, officials said Wednesday.

West German Defense Minister Gerhard Stoltenberg insisted that the transport would present no dangers to the environment or the populace. But he asked West Germans to help make sure there are no attempts to disrupt the shipments.

Stoltenberg said withdrawal of the artillery shells is scheduled to begin in July and last until September. But he said the schedule could change depending on security concerns.

The chemical weapons have long been criticized by West German environmentalists and anti-military activists, who have often staged protests at Fischbach, where they suspected the weapons were stored.

Ronald Reagan, then the U.S. president, and Chancellor Helmut Kohl agreed in May 1986 that the artillery shells would be removed.

The shells contain the nerve gases VX and Sarin said Col. Eckart Fischer of the West German army. He said the total quantity of nerve gas to be shipped out is about 400 tons.

Maj. Gen. John C. Heldstab, deputy chief of staff for operations for the U.S. Army in Europe, said that 100,000 shells represent about 1 percent of the total U.S. stockpile of chemical weapons.

The weapons are stored at a depot near Clausen, Rheinland-Pfalz, Stoltenberg said. It was apparent the first official statement indicating where the chemical weapons are kept.

They will be loaded into thick, air-tight steel magazines that will be placed in specially designed steel metal containers, Stoltenberg said the containers would be transported by truck to a U.S. munitions depot.

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## GAS

From Page 1

depot in Miesau, about 25 miles from Clausen, and loaded aboard railway cars.

Fischer said more than 5,000 containers will be needed to move the 155mm and 203mm artillery shells.

The gas containers are being packed in such a way that if one canister should detonate, it would not affect the others, said Jürgen Dietzen, spokesman for the Rheinland-Pfalz Interior Ministry.

Stoltenberg refused to disclose what routes the transport would follow.

But Dietzen said three autobahns could be used to carry the weapons from Clausen to Miesau.

The shortest route is a 25-mile stretch on Autobahn 62 and Autobahn 6. But using it would require a quick construction of a temporary surface on Au-

tobahn 62, which is still being built.

The other likely route is a 37-mile stretch using Autobahn 8 toward Zweibrücken, then Autobahn 6 to Miesau.

Dietzen said the transport will involve convoys of about 70 vehicles each. Twenty vehicles will be military trucks carrying the weapons. The rest will carry police escorts, firefighting teams and other emergency personnel.

The convoys will roll on 30 weekdays in a row, one convoy per day.

Each convoy should take two or three hours to make the trip, traveling at a top speed of 18 miles per hour.

All the drivers and emergency personnel are to receive special training for the operation.

From Miesau, train cars will carry the containers to the North Sea port of Nordenham, where they will be loaded aboard specially equipped U.S. transport ships. Plans call for the munitions then to be shipped to the Johnston Atoll, southwest of Hawaii,

for destruction, Stoltenberg said.

He also said the transport will be "carried out as a logistical operation of the U.S. armed forces" with special protective measures from the West Germans.

Rudi Geil, the interior minister of Rheinland-Pfalz, said that during the operation the routes will be closed to other transportation and to overhead air traffic. He said the convoys, which will move at night, will be accompanied by U.S. and German military and civilian catastrophe protection teams.

The operation's cost will be divided between the Germans and Americans. He estimated the Americans will pay \$50 million and the Germans 38 million marks, about \$23 million.

Geil detailed the plans in Mainz.

Gernot Rotter of the Greens asked Geil whether such weapons were being stockpiled anywhere else in West Germany. Geil told Rotter that there are no more stockpiles of chemical weapons in the country. (Contributing to this report: the Associated Press in Bonn, and staff writers Joseph Owen in Pirmasens and Mary Nath in Mainz.)



## Plan draws cheers, jeers

By JOSEPH OWEN  
 Staff writer

CLAUSEN, West Germany — Plans to remove U.S. chemical weapons from the Clausen area inspired cheers and catcalls from the 600 people attending an information session Wednesday night at the town's sports hall.

At the meeting, West German army Maj. Gen. Klaus Naumann was asked whether the removal plans are foolproof. "There is no hundred-percent security in life," Naumann said.

But he added that the government, the military, the police and emergency personnel have developed primary and backup security plans for every facet of the removal.

But one woman suggested to the crowd that, if government officials are satisfied with the security measures, they should plan to spend their summer vacations in the Clausen area with their families.

The idea drew loud cheers. The meeting was held several hours after officials announced that the removal of more than 100,000 shells loaded with chemical weapons would be carried out from July through September.

The weapons will be taken by truck from the Clausen area to Miesau. From there, they will be transported by train to the port of Nordenham. Afterward they will be carried by ship to an atoll in the Pacific where they will be destroyed.

Emil Klein of nearby Münchweiler said the removal would have been a lot safer if the government had arranged to carry it out secretly, so "the population wouldn't even need to think about it."

As he listened to loudspeakers set up outside the crowded hall, Gerd Reinhard of nearby Höheindö expressed resignation and relief over the plans.

"If they aren't sufficient, we can't do anything about it," he said. But, he added, "we're in favor of transporting them out of the country."

His wife, Dagmar, credited the area's peace activists with having exerted enough pressure on the government to force the 1986 agreement on the withdrawal.

In the hall, officials also assured the audience that no other chemical weapons are stored in West Germany.

"Who guarantees that?" a spectator yelled, interrupting Naumann's address.

"My God," Naumann said quietly before saying to the questioner that people should have faith in their elected officials.

53rd Trans. Bn.

## STEEL BOX soldiers earn unit top award

Men and women of the 53rd Transportation Battalion haul goods all over Europe as a routine job. Last summer, they added Operation STEEL BOX to their workload; this month, they received the Army Superior Unit Award for their efforts.

Lt. Gen. William S. Flynn, commander of 21st Theater Area Army Command (TAACOM), presented the award at a March 7 ceremony.

The general spoke of the flawless weapons transportation by the 53rd. At the same time, he noted,

37th Transportation Command faced the daunting prospects of sudden and unexpected DESERT SHIELD missions combined with normal day-to-day missions, such as mail, groceries, parts and supplies. Somehow, it all worked.

"It's a great day today." The general spoke after sliding a new streamer on the battalion guidon. "This battalion did one hell of a job -- the moving of the equipment, the planning and organization of the mission. We could not have done it without you, the soldiers. This mission was politically sensitive. We couldn't afford any mistakes. You had cameras, politicians, everybody looking over your shoulders. At the same time, you worked during the winds of war and did a fantastic job."

Operation STEEL BOX called for moving  
(continued on page 5)



## STEEL BOX

(continued from page 1)

more than 100,000 chemical munitions by truck, rail and ship from Germany to a site in the Pacific Ocean for destruction. Many U.S. and German military and civilian organizations, and hundreds of people, spent months planning and organizing the operation. This list included the 53rd as the 37th TRANSCOM's primary weapons mover.

As they worked their normal transportation missions, battalion members also trained to move the weapons from the Clausen storage site to Miesau Army Depot in 29 convoys. Plans included manufacturing more than 5,000 specially-built steel shipping containers. Made in Mainz, the containers were designed specifically for the chemical weapons shipments.

Drivers brought the special containers to Clausen. There, the weapons were very carefully loaded into the containers, which were then loaded on to trucks for the 29 convoys. Each convoy had at least 89 vehicles with 20 trucks carrying

the munitions. ... a good bit of the 50 kilometers between Clausen Miesau on gravel-paved roads. They moved 12,000 tons of chemical weapons more than 138,879 miles between July 28 and Sept.

"The Army has done incredible things this year because of people like you," concluded Flynn.

The 8988th Civilian Support Center, headquartered at Pulaski Barracks, for itself supporting STEEL and DESERT SHIELD simultaneously.

At a ceremony earlier this month, nine men from the 8988's 8371st Civilian Support Group, Panzer Kaserne, received cash awards and certificates of appreciation for their efforts. Col. Roger G. Thomson Jr., 37th TRANSCOM commander, commended and thanked the men in both English and German for their STEEL BOX and DESERT SHIELD work. "The Civilian Support Group is a strong supporter of various initiatives the 37th has had. Just the central trailer fleet but also STEEL BOX, the ammo [ammunition] runs, other special missions," told the group. "Thanks for all the wonderful things you've done."

Supervisor Lothar Geisler and Mechanics Karl Edinger, Theodor Hablitz, Dieter Kluge and Friedrich Mueller joined Clerk Johannes Henn, Dispatcher Gunter Spengler, Driver Thomas Wagner, Trailer Transfer Operator Technician Juergen Wirth at the ceremony.

In recent months, 37th TRANSCOM recognized several other U.S. and German groups and individuals for their STEEL BOX work.

**A complex operation dubbed "Steel Box" marked the end of an era in Europe.**

## **USAREUR'S Chemical Retrograde**

By Debra Fowler  
Photos by Spec. Randy Tiesl

LAST year's biggest news stories were undoubtedly the continuing deployment of American and allied troops to the Persian Gulf and the reunification of Germany. Yet these events diverted attention from an equally important occurrence: the complete withdrawal from Europe of American chemical weapons.

The historic event was undertaken in compliance with a 1986 U.S.-West German agreement, signed by then-President Ronald Reagan and West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, that called for the American chemical munitions stockpile — all of which was located in Germany — to be removed by the end of 1992. U.S. Secretary of State James Baker, however, announced in March 1989 that President George Bush had decided to accelerate the removal. In October 1989, Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney announced at a summit in Bonn, Germany, that the U.S. would complete removal of the weapons in 1990 or, at the latest, in 1991.

The massive logistics exercise, dubbed "Operation Steel Box," included many U.S. Army, Europe, units as well as a Department of Defense technical escort team, members of the German armed forces and more than 10,000 German police officers. In addition, scores of German and American medical personnel and German political officials worked to ease public fears and to implement safety precautions during the operation.

The weapons were moved by truck from the storage site at Clausen to the Miesau Army Depot and by rail from there to the North Sea port of Nordenheim. At the port the munitions were loaded onto two modified U.S. Navy ships, which set sail Sept. 22 and arrived before year's end at Johnston Atoll, a tiny island in the Pacific where the weapons will be destroyed.

**DEBRA FOWLER** is a public affairs specialist assigned to HQs, USAREUR, in Heidelberg, Germany.

"I think the removal operation was a solid plus for German-American relations," said Brig. Gen. Dennis L. Benchoff, then-commander of the 59th Ordnance Brigade, which managed the chemical weapons removal. Benchoff now is chief of logistics for the U.S. European Command.

"Everyone was relieved and pleased that it went so well. There was some skepticism by a small part of the German public, who were afraid of the operation because they didn't understand it. We showed on a daily basis, however, that we knew what we were doing," Benchoff said. "Everybody had to give us credit for a good job. We had no critics when it was over."

Lt. Col. F. E. Hamilton, commander of the 3rd Ord. Battalion, which was responsible for several phases of the removal operation, said the esteem the U.S. Army gained from the operation is "immeasurable."

"We worked on a large scale with the Germans — fire workers, emergency teams, police and so on — and a lot of professional respect developed on an individual level ... between the Germans and our soldiers," Hamilton said. "After it was over, I was in one of my German classes, and I spent half the time talking to the Germans about what we did. They were happy; they felt that we knew what we were doing and that we did it well."

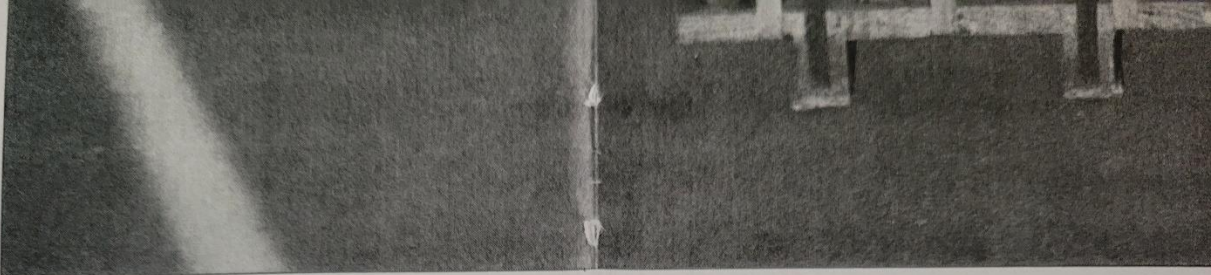
Preparations for the removal of the weapons began in 1986 and included physical alteration of roads and storage areas as well as intensive training of both Germans and Americans involved in the operation.

According to Hamilton, soldiers and civilians who participated in the operation were carefully screened. Any soldier undergoing any kind of disciplinary action or involved in anything out-of-the-ordinary, like a traffic accident, was not allowed to participate.

"I talked to a lot of the soldiers involved, and they were all excited that we were doing something real; we weren't

Sgt. Juan Moreno

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Sgt. Juan Morejon

just training," Hamilton said. "It wasn't hard to keep them motivated. The worst punishment for a soldier was to be told he couldn't participate."

The 100,000 rounds of chemical munitions had been stored since 1968 in Clausen, a small town of about 1,600 near the U.S. Army complex at Kaiserslautern in southwestern Germany. The muni-

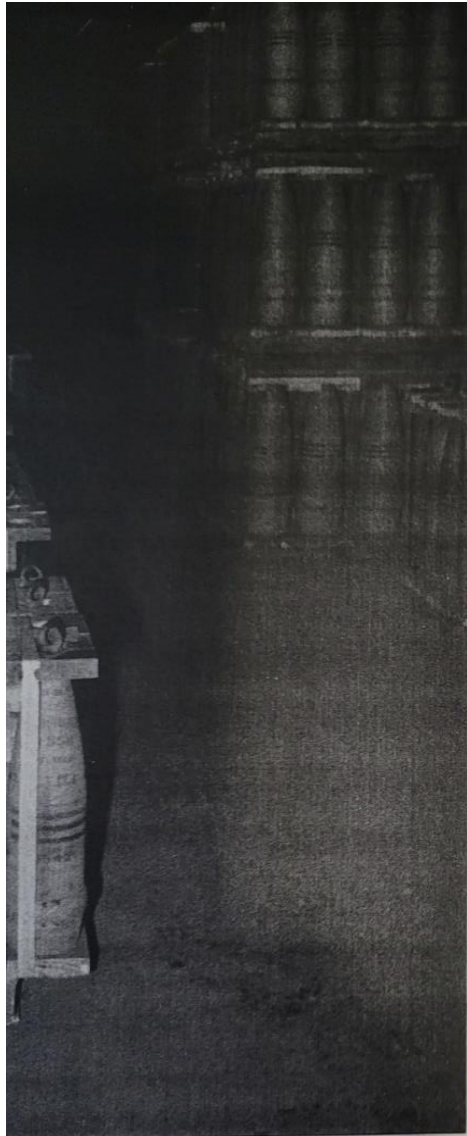
tions were 155mm howitzer projectiles and 8-inch rounds, each containing lethal, rapid-acting, liquid nerve agents.

Because the movement of the munitions through the heavily populated German states of Rheinland-Pfalz and Hesse caused concern to some local residents, a 24-hour hotline was established by USAREUR and German offi-

**SOLDIERS**

**MARCH 1991**





Left: Spec. Christopher Bruce of the 59th Ord. Bde. works in a bunker housing 155mm chemical rounds. • Below: A military working dog team checks a MILVAN before the convoy's departure.



Safety personnel monitored the air in each bunker, and soldiers loading the munitions carried protective masks and visually inspected the rounds to ensure each was properly sealed, according to a spokesman for the 59th Ord. Bde.

The secondary steel containers, designed to meet the requirements of the International Maritime Dangerous Goods Code, could hold three pallets of 155mm rounds or two pallets of 8-inch rounds. Before their use in the weapons transport, the containers were subjected to months of rail impact, pressurization, drop and seaworthiness tests.

Once the munitions were secured inside the steel containers, 10 containers were double-packed into each specially designed military cargo container. Known as MILVANS, the containers met or exceeded the requirements of the International Maritime Dangerous Goods Code. The MILVANS, inspected daily by U.S. safety personnel, were stored in heavily guarded holding areas until the road convoy from Clausen to the railhead at the U.S. Reserve Storage Facility, Miesau, began on July 26.

To ensure safety at the Clausen MILVAN storage site, extra lightning protection was added, and the roadway

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cial to answer questions and calm fears.

The removal operation officially began at Clausen on June 26. Soldiers of the 330th Ord. Company, 3rd Ord. Bn., 59th Ord. Bde., assisted by German and U.S. chemical experts, removed the munitions from the bunkers and blocked and braced them in specially designed, vapor-proof secondary steel containers.

German police in Clausen and Miesau distributed flyers asking for public understanding about any traffic tie-ups that might develop due to the truck convoy. The population was kept informed, and German officials on the state and local levels showed great interest in and support of the project, Benchoff said.

Because the average speed of the 3-mile-long convoy was just 18 mph, travel time from Clausen to Miesau averaged two hours. To further ensure safety, oncoming traffic was limited to 35 mph, passing the convoy was prohibited, and highway entrances were closed.

Drivers from the 76th Transportation Co., 53rd Trans. Bn., were selected to handle the convoy because during the year preceding the removal the 76th had logged 1,500,000 accident-free miles on European highways. Drivers selected for the removal mission attended an intensive

driver training and vehicle maintenance program and were given special safety and hazardous cargo training.

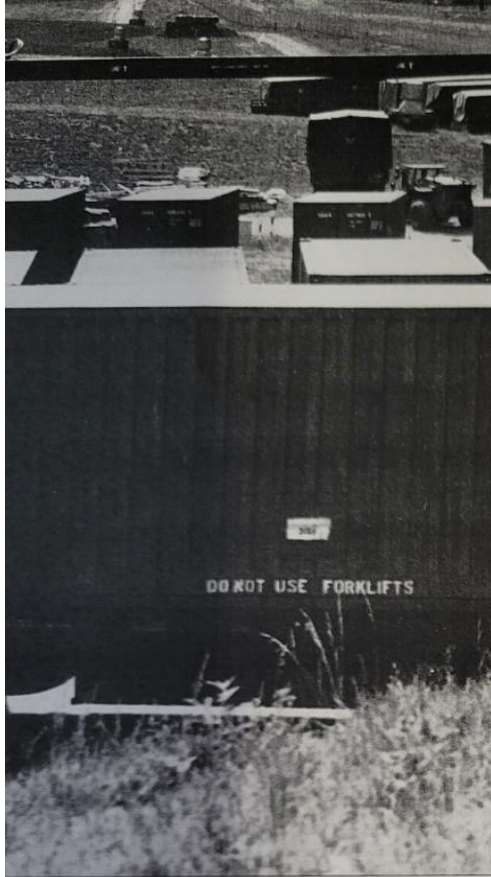
All soldiers involved in the chemical removal operation were specifically trained in special safety and reaction procedures, according to a 59th Ord. Bde. spokesman.

Further safety precautions included restricting air traffic during the loading and road transport phases of the removal. No aerial combat training was permitted, and all low-level and visual flights were cancelled around and above Clausen and Miesau. Only essential civilian and military flights, such as search-and-rescue operations, were permitted, and those were closely monitored.

The first road convoy traveled from Clausen to Miesau without incident on July 26, and the last convoy rolled into Miesau on Sept. 1. Security and other

**SOLDIERS**

**MARCH 1991**



**removal operation  
were trained in  
special safety and  
reaction procedures.**

Of great importance to the safety of the removal mission were the German and American medical teams and hospitals that were prepared to deal with accidents or incidents along the route throughout the 28-day truck convoy from Clausen to Miesau, the seven-day rail movement from Miesau to Nordenheim and the loading of the ships at port, Hamilton noted.

U.S. personnel from the 763rd Medical Detachment, 3rd Ord. Bn., and elements of the 7th Medical Command received specialized training in handling patients exposed to chemical agents. Each American military medical team included a physician and six medics. U.S. military helicopters were prepositioned along travel routes to expedite the transfer of any casualties. German hospitals along all travel routes also were prepared to deal with casualties, according to German reports.

U.S. military chemical decontamination teams also stood ready to handle any problems, Hamilton said. Soldiers from the 98th Chemical Det., 3rd Ord. Bn., and soldiers from the 10th Chemical Co., 84th Ord. Bn., as well as six five-member U.S. emergency response squads, were "prepared and highly trained" to mop up spills and deal with any disaster, he said.

A technical escort team from the only DOD organization with the mission of moving chemical munitions or other hazardous material anywhere in the world provided security and emergency response personnel for the operation. The team supervised the loading of the munitions at Miesau and also trained the transport ships' crews on the use of protective gear and on safety and emergency procedures.

In summing up, 3rd Ord. Bn. commander Hamilton said the "operation was well-planned, and we practiced lots of 'what ifs' beforehand. We did good, hard, intensive training as a team, and we finished the mission with a great sense of teamwork and accomplishment." □

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operational support at Miesau was provided by soldiers of Co. C, 2nd Bn., 4th Infantry Regiment; the 9th Ord. Co; and the 164th Military Police Co.

Once all munitions were at the railhead at Miesau — where the holding area was earlier improved with additional asphalt hardstand, security fences and lighting, and lightning protection — the rail transport phase began.

Two specially configured ammunition trains, accompanied by an escort train, moved the weapons to port over seven days. U.S. Ambassador Vernon Walters rode one of the ammunition trains to port with German ministers.

Amid tight security, the munitions-carrying MILVANS were loaded into the holds of the two modified Navy ships. The vessels set sail for Johnston Atoll on Sept. 22, after a two-day delay due to poor weather conditions.

# Army prepares for poison gas move

By PEGGY DAVIDSON  
Kaiserslautern bureau

MIESAU, West Germany — The Army Corps of Engineers has installed sophisticated lightning rods to protect chemical weapons when they are transferred from military trucks to civilian trains at Miesau this summer.

The lightning rods are part of additional security measures installed at the railhead in preparation for the withdrawal of 100,000 artillery shells filled with chemical weapons.

The engineers also have:

- Enclosed the entire railhead with nearly 5,000 feet of security fence.

- Installed a new low-pressure sodium lighting system for the shipments, which will be done at night.

- Cleared huge areas of trees, creating a 33-foot buffer zone between the new security fences and the tree line.

The construction project, which has been under way for five months, will be turned over to the 59th Ord Brigade on April 6.

The weapons will be moved from Clausen Army Depot to Miesau in 70-vehicle convoys, with 20 military trucks carrying the shells in each convoy. The other vehicles will carry police, medical and firefighting teams, as well as other emergency personnel.

The shells will be mounted on specially built pallets. These, in turn, will be inserted in vapor-proof steel containers. The cargo then will be packed in military shipping containers, which will be carried by the trucks.

At the railhead, the containers will be lifted from the trucks by military machines specially designed to move the

## Atoll disposal facility being readied

By JANET HOWELLS-TIERNEY  
Washington bureau

WASHINGTON — The chemical weapons being withdrawn from West Germany will be destroyed in special furnaces on a Pacific island.

The Johnston Atoll chemical agent disposal system took four years to build. It is 700 miles southwest of Hawaii.

It has protection devices normally reserved for a maximum-security prison.

The \$140 million facility is the first full-scale system designed solely for chemical agent disposal. The chemical weapons from Europe will join more than 200,000 munitions already stored on the island in 54 earth-covered, steel-arch bunkers.

Beyond the compound's 7-foot-high, chain-link fence patrolled by security police, is the Munitions Demolitions Building. Inside, the plant's sophisticated machinery is being tested. It should be operational by late April or mid-May. Officials expect to destroy the chemical stockpile on the island in three or four years.

The two-story building has reinforced concrete and steel explosion containment rooms and remote-controlled equipment operated by computers. Each room is treated with a special coating to resist toxic chemicals.

Every type of chemical weapon is taken apart in the protected rooms. The various parts of the weapons are then incinerated in separate furnaces, which

can produce heat between 1,500 and 2,000 degrees.

One furnace destroys explosive components, fuses, propellants, residual agents and other combustible material.

Another furnace will destroy metal parts and burn off residual mustard agents, which are used in the weapons because of their extremely irritating, blistering and disabling effects.

A third incinerator will burn all chemicals drained from the munitions and bulk containers. And a fourth furnace will incinerate all pallets, packaging, contaminated wastes and protective clothing used in transporting the agents.

The complex is protected by monitors and detectors that will warn the 800 workers of potentially hazardous conditions.

load. The machines will place the containers onto the trains.

From there, the weapons will be transported to the seaport of Nordenham, loaded on Navy ships and taken to the Johnston Atoll in the Pacific Ocean where they will be destroyed.

The exact routes are classified. The short trip from Clausen to Miesau — from 25 to 37 miles depending on the route — is considered the most vulnerable portion of the entire mission.

"Once a convoy leaves Clausen, everyone knows where it's going," said Lt. Col. John C. Carson, area engineer for the Kaiserslautern area, European Division of the Army Corps of Engineers.

doing the construction at Miesau.

Although the weapons aren't scheduled to be moved until sometime between July and September, the Army needed the railhead completed early so that it can train soldiers to move the military shipping containers, bring convoys to the railhead and perform security drills.

Construction began in October 1989, even before the design for all segments of the project were completed. One of the bigger design problems for the 6970th Civilian Support Group, Kaiserslautern, was the lightning system.

"No one had ever done it here," said 1st Lt. Jeffrey Kuhl, project officer for the 94th Engineers Combat Bn, the unit

doing the construction at Miesau.

The lightning rods are mounted atop 66-foot poles, which also hold the new lighting system. Wire is strung between the poles to form a protected area. If lightning strikes, it will hit either the poles or the wires, dissipating its energy through the grounded lightning system, missing anything on the ground below.

The rails themselves are already grounded, said Capt. Bill Reichert, construction management engineer, European Division of the Army Corps of Engineers, Kaiserslautern.

The project was budgeted to cost \$970,000. Reichert said the actual costs are about \$130,000 less.

# Convoy rehearses summer's transfer of chemical arms

By PEGGY DAVIDSON  
Kaiserslautern bureau

CLAUSEN, West Germany — Army truck drivers and West German police went through a slow-motion rehearsal Tuesday of this summer's slow-motion transfer of deadly chemical weapons.

The 70-vehicle convoy of empty tractor-trailers and police trucks wound its way along secondary roads and autobahns in a rolling test of the removal operation, set for July through September.

The plan is to truck 100,000 artillery shells filled with the nerve agents from the Clausen Army Depot to the railhead at Miesau. The steel containers of shells will be taken from the trucks and stored on the concrete pads at Miesau until the entire stockpile of weapons is at the railhead, said Capt. John M. Curd, spokesman for the 59th Ord Brigade, Pirmasens.

Once at the railhead, the shells will be loaded onto seven trains and moved to the seaport at Nordenham. The Navy will take the shells to the Johnston Atoll in the Pacific Ocean, where the chemical will be incinerated.

Tuesday's convoy was the first joint-training convoy, said Brig. Gen. Dennis L. Benchoff, 59th Ord Brigade commander.

Benchoff said no shortcuts are being taken on safety issues. He noted that the weapons were "designed to be transported under wartime conditions with no special provisions."

The practice convoy used one of the possible routes the trucks may use this summer.

Truck convoys will travel on secondary roads from Clausen to whichever autobahn the German police decide to use. While on the secondary roads, the convoy vehicles travel at 20 miles per hour and are spaced 165 feet apart.

On the autobahn, they travel at 30 miles per hour but maintain 330-foot in-

tervals. The low speed on the autobahn is a "speed at which we can maintain control of the convoy," said Curd.

Tuesday's dry run took a circuitous route.

The convoy headed west through the towns of Clausen and Donsieders. It made a quick jaunt on route B-270 to autobahn A-62, then headed south to Höheischweiler where the autobahn changed to A-8.

From there, it was west to Zweibrücken, northwest to Neunkirchen and autobahn A-6. That autobahn took the convoy past Niederbexbach, Reiskirchen and several other towns to Miesau.

The trip of 25 to 30 kilometers lasted more than two hours.

On a secondary road, the convoy took about 25 minutes to pass one point. A second convoy of civilian cars trailed after it because German police would not allow them to pass. On A-8, the military convoy spent about 15 minutes passing a single point. Traffic on both sides of the road was slowed. Cars that followed were not allowed to pass when the convoy was near entrance and exit ramps.

Each 70-vehicle convoy will have 20 tractor-trailers hauling munitions, Curd said. The rest of the convoy will include 17 U.S. military vehicles, and more than 30 German police, fire and safety vehicles.

On Tuesday, a German police van filled with officers rode between each tractor-trailer.

Following along for part of the autobahn drive was a car from the Soviet mission to West Germany. Benchoff suggested that the Soviets might simply have business that brought them onto the autobahn.

Maj. Gen. Roland Oppermann, commander of Wehrbereichskommando IV, said he hoped the Soviets were watching and that they reported "how well we work together."



SAS: L. Emmett Lewis Jr.

The slow-moving convoy travels the autobahn near Schwarzenacker, West Germany.

The slow-moving convoy travels the autobahn near Schwarzenacker, West Germany.

miles per hour but maintain 550-1000

# Security tight for transfer of shells

By PEGGY DAVIDSON  
Kaiserslautern bureau

PIRMASENS, West Germany — Army officials who'll be moving 100,000 shells filled with deadly nerve agents this summer have two major worries — terrorist attack and fire.

A terrorist raid on the 70-vehicle convoy probably is the only way that shells could be damaged during the trek through West Germany, said Maj. John Curd, a spokesman for the 59th Ord Brigade.

"Technically, we feel that there's a very, very low probability that anything will happen," Curd said.

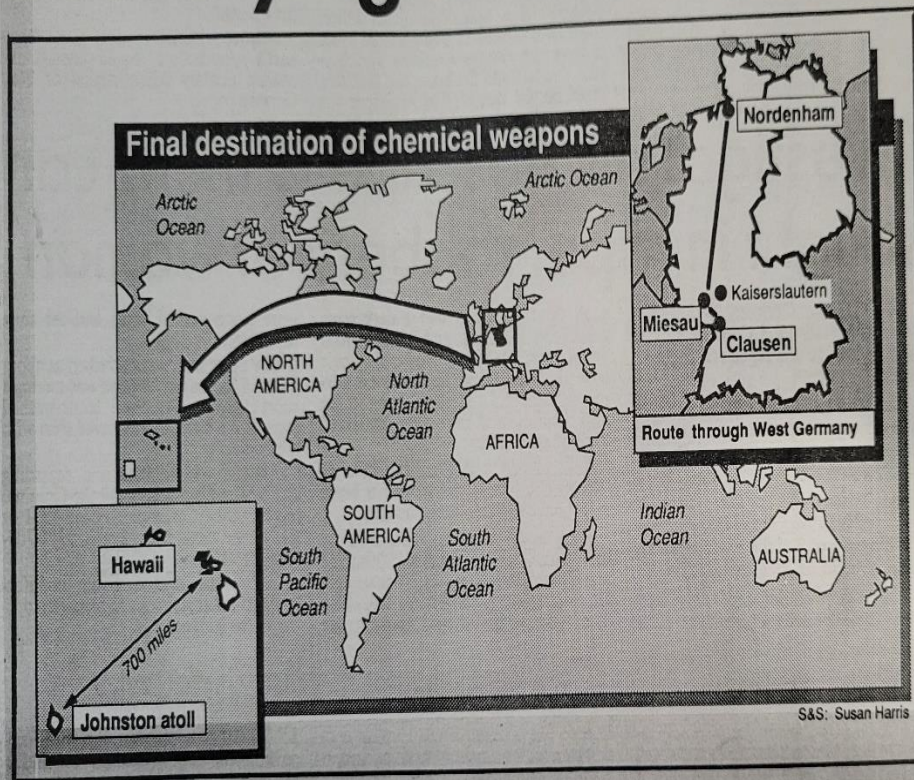
The operation will be carried out sometime between July and September, although no schedule has been announced.

It is aimed at moving, by truck, the stockpile of 8-inch and 155-millimeter shells filled with the liquid nerve agents VX and sarin from the Clausen Army Depot to a railhead at Miesau. From there, the cargo will be shipped by rail to the North Sea port at Nordenham and then by Navy ship to the Johnston Atoll in the Pacific Ocean, where it will be destroyed.

The operation will cost an estimated \$73 million.

According to the West German government, the shells were shipped to Ger-

Continued on Page 9



# Security tight for chemical weapons transfer

Continue from Page 1

many in 1967 and stored at the Clausen depot. They are part of a U.S. stockpile that is, on average, 31 years old.

Curd's confidence in the operation's safety is based on tests conducted by the service.

The U.S. Army Defense Ammunition Center and School in Savanna, Ill., has detonated test shells and set another on fire to show that neither an accidental detonation of one shell nor flame would blow up other shells in the shipment.

In the live-fire test, empty 8-inch rounds like those stored in Clausen were detonated. That test detonation did not cause other nearby shells to explode, Curd said.

As an added precaution, the weapons will be moved without fuses, Army officials said.

"The fuses are already shipped to another place," said Brig. Gen. Dennis L. Benchoff, 59th Ord Brigade commander. "They are not with the weapons and will not be shipped with the weapons."

The fuses can be set to detonate the shells at a certain time or on impact, Curd said. In practice, the fuse triggers a burster inside the shell. The burster, a metal cylinder filled with explosives, is designed to explode and scatter the chemical agents over enemy forces.

Army officials said the shells' packing will protect them from attack. The steel shells will be encased in steel boxes with vaporproof seals. These boxes will be placed inside steel military containers.

Sixty-five of the 100,000 shells require special packing because the Army has declared them unserviceable. The defects include rust on the shell exterior and scratches in the casing. No corrosion or leaks have been found on any of the 100,000 shells, Army officials said.

Each of these 65 shells will be packed in forged steel containers and sealed. They will then be placed in the secondary steel containers and packed into the military containers like the other weapons.

Even light anti-tank weapons — LAW missiles — couldn't penetrate the multiple layers of steel, Curd said. Army officials refused to discuss what types of weapons could penetrate to the containers and the shells, citing security considerations.

Terrorists, depending on the level of organization,

tend to carry semiautomatic weapons, heavy machine guns, grenade launchers and explosives, said a spokesman for Jane's Defence Weekly in London.

"We don't want to give anyone any ideas," he said. "But (in an attack on the convoys) they would probably use standard ambush techniques, standard guerrilla tactics.

The spokesman added that it is entirely possible for terrorists to have LAW missiles. "You can buy them off the streets in Los Angeles or New York," he said. Despite the ease of obtaining such a weapon, he added that he "wouldn't expect it to puncture the cells that the chemicals are in."

The spokesman said the amount of damage would depend on a variety of factors, including the type of warhead on the missile and the range.

To ward off ambushes, the truck and rail convoys will be accompanied by a large force of West Germans and Americans. Officials from both groups are reluctant to provide details about the force, but they acknowledged that the guards would be prepared to fire.

The German police will provide the outer ring of defenses, Curd said. They will be standing guard at crossroads and railroad crossings. German police helicopters will fly beside the truck convoys and the trains.

Trains carrying the weapons will be escorted by other trains carrying security, medical and firefighting personnel. The exact positioning of these security troops was not disclosed.

Aircraft flights over the weapons are forbidden, whether they are at the depot, in the convoy, at the railhead, or on the train tracks, Army officials and German police said.

The specific routes are not being released, Curd said. "The U.S. has no involvement in the routes," he said. "The German police decide them daily."

West German police also will ride with the convoys. During a practice run in April, a German police van filled with officers rode between each of the 20 U.S. tractor-trailers hauling a simulated load of chemical weapons.

U.S. military police also will accompany the convoys, with orders to shoot if necessary.

"The very last step, if the person shows definite aggression to cause harm to personnel or the weapons, is shooting to kill," Curd said. "First, they would shoot to wound."

One possible target for terrorists would be the railhead at Miesau, where the Army will store the weapons outdoors until all 100,000 shells have been moved from Clausen. Army officials said it will take 30 days to clear the weapons from the depot.

Officials said they think the security measures planned for Miesau will deter an attack. The Army Corps of Engineers has strengthened the concrete pad area on either side of the railhead to store the weapons. It also has installed new security fences, lighting systems and a lightning-protection system.

Outside the fenced area is a cleared buffer zone between the fence and the nearby trees to give guards an unobstructed view. But Army officials will not comment on the placement of guards at the site.

The Army's fear of a fire is related to the fear of an attack. A blaze would force the convoy to stop, making it an easier target.

A fire itself presents few problems, officials said.

To back up that belief, the Army burned one shell that was filled with one of the nerve agents for 44 minutes. The shell did not detonate, and the liquid inside dissipated because of the heat.

"This is an exaggerated case of what would happen," Curd said.

Curd added that firefighters would respond within seconds if a truck carrying the weapons caught fire.

Members of the technical escort team will be providing firefighting response. These team members' primary job in the Army is providing escort services for hazardous materials of all sorts. These soldiers are trained to respond quickly to any emergency situation to preserve lives, Army officials say.

But officials would not describe the type of equipment the crews will carry.

Despite the potential problems, Benchoff reminded reporters last March about the shells' original mission. "These rounds were designed to be transported in wartime conditions without any special provisions," he said.

Rose Götte, a Social Democratic member of the West German Parliament, has been a vocal critic of the transportation arrangements. Today, however, she says she's pleased that the chemical munitions are about to be withdrawn.

"I'm satisfied that the military has planned the move well," she said.

# Secrecy worries W. German groups

By MARY NETH  
Staff writer

West German citizens groups and political parties are uneasy about the upcoming trek of 400 tons of deadly chemical weapons across their country.

The critics, including members of the Social Democrats and the Green Party, raise three central questions about the operation. They argue that:

- The operation is being rushed.
- The West German government has grudgingly refused to allow independent studies of the operation.
- Officials have sealed off local emergency personnel from valuable information about the operation's schedule.

Initially, the U.S. Army was to remove the chemical weapons from West German soil by April 30, 1997. That plan changed in 1986 when then-President Reagan and West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl agreed to move the deadline up to December 1992. The schedule got another nudge forward in April 1989, when Kohl told the West German Parliament that the Bush administration had agreed to an earlier date. Kohl based his announcement on a public statement by Secretary of State James A. Baker that the United States was exploring ways to accelerate the withdrawal.

Roger Harrison, former deputy assistant secretary of state, told Congress that Kohl's announcement was not "reflective of any agreement" between the two governments.

"U.S. officials say they were maneuvered into removing the weapons two years ahead of time by Kohl," the Washington Post reported in October 1989. And the withdrawal was given a December 1990 deadline, the Post reported.

Lt. Col. Helmut Fischer of the German Defense Ministry scoffed at that scenario.

Fischer, the official West German spokesman for the operation, said there was no reason to wait because the transportation has been deemed safe by the Pentagon and the German government.

He said that "because the operation is safe, there also has been no reason to consider other means of disposal," such as burning the chemicals where they are stored. That process will be used on chemical weapons stored in the United States.

German critics aren't satisfied with

such assurances.

The Social Democratic Party, the Greens and citizen groups such as the Freedom Coordination Group of the West Pfalz have demanded without success that safety studies be conducted and made public.

In contrast, the Pentagon has conducted two exhaustive studies into ways of destroying U.S.-based chemical weapons. The outcome of one three-volume study was an Army decision to build eight plants to destroy the weapons at the storage sites.

"We studied three alternatives — moving the entire U.S. chemical stock-

pile to one national location in Utah for disposal, moving chemical stockpiles from the eastern and western parts of the country to local disposal plants and disposal of each stockpile at its current site," said Gregg Zimmerman, a scientist at Tennessee's Oak Ridge National Laboratory who helped prepare the report.

Zimmerman said the national disposal plant in Utah was ruled out because of the risks posed by long-distance rail travel.

"But it was a tossup between regional and on-site choices," said Zimmerman. "The Pentagon finally chose the on-site disposal plan."

On-site disposal removed all transportation risks and reduced the emergency preparedness that would have been required, he said.

The study also compared truck, rail and plane transportation. Zimmerman said that rail was chosen as the safest means.

The critics also are uneasy about the secrecy of the operation and its effect on plans for medical care should the deadly chemical agents leak from the vapor-proof containers.

"We also have asked that organizations that might be called upon in an emergency — rescue teams, doctors and hospitals — be included in the planning," said Hannelore Höbel of the Freedom Coordination group of the West Pfalz. "Our request was ignored."

The date and route of the chemical transportation are being kept secret as part of "a mutual German-American decision based on security," Fischer said. Therefore, local fire departments and other rescue organizations will be notified just before the transport of the chemical agents through their areas, he said.

## Plant begins destroying first batch of nerve agents

WASHINGTON (S&S) — After a lengthy delay, the Johnston Atoll furnace began Saturday to destroy the first batch of nerve agents, Army officials said Tuesday.

Problems with equipment and worker training at the plant, formally known as the Johnston Atoll Chemical Agent Disposal System, had held up operations since May.

For the next 16 months, the facility in the Pacific Ocean will undergo verification testing while destroying the island's chemical weapons stockpile, officials said. The mechanical method of disassembling and incinerating the weapons will be tested during this phase.

The 100,000 artillery shells stored

at Clausen Army Depot in West Germany will begin the journey to the facility only after an undisclosed amount of the stockpiles on the island are incinerated.

"The Army is in the process of verifying that the furnaces, rocket-shearing equipment and pollution abatement systems at the JACADS facility operate as designed," the Defense Department said in a news release.

According to the statement, once the Army is satisfied the systems are working correctly, Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney will send certification to Congress. The process is expected to take at least two weeks, the release said.



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## Security tight for chemical

# Army OKs unfinished autobahn as possible chemical arms route

By PEGGY DAVIDSON  
Kaiserslautern bureau

MIESAU, West Germany — The Army has given the green light to the use of an autobahn that is still under construction as a possible route for the transport of chemical weapons this summer.

Autobahn 62 is the shortest route available to the Army when its trucks begin moving 100,000 artillery shells filled with deadly nerve agents from the Clausen Army Depot to a railhead at Miesau.

During the 25-mile trip, the weapons would use Autobahn 62 and then Autobahn 6. Another likely autobahn route is a 37-mile stretch using Autobahn 8 toward Zweibrücken, then Autobahn 6 to Miesau.

Citing security considerations, officials will not announce the exact routes and times of the transport.

"Each day, the (West German) police will determine the route to be taken,"

said Brig. Gen. Dennis L. Benchoff, commander of the 59th Ord Brigade, which controls the weapons.

Autobahn 62 also has the advantage of being located entirely within the state of Rheinland-Pfalz, eliminating the need to traverse another state, an Army spokesman said Tuesday. Citizens in neighboring Saarland have expressed concern over the weapons' traveling in their state.

Army officials initially doubted whether Autobahn 62 could be used for the first leg of the journey, because an eight-mile stretch of the road remains incomplete. Although there is a solid roadbed in place on one side of the unfinished highway, the top layer of asphalt has not been laid and there are no guardrails or solid shoulders along the road.

In a test run Tuesday morning, an Army convoy was delayed by an auto accident between the towns of Ruppertsweiler and Münchweiler. Once

the route was cleared of the mishap and the convoy prepared to depart, one of the trucks wouldn't start and had to be replaced, causing a second delay.

Otherwise, the convoy proceeded without a hitch, officials said, including travel over the unfinished part of Autobahn 62.

"From the American point of view, the route was excellent," Benchoff said. "While the time it took was longer than planned, it was done safely."

Spokesmen said Autobahn 62, in addition to being a shorter route, was good because it bypasses both Kaiserslautern and Landstuhl and does not require traffic to be stopped.

Currently, the chemical shells containing Sarin and VX are being packed in steel containers and loaded into Army vans. From Miesau, the weapons are to travel by train to the North Sea port of Nordenham and then head by ship to Johnston Island, 700 miles southwest of Hawaii.



AP

## Testing the plan

**U.S. Army vehicles drive through Clausen, West Germany, Tuesday during a rehearsal of military plans to remove 100,000 artillery shells containing deadly chemical agents. The chemical arms are to be**

**transported on West German autobahns and by rail to the North Sea, where they will be loaded aboard ships for shipment to a U.S. facility for destruction. (See story on Page 2.)**

# Shells' transfer bumps rally by Porsche Club

By PEGGY DAVIDSON  
Kaiserslautern bureau

PIRMASENS, West Germany — The Porsche Club of America's Germany Region chapter is having to take a back seat to the transfer of Army chemical weapons this summer.

The club, which had planned a rally at Pirmasens Airfield this weekend, has been banned from the field until the Army finishes shipping out 100,000 artillery shells filled with a deadly nerve agent.

Although Army officials said none of the chemical weapons stored at nearby Clausen Army Depot are due to be moved on a weekend, "we don't want to block our airfield" at any time, said Warren Field, a spokesman for the Pirmasens military community.

The Army has told the club it can probably schedule its next rally at the airfield on Sept. 22 and 23. The dates are tentative, Field said, because the chemicals may still be in transit at that time.

"We're always second to the mission of the Army," said Charles Statham, the car club's president. Despite the cancellation of this weekend's slalom, "we're very thankful to those people there," he said. "Pirmasens has been very generous" in allowing the club to use the airfield for rallies.

Only Pirmasens and Wildflecken military installations allow use of their airfields for the club's safety training and slaloms, Statham said. The club has been in operation in Europe for 28 years and hosts eight slaloms and 32 other events a year.

Although the group carries \$1 million in liability insurance, there's never been an injury. The only casualty Statham could remember was a runway light that broke when a car accidentally slid into it.

"We replaced the light," he said.

AP

rail  
board  
tion.



An inspector, Jürgen Wiesnet, studies his checklist.

S&S: Peggy Davidson

## Trucks undergoing rigorous tests before moving chemical agents

By PEGGY DAVIDSON  
Kaiserslautern bureau

PIRMASENS, West Germany — The trucks that will carry 100,000 artillery shells filled with deadly nerve agents this summer are undergoing fine-tooth comb inspections.

Afterward, each tractor-trailer will be in the best possible condition for the delicate job, Army officials said Thursday.

Five four-person teams are checking over the vehicles. The inspectors are examining each vehicle's exterior, checking the engine and undercarriage, and performing brake tests.

Each team consists of two German police officers and two American soldiers. The 13 Germans regularly work on the autobahns, inspecting trucks for safety violations. The three other Germans are supervising the operation.

Vehicles that would pass a normal, day-to-day safety inspection won't necessarily pass the hazardous cargo

inspections, said Chief Warrant Officer 2 John Cantu, 76th Trans Co maintenance officer.

With more than 40 trucks already through the inspections, only two have been pulled off the line for repairs, Cantu said. Once the trucks complete the major inspection, they will undergo daily inspections during the chemical shipment.

Brig. Gen. Dennis L. Benchhoff, the 59th Ord Brigade commander, said 45 to 50 trucks will be certified to carry the hazardous cargo. Although each convoy will only have 20 trucks carrying the shells, others will be available in case one breaks down.

The trucks, accompanied by about 50 vehicles carrying security and medical personnel, will haul the weapons from Clausen Army Depot to the Miesau railhead. There, the weapons will be loaded on trains for the trip to the port of Nordenham. Ships will carry the weapons to Johnston Atoll in the Pacific, where they will be destroyed.

The operation is to be carried out sometime between July and September.

## Greens trying to delay chemical arms removal

By MARY NETH  
Staff writer

The Green Party, which has loudly protested the presence of U.S. nerve agents in West Germany, is now attempting to hold up the weapons' removal.

"We are not satisfied that transportation of the chemical weapons across West Germany is being done in the safest way possible," a member of the party said.

The stockpile, 100,000 artillery shells filled with the liquid nerve agents VX and sarin, is to be moved from Clausen Army Depot to a railhead at Miesau, West Germany. From there, it will be

shipped by rail to the North Sea port at Nordenham, West Germany, and then by Navy ship to the Johnston Atoll in the Pacific, where it will be destroyed.

The operation is to be carried out between July and September.

Last week, 12 members of the Green Party who live along the possible transport route asked an administrative court in Cologne, West Germany, to impose a temporary restraining order on the operation. Günter Urbanczyk, a Mannheim, West Germany, lawyer handling the case, said the court might decide the issue Thursday.

The Greens have argued:

- That the United States ruled out a plan to transport chemical weapons stored in stateside sites to a central place for destruction. Moving them through highly populated areas was considered too dangerous.

- That ordinary military containers are being used to haul the weapons instead of special ones equipped with shock absorbers. Such containers were mentioned in a U.S. study on transporting the stateside chemical weapon stockpile.

- That the West German government has not conducted any transportation risk studies, thus sacrificing safety for the sake of speed.

Other critics have said local emergen-

cy personnel have been sealed off from valuable information about the operation's schedule.

Lt. Col. Helmut Fischer of the West German Defense Ministry has said there is no reason to delay the operation because it has been deemed safe by the Pentagon and the West German government.

The military's planning also has converted one opponent. Rose Götte, a Social Democrat member of the West German Parliament, changed her outspoken opposition earlier this month.

After visiting Clausen, she said she was "satisfied that the military has planned the move well."

Tuesday, July 24, 1990

# West German Greens lose effort to block removal of nerve agents

By MARY NETH  
Staff writer

A last-ditch effort by the Green Party to prevent the removal of U.S. nerve agents from West Germany has failed.

An administrative court in Cologne, West Germany, ruled Friday evening against the Greens' attempt to block the withdrawal because of the party's safety concerns. The court ruled there was no evidence to prove the contention of the 12 party members that incorrect standards had been used to calculate the risk of the transportation.

The Greens were scheduled to decide Monday evening whether to appeal the decision to a higher court in Münster.

The operation to transport the stockpile of VX and sarin out of the country is to be conducted between now and September. The 100,000 artillery shells will

be moved from the Clausen Army Depot by truck to a railhead at Miesau. From there, they will be shipped by rail to the North Sea port at Nordenham and then taken by ship to the Johnston Atoll in the Pacific, where they will be destroyed.

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- That the United States ruled out a plan to transport chemical weapons stored in stateside sites to a central place for destruction. Moving them through highly populated areas was considered too dangerous.

The West German press office in charge of information about the operation said it would make an announcement Tuesday afternoon about the expected date for the first shipment.

Wednesday, July 25, 1990

# Withdrawal of chemical weapons in W. Germany to begin this week

From staff and wire reports

BONN, West Germany — The first convoy loaded with U.S. chemical agents being withdrawn from West Germany will roll Thursday, West German officials say.

The truck convoys will move the weapons from an Army depot in Clausen to a railhead at Miesau in the first stage

of the three-step operation. The weapons have been stored at the Clausen depot since 1968.

Despite Monday's announcement by the West German Defense Ministry, a U.S. Army spokesman said Tuesday that he could not confirm the start-up date. Nevertheless, U.S. soldiers and German police are assuming that the date is cor-

rect, said Jim Boyle, a USAREUR spokesman at the West German-American press information center at Enkenbach.

"We're leaning toward Thursday. We're planning to be ready for operations Thursday," Boyle said.

In Washington, the Pentagon cleared the way Monday for the operation to

begin. Deputy Secretary of Defense Donald Atwood notified Congress that the chemical weapons disposal plant on Johnston Atoll in the Pacific has passed its initial start-up tests.

Sufficient storage capacity exists at the plant's facilities "to accommodate any chemical munitions or hazardous materi-

See WEAPONS on back page

# WEAPONS

From Page 1

als transported to the site," Atwood said in a statement.

The announcement means that the planned move of munitions to the tiny Pacific Ocean island can take place as scheduled, said Pentagon spokesman Lt. Col. Steven Roy. The atoll is about 700 miles southwest of Hawaii.

Atwood certified that the plant had destroyed more than 600 rockets and 4,000 pounds of nerve agents during its first test runs, Roy said.

Shortly after it began operating in early July, the plant shut down for about a week because positive chemical readings in its mechanical equipment room were picked up on automated monitoring equipment. The problems were traced to minor equipment malfunctions that were quickly corrected, Roy said.

"The plant went back on line July 14, and there have been no problems since," he said.

Operational testing of the plant is scheduled to continue for 16 months, Atwood said in the statement. The Defense Appropriations Act for fiscal 1990 required the Pentagon to certify to Congress that the plant functioned properly before any chemical munitions were withdrawn from West Germany.

The weapons will be removed from West Germany in a operation that involves trucks, trains and ships.

The trucks will travel a variety of routes, for safety

and security reasons, from Clausen to Miesau, about 30 miles away, he said. The shortest route is a 25-mile stretch over Autobahn 62, which is still under construction, and Autobahn 6. The other likely route is a 37-mile stretch using Autobahn 8 toward Zweibrücken and then Autobahn 6 to Miesau.

Each convoy will include 20 flatbed trucks loaded with the chemical weapons stored in airtight steel containers. Those containers are packed in steel military vans. Each convoy also will include 60 escort trucks, including German and U.S. security forces, emergency crews and decontamination teams. Boyle said there would be about 30 convoys, running one a day.

In a flier, West Germany has listed a number of rules that will affect drivers who encounter the convoys, which will be about 4½ miles long. The restrictions include:

- On the autobahn, drivers may not pass the convoy.
- Travelers on the other side of the autobahn cannot go faster than 60 kilometers per hour, or 37 mph.
- Entrances to the autobahns and rest stops will be closed off when the convoys pass by.

The containers will be loaded onto special trains at Miesau for the trip north to Nordenham, on the North Sea. At the port, they will be reloaded onto U.S. Navy ships for transport to Johnston Atoll.

Officials said the removal operation was expected to be completed before October.

West Germany Chancellor Helmut Kohl and then-President Reagan agreed in 1986 to remove the weapons by 1992. President Bush advanced the timetable to 1990.

# Loading begins for 1st shipment of chemical arms

From staff and wire reports

CLAUSEN, West Germany — The first of 100,000 U.S. chemical rounds were to begin the trip from West Germany to a remote Pacific atoll today with a 30-mile truck ride.

In preparation for the first convoy, soldiers assigned to the 59th Ord Brigade began loading the artillery shells, filled with deadly nerve agents but without fuses, into vaporproof steel containers Tuesday. Those containers, packed while inside storage bunkers at the Clausen Army Depot, were then loaded into large metal boxes, according to a statement released by a joint West German-American information center for the project at Enkenbach.

"This is the most well-planned operation we've had here as far as the transport of munitions," said Jim Boyle, a U.S. Army spokesman at the center. "There is safety measure upon safety measure redundant throughout the operation."

Today's operation involves transporting the shells filled with VX and sarin by truck from Clausen to a railhead at Miesau. Each convoy will include 20 flat-bed trucks loaded with the chemical weapons and 60 other escort trucks, including West German and U.S. security forces, emergency crews and decontamination teams.

Boyle said there would be about 30 convoys, running one a day. The trucks will travel a variety of

**See CHEMICAL on back page**

Thursday, July 26, 1990

routes for safety and security reasons.

At Miesau, the weapons will be loaded onto rail cars for the trip north to Nordenham, on the North Sea. The train part of the operation is expected to last seven nights. In Nordenham, the weapons will be reloaded onto U.S. Navy ships for transport to Johnston Island, 700 miles southwest of Hawaii.

Boyle said the chemical weapons will be destroyed later in a specially built incinerator on the island.

The munitions were brought to West Germany between 1958 and 1968. Since then, they have been stored, maintained and monitored in Clausen without incident.



Friday, July 27, 1990

# Arms shipment starts smoothly

By PEGGY DAVIDSON  
Kaiserslautern bureau

CLAUSEN, West Germany — On a forest road outside the small town of Clausen on Thursday, the first shipment of chemical weapons began the long trek to destruction in the Pacific Ocean.

The early morning convoy included 20 military vans loaded with the first of 100,000 artillery shells filled with the deadly nerve agents sarin and VX. The morning's journey began about 8 a.m. and ended 2½ hours later at the Miesau railhead, where the weapons will be stored until all the shells are there. From Miesau, the shells are to go by rail to the seaport at Nordenshmünde to be loaded onto Navy ships for the voyage to Johnston Atoll.

Depriving the Clusen Army Depot, the vehicles traveled at close intervals, allowing the entire 79-vehicle convoy to exit the depot gate in just more than 10 minutes. The convoy then wound its way through the town of Clusen to Autobahn 62. Part of the autobahn, 13 miles from Weselberg to Lindstuhl, is still under construction and not open to public traffic.

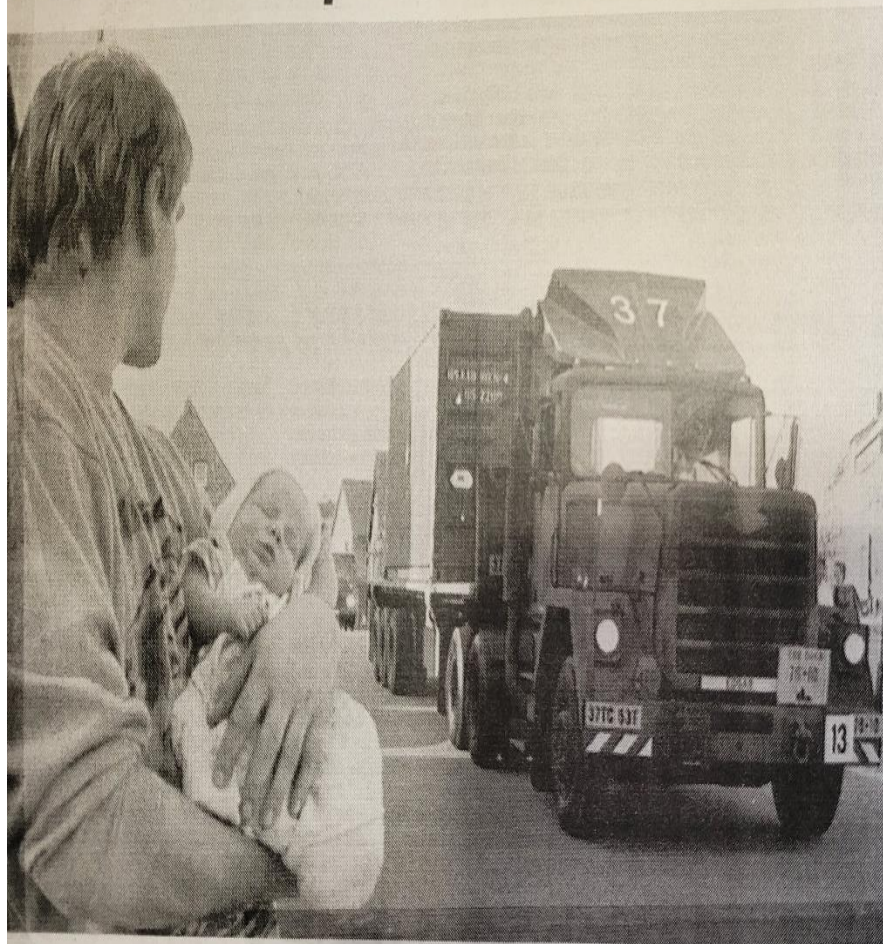
Once the convoy was on the autobahn, it stretched out over nearly 4½ miles. At Lindstuhl, the convoy turned west on Autobahn 6 for the final leg of the journey to Miesau.

"It was just a normal day," said Sgt. James Edgar, one of the drivers.

"It didn't bother me," said Sgt. Kirk Pearson, another driver. "I was almost anxious to get the mission started."

Pearson, who has racked up 75,000

Continued on Page 3



Carl Metzger holds his baby son, Nikolaus, as he watches the military convoy pass through Clausen, West Germany.

AP

Friday, July 27, 1990

## Calm residents of Clausen took convoy in stride

By MARY NETH  
Staff writer

CLAUSEN, West Germany — The red-letter day had arrived. In less than two hours, operation Golden Python would begin. Then, the first convoy would rumble down the main street of this small Rheinland-Pfalz village, carrying enough chemical weapons to wipe out the town and miles of the tranquil surrounding countryside.

Clausen, however, seemed to be sleeping in. Some housewives were making morning purchases at the bakery. An overalls-clad worker was setting up in preparation of giving a house a coat of paint. Here and there, a few commuters were revving up their cars for trips to work.

That was all. Closed shutters. No signs of excitement. Staff Sgt. Leonard Roberts was about to head to his job in Pirmasens.

"There's a laid-back feeling here about the chemical weapon operation," Roberts said. "My neighbors aren't alarmed. Of course, everyone knows what could happen if one of those rockets bust. No one believes one will."

It took the arrival of two huge buses packed with reporters and politicians to liven up the scene.

While reporters and photographers roamed the streets trying to find locals to interview, the politicians gathered at the bus-stop breakfast buffet set up in their honor.

Hans-Jürg Duppre, head of local area administration, expressed complete faith in the operation and said that Wednesday evening's failed attempt by the Green Party to halt the operation amounted to a boost for the withdrawal.

"Now, the courts have given their stamp of approval on its safety," he said.

Gerta Wagner was out for a stroll with her grandchild on moving day. "The chemical weapons don't bother me," Wagner said. "They mean nothing."

Clausen is a rather conservative town that doesn't think much of the likes of the Greens, she said. They

just like to stir things up, she said. "I am more afraid of them than of the chemicals."

The Green Party effort to halt the convoy also drew sneers from local guesthouse owner Klaus Petry. "There are only about 10 Greens in the town," said Petry, who confided that he doesn't want their business.

What Petry does want, he said, is an artillery rocket to hang above his bar.

"I asked (Rheinland-Pfalz Interior Minister) Rudi Geil if he could get one for me. He laughed. 'You mean an empty one, of course,' he said."

Despite such local optimism, there were some protesters on hand when the 79-vehicle convoy moved slowly down the street.

Young scrubbed-looking West German soldiers riding in one of the Army buses looked up and grinned as three women presented posters protesting the weapons' transport to the Johnston Atoll in the Pacific.

"I'm against experiments on people — to test the burning of chemical weapons," one sign read.

In an interview, protester Gudrun Hulsmann-Göbel said: "No, we aren't from here. We also aren't representing any particular group. We are just three people with similar points of view."

Though Hulsmann-Göbel said she and her friends found transporting such dangerous cargo through highly populated areas completely vile, the main thrust of their



S&S: Lynda Davidson  
Wagner



S&S: Lynda Davidson  
Duppre



S&S: Lynda Davidson  
Petry

protest was against the existence of such weapons at all.

"Mankind hasn't learned a thing," she said. "And from here the chemicals will go to that atoll. There, the gases released when they are burned will create an environmental danger for those people (in the Pacific)."

The church bell rang for the half-hour. The convoy wound out of sight. All in all, the Clausen operation had lasted a mere 15 minutes.

A white-clad Catholic nun breathed an audible sigh of relief as she prepared to speed across the now empty street.

"My name, oh no," she said. "It's been such an ordeal. It's not the chemical transportation that's bothering people. It's being constantly followed by the press."

"Why for weeks now, every time you step out on the street someone thrusts a microphone or camera in your face. It's been terrible. That's why the people of Clausen are staying indoors."

# More nerve agents moved without a hitch

By PEGGY DAVIDSON  
Kaiserslautern bureau

The second convoy moving chemical munitions from Clausen to Miesau went off as smoothly Friday as the first one, officials said.

With the successful running of two convoys, West German police said a third convoy will move out of the Clausen Army Depot early Monday.

The Army is moving 100,000 artillery shells filled with the deadly nerve agents VX and sarin to Miesau by truck. Once all the munitions have reached Miesau, the military shipping vans filled with the weapons will be loaded onto trains for the trip to the seaport at Nordenham. At the North Sea, the munitions will be transferred onto two U.S. Navy ships and moved to the Johnston Atoll in the Pacific Ocean, where they will be destroyed.

Friday morning's convoy was completed in two hours, 19 minutes — 14 minutes less than Thursday's convoy, an Army spokeswoman said. The 79 vehicles also used the same route as Thursday. They left Clausen, used the unfinished Autobahn 62 and then turned onto Autobahn 6 for the trip into Miesau.

The convoy made one unexpected 10-minute stop when an escort vehicle driver noticed that one trailer hauling the weapons was vibrating excessively. Mechanics discovered no problems with the trailer, and

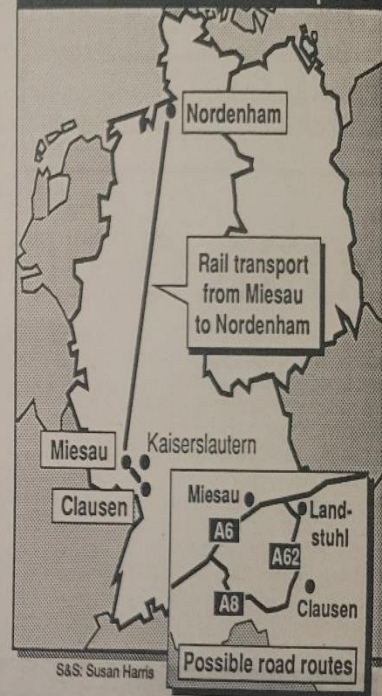
the convoy moved on. At the end of the convoy, the vehicle was scheduled for a closer inspection. Results of that inspection were not yet available Friday afternoon, an Army spokesman said.

Twenty-eight more convoys will be needed to move the weapons to Miesau. To help local motorists, West German police officials are releasing the routes to local radio stations at 6:30 a.m. on the days that the trucks roll. The stations broadcast the information during their daily traffic reports.

AFN-Kaiserslautern also receives the information and broadcasts the routes just before EUCOM Update at 6:55 a.m., again at 7:30 a.m., before the 8 a.m. news broadcast and before 8:30 a.m., said Sgt. Rich Dalton of AFN. Beginning Monday, AFN television in the Kaiserslautern viewing area will air the routes between 6:55 a.m. and 7 a.m., and again between 7:20 and 7:30 a.m., Dalton said.

An information hot line for local citizens also has been established, an Army spokeswoman said. During the first two days of the transport, 236 people called in with questions, she said. Anyone in West Germany wanting information on the chemical withdrawal can call 0130-2197 toll-free. The hot line is staffed Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. Callers before or after those hours will have their questions recorded and will receive a return call from a West German police officer or a soldier.

## Removal of chemical weapons



S&S: Susan Harris

Tuesday, July 31, 1990

## Chemical weapons moved smoothly by third convoy

ENKENBACH, West Germany — A third road convoy successfully transported U.S. chemical munitions from Clausen Army Depot to the railhead at Miesau on Monday.

The 80-vehicle convoy left the U.S. depot at 8 a.m. and took two hours, 11 minutes to complete the 30-mile route. The convoy was accompanied by 1,200 police.

The transport went smoothly, a spokesman said. The removal of the chemical munitions was expected to continue Tuesday. The weapons will eventually be transported by train to the North Sea port of Nordenham, where they will be shipped to the Johnston Atoll in the Pacific.

Wednesday, August 1, 1990

# Ramstein will close its runways for chemical weapons convoys

By PEGGY DAVIDSON  
Kaiserslautern bureau

RAMSTEIN AB, West Germany — Runways at Ramstein AB will be closed whenever truck convoys moving U.S. chemical weapons from Clausen Army Depot come near the base.

The new no-fly safety area extends about 4½ miles from the center of the moving convoys, which can stretch out over more than four miles while under way. All flights to and from Ramstein AB will be suspended when the base is part of that zone, officials said.

The restrictions, which will remain in effect until the convoys end in September, follow an incident in which two U.S. F-16 fighters from Ramstein flew near

the first convoy last Thursday. Under the new restrictions, the aircraft would not have been allowed to take off from the base while the convoy was in the area.

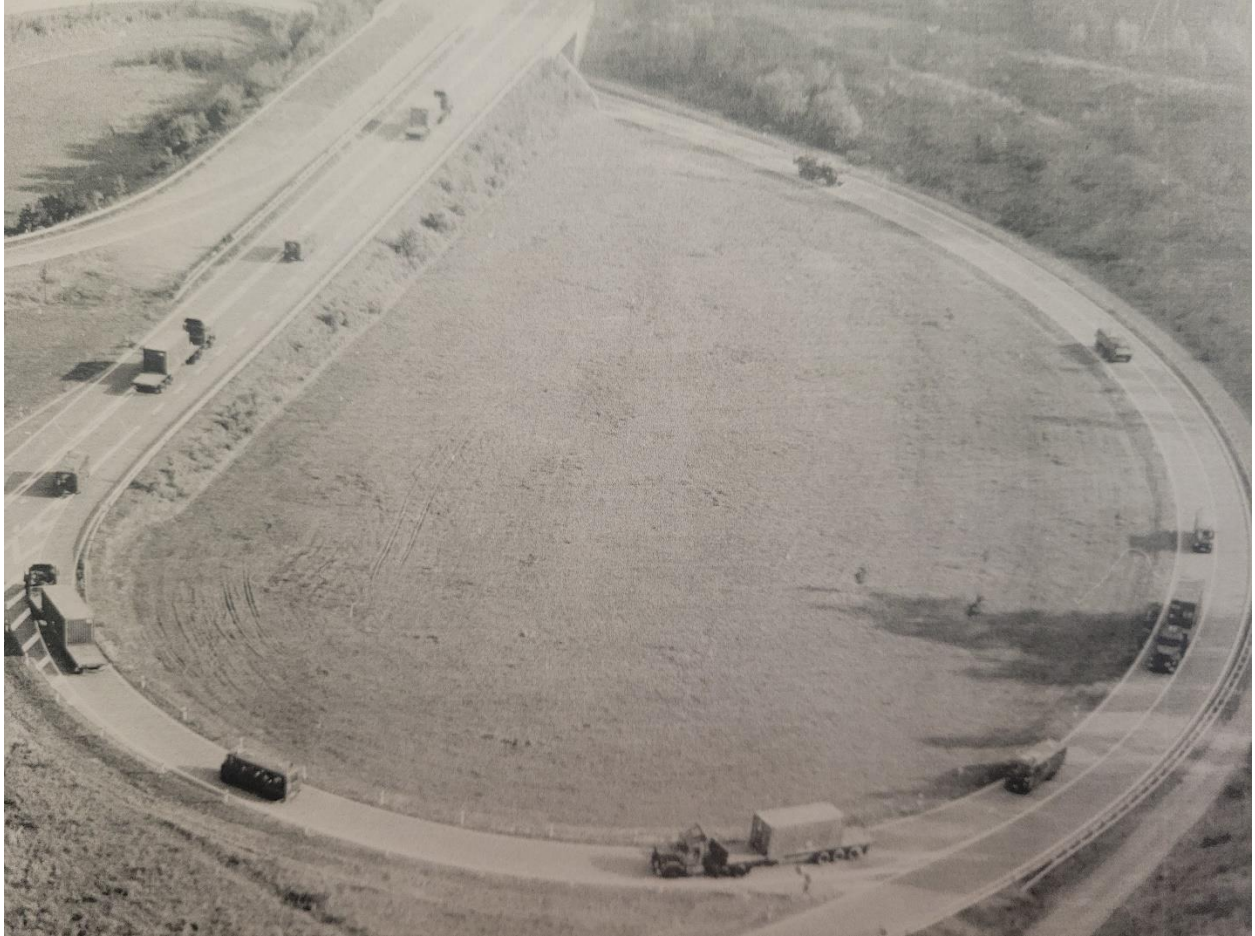
In addition to the new restrictions, a previous ban exists on all civilian and military flights near the Clausen and Miesau depots. It places no-flying limits for a radius of nearly five miles and an altitude of 6,600 feet over Clausen and 3,960 feet over Miesau. There are additional flight restrictions for aircraft that fly in a five-sided area that covers the two depots and the territory between them. Those restrictions require aircraft to keep in touch with the Ramstein flight tower.

Truck convoys are being used to move the 100,000 nerve agent shells from Clausen to Miesau. From there, the

shells will be loaded on trains and taken to the North Sea port of Nordenham. They will then be stowed on Navy ships for the voyage to Johnston Atoll, where they will be destroyed. The atoll, owned by the U.S. Department of Energy, is located about 700 miles southwest of Hawaii.

The first four convoys have used a route from Clausen through Donsieders to Autobahn 62, and then west on Autobahn 6 to Miesau.

Tuesday's convoy, the fourth of 30, took the chemicals close to Ramstein AB, briefly halting flight operations. The convoy pulled into the Miesau depot at 10:17 a.m., according to an Army spokesman. The trip, which went without incident, took two hours and 18 minutes.



Thursday, August 2, 1990

## *U.S. plan to burn chemical arms criticized*

PORT VILA, Vanuatu (AP) — South Pacific nations Wednesday criticized a U.S. plan to burn chemical weapons on a remote Pacific atoll and said they would not allow the region to become “the toxic waste disposal center of the world.”

But the communique, issued by the 15-nation South Pacific Forum at the end of a two-day meeting, stopped short of condemning the United States.

The chemical weapons, which were stockpiled in West Germany and elsewhere, are to be destroyed at

an incinerator now being tested on the Johnston Atoll.

The United States has agreed to move its entire stockpile of chemical weapons out of West Germany by the end of the year.

Also to be destroyed are 1,200 tons of weapons already on Johnston Atoll, which are so badly corroded by sea air that they cannot be moved. In addition, a leaking stockpile of about 100 U.S. mustard-gas rounds dating from World War II recently was found in the Solomon Islands.



UPI photo

**Moving out:** U.S. trucks carrying nerve gas roll through Clausen, Germany, beginning the removal of chemical weapons from a nearby U.S. depot.





*Rolling, rolling, rolling*

## Chemical munitions convoys move out

Five convoys carrying chemical munitions have pulled out of the Clausen depot on the first leg of their 8500 mile journey to their final resting place, Johnston Atoll.

For over 20 years, the chemicals' location remained secret until the U.S. Army and Federal Government of Germany jointly announced plans for the removal of the Army's total European stockpile of chemical munitions from the Clausen Depot near Pirmasens, March 7. Over 100,000 artillery rounds containing GB (Sarin) and VX nerve agents will be moved during the four next two months.

According to Pirmasens Community and 59th Ord. Bn Commander, Brig. Gen. (P) Dennis L. Benchoff, the Army and West German officials are taking extensive, costly and time-consuming measures to ensure that there is no danger to soldiers or to the German people during the transport operation.

Agreement for the removal of the artillery shells was made in May 1986 between then President Ronald Reagan and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl.

The munitions are 155mm and 8 inch (203mm) artillery projectiles banded on wooden pallets and inserted into specially constructed vapor-proof, steel containers. These secondary steel containers have been loaded and secured in military shipping containers (MILVANS) which are loaded onto trailers for transportation. Both enclosures meet the Maritime Dangerous Goods Code which has been adopted by West Germany.

The rounds containing the chemicals were designed to be transported under wartime conditions without special provisions and to withstand the stress of 12,000 times the force of gravity as they are fired from artillery pieces.

While in storage these munitions have been subjected to a series of regularly scheduled inspections and are safe to transport. These rounds are designed to be detonated only with a fuse. There are no fuses with these munitions.

The MILVANS, loaded onto 76th Trans. Co., tractor-trailer rigs, are being convoyed to the Army railhead in Miesau, approximately 50 km from Clausen. All MILVANS are equipped with air-monitoring devices. There are German Army chemical agent detection vehicles within each convoy. Each tractor-trailer hauling the MILVAN has undergone a rigorous hazardous cargo inspection and receives daily inspections before and after each move.

In addition to the constant safety checks, convoy speed is also one of the several safety measures that have been established to ensure safe removal. Convoy vehicles travel at an average of 30 kilometers per hour on secondary roads and 50 KPH on the autobahn.

(See convoy, pg. 6-7)



Clausen residents watch the first retrograde convoy roll through town shortly after leaving the Clausen depot. An 80 vehicle convoy will move through Clausen every week day morning during the next two months. (Photo by Kathy Ports)



A forklift driver from the 59th Ordnance Brigade loads a pallet of chemical munitions into a vapor-proof Secondary Steel Container (SSC). Ground guides are always used to ensure safe loading of the projectiles. (Photo by SPCLJ. Teisel)

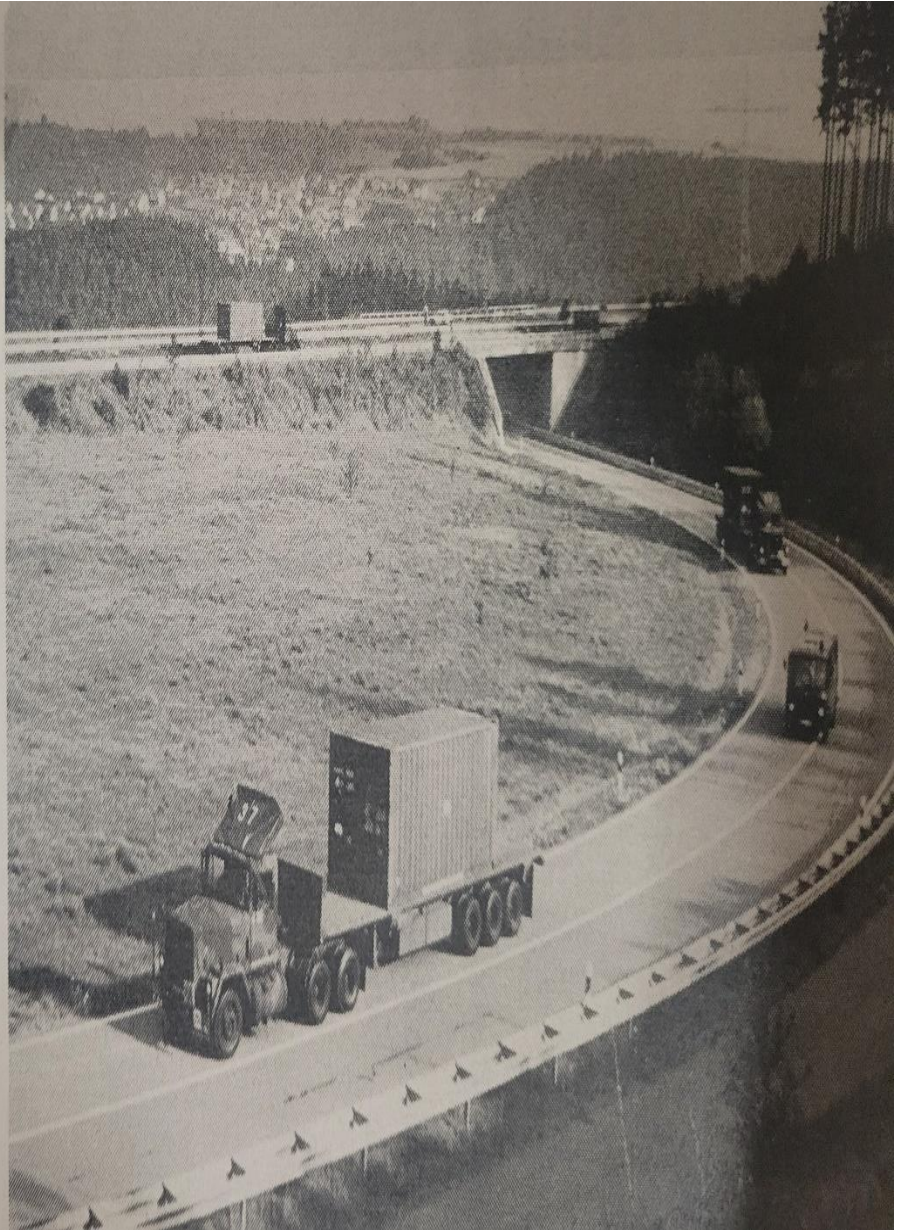


A 59th Ordnance Brigade soldier guides the operator of a MILVAN mover during unloading operations at the U.S. Army depot near Clausen. (Photo by SPC L.J. Teisel)



**A ground guide directs a forklift driver to a pallet of chemical munitions inside a bunker at the U.S. Army depot near Clausen. Agent monitoring devices are used continually when personnel are working in a bunker environment. (Photo by L.J. Teisel)**

The 1st chemical munitions convoy curls around the Thaleisweiler entrance ramp to Autobahn 62 enroute from the Clausen Depot to the Army railhead at Miesau. (Photo by H. Grüny, PZ)





76th Trans. Co. tractor-trailer and German Border Security van emerge from the tunnels on the A 62 autobahn. The unfinished A 62 autobahn is just one of the numerous routes the convoys will travel as the munitions are transported from Clausen to the Miesau Army Depot railhead. (Photo by Bernard Kolb, PZ)

# Convoy and Traffic Information

- The convoys will run approximately 30 weekdays; no convoys on weekends or German or American holidays.
- The convoy will start daily around 8 A.M. and will last about three hours. There will be only one convoy per day.
- The convoy is about 7 km long and consists of about 80 vehicles. Twenty of the vehicles will be transporting munitions.
- For security and practical reasons, the convoy route will be selected and announced each morning.
- Each convoy will travel thru Clausen and Donsieders or possibly thru Rodalben.
- The routes will vary daily and could include Hiway B-270 for a short distance, Autobahn 62 between Hoeheischweiler and Landstuhl, A-8 between Hoeheischweiler and Zweibruecken, and A-6 to Miesau.
- In each town thru which the convoy passes, there will be absolutely no parking or stopping on the street for the duration of the convoy.
- No other vehicles may get between convoy vehicles.
- While the convoy is passing, all intersecting side roads will be blocked by polizei.
- On two lane roads, on-coming and following traffic will be blocked until the convoy passes.
- On divided Autobahns, traffic will not be allowed to pass the convoy. On-coming traffic on the opposite side will be slowed to 60 KPH.
- Autobahn entrances, parking areas and rest areas will be closed briefly while the convoy passes.
- Convoy information and traffic advisories will be broadcast each morning on German Verkehrsfunk Traffic Radio. AFN Kaiserslautern AM and FM Radio will broadcast convoy information just before the 7 a.m. news, at 7:30 following the news, and later in the morning as required. There will be an announcement when convoy operations have ended for the morning.
- Information on daily convoy operations is also available for Community members from Community Public Affairs 495-6133 or 06331-99617.

Saturday, August 4, 1990

## Chemical arms convoy alters route after old smoke grenades turn up

By PEGGY DAVIDSON  
Kaiserslautern bureau

ENKENBACH, West Germany — Military officials abruptly changed the route of the convoy carrying U.S. chemical weapons Friday after search dogs found a half-dozen aging smoke grenades along the way.

The grenades, several with fuses still attached, were found just off the road leading from the town of Donsieders in a runoff area used in case of truck brake failure. Two of the grenades are German-made, police officials said, while some may be Canadian or British. None was of American manufacture, police said.

Some of the grenades dated to 1986, and they had obviously been in the location for a long time, an Army spokesman said. This type of grenade is used to

mark landing areas for helicopters, he said.

The grenades were discovered by police bomb-detecting dogs during a regular daily sweep of the convoy route. Rudi Geil, interior minister for the German state of Rheinland-Pfalz, was concerned that the grenades had not been found in earlier security sweeps.

The discovery of the grenades did not halt Friday's convoy, the fifth of 30. Instead, West German police made a minor route change, and the convoy proceeded from the Clausen Army Depot through Donsieders and Rodalben to Autobahn 62 and then on to the Miesau Army Depot, Army officials said. The convoy took two hours and 45 minutes to reach Miesau.

Friday's convoy was watched by the

minister-president of Rheinland-Pfalz, Karl-Ludwig Wagner, who expressed pleasure with the German-American cooperation in the munitions move. Wagner also commented on a court action still pending in Hawaii to halt the arms shipments to Johnston Island, a Pacific atoll where the weapons are to be incinerated.

Wagner said he has faith that the courts in Hawaii will rule in favor of the shipments.

Approximately 25 percent of the munitions, which have been stored at Clausen for more than 20 years, have already been moved to Miesau, said Brig. Gen. Dennis L. Benchoff, the 59th Ord Brigade commander.

The munitions will be moved by train from Miesau to the North Sea port of Nordenham, then loaded onto two Navy ships for their voyage to the Pacific.

Thursday, August 9, 1990

## 10th weapons convoy successfully completed

ENKENBACH, West Germany (S&S) — Army trucks on Wednesday completed the 10th of an expected 30 convoys involved in the operation to remove U.S. chemical arms from West Germany.

The convoy, which carried some of the 100,000 artillery shells being moved from Clausen Army Depot to a railhead at Miesau, traveled on Autobahn 8 past Zweibrücken and Neunkirchen to Autobahn 6, and then east to the rail facility.

Wednesday marked the first time that a convoy had used that route, said an Army spokesman at the operation's press center at Enkenbach.

Once the road convoys are complete, the weapons will be moved by rail to the North Sea port of Nordenham. From there, they will travel by U.S. Navy ship to a Pacific atoll for incineration.

## Senator not worried about safety after viewing nerve agent disposal

JOHNSTON ATOLL (AP) — A television monitor showed the destruction of one of the world's most loathed weapons — a rocket armed with deadly nerve agent being cut by a machine and dumped into an incinerator.

It was the 63rd M-55 rocket destroyed Tuesday at this remote outpost 800 miles southwest of Honolulu, and the 1,104th incinerated since the Johnston Atoll Chemical Agent Disposal System or JACADS plant began tests June 30.

"I came here with a few doubts, but I leave here reinforced in my support for this facility," Sen. Daniel Inouye, D-Hawaii, said after seeing the process.

He and several other visitors wore gas masks and nerve gas antidote syringes strapped to their sides.

The \$240 million facility was built to destroy 300,000 aging chemical weapons moved here from Okinawa in 1971. Pending government approval and the outcome of a lawsuit filed by the environmental group, Greenpeace USA, the facility also

will incinerate 100,000 rounds being shipped from West Germany.

Some Pacific leaders and environmental groups fear the facility is unsafe and could turn Johnston Atoll into the nation's — and perhaps the world's — chemical munitions disposal site.

To address those fears, Inouye traveled to the small, flat atoll on Tuesday with congressional delegates Ben Blaz, R-Guam, and Eni Faleomavaega, D-American Samoa, Adm. Huntington Hardisty, head of the U.S. Pacific Comd, and several reporters.

An Army spokesman said it was the first time reporters had been given access to the atoll's chemical weapons facilities.

Inouye, chairman of the Senate defense appropriations subcommittee, said he arranged the tour because a lack of information about activities at Johnston Atoll was causing unfounded concern.

Inouye said he came away convinced the facility was safe, would not harm the environment and would not be used for

weapons stored on the U.S. mainland.

"My reaction is very good," Blaz said. "I am absolutely convinced this facility is as good as it can be to do the job for which it is intended."

Col. David Moss, in charge of JACADS, told the visitors the facility is safe.

"We take all the precautions we possibly can. We do extensive monitoring. We've destroyed over 1,100 rockets already without incident," Moss said.

Similar plants are planned for the mainland, where nearly all of the U.S. chemical weapons stockpile is kept. The Johnston Atoll and European weapons amount to 6.6 percent of the U.S. chemical munitions arsenal.

The disposal facility, which resembles a factory or power plant, covers several acres on the coral atoll that is barely large enough to accommodate its airport.

The facility is being tested in a 16-month trial run, burning obsolete rockets containing the nerve agent GB.

## Nerve weapons convoys beef up security

MIESAU, West Germany (S&S) — Nearly 100 extra personnel have joined the security force guarding U.S. chemical weapons convoys because of the international showdown with Iraq.

The 92 extra West German border patrol officers were added Tuesday, said Rudi Geil, interior minister for the state of Rheinland-Pfalz. They joined a force of 1,200 West German police, German army and border patrol officers who were al-

ready monitoring the convoy route.

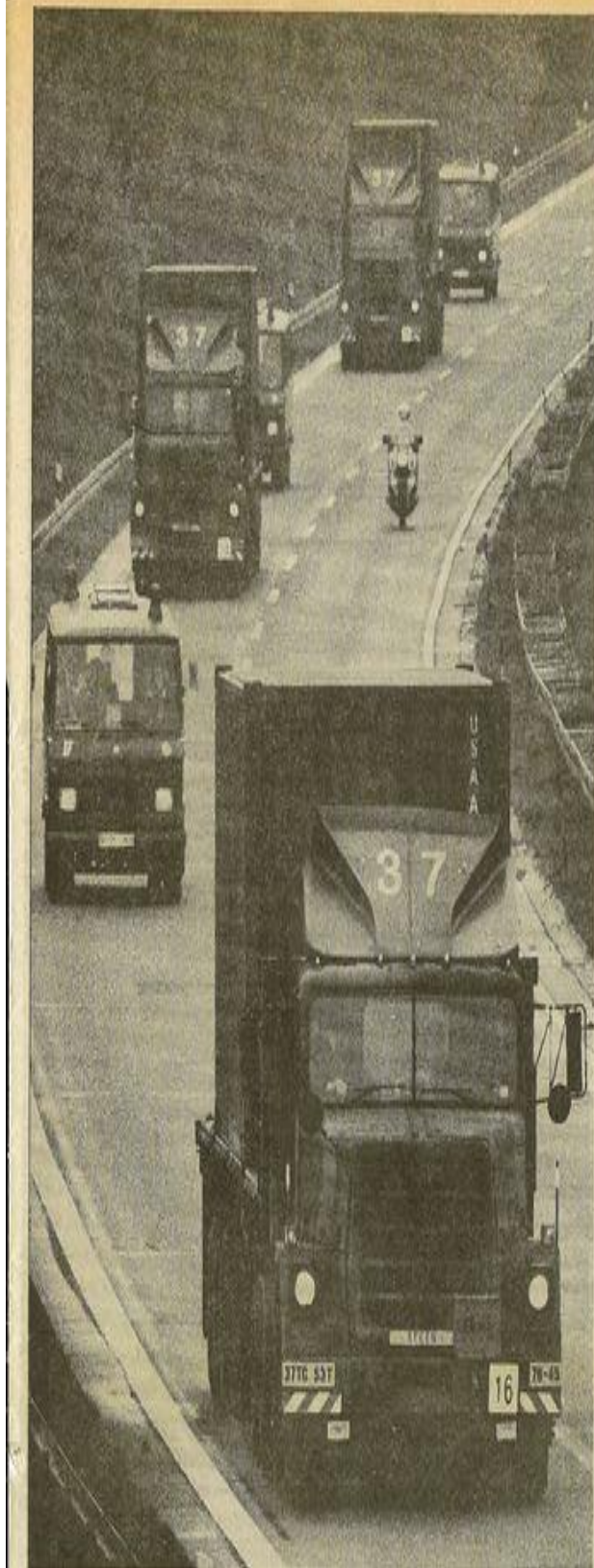
Geil said there had been no actual threat to the convoys, which are moving the chemical weapons from the Clausen Army Depot to the railhead at Miesau.

Wednesday's convoy was the 15th since the operation began July 26. That is half of the projected number that the Army says it needs to move the approximately 100,000 artillery shells with the nerve agents VX and sarin.

Geil said the convoys are going better than expected and, in his opinion, "if the others run as scheduled, we may finish (moving all the weapons) a day or two early."

Once all the weapons are at Miesau, they will be loaded onto trains and moved to the North Sea port at Nordenham. At the port, the shells will be loaded onto two Navy ships and taken to Johnston Island in the Pacific Ocean for destruction.





# Convoy rehearses summer's transfer of chemical arms

By PEGGY DAVIDSON  
Kaiserslautern bureau

CLAUSEN, West Germany — Army truck drivers and West German police went through a slow-motion rehearsal Tuesday of this summer's slow-motion transfer of deadly chemical weapons.

The 70-vehicle convoy of empty tractor-trailers and police trucks wound its way along secondary roads and autobahns in a rolling test of the removal operation, set for July through September.

The plan is to truck 100,000 artillery shells filled with the nerve agents from the Clausen Army Depot to the railhead at Miesau. The steel containers of shells will be taken from the trucks and stored on the concrete pads at Miesau until the entire stockpile of weapons is at the railhead, said Capt. John M. Curd, spokesman for the 59th Ord Brigade, Pirmasens.

Once at the railhead, the shells will be loaded onto seven trains and moved to the seaport at Nordenham. The Navy will take the shells to the Johnston Atoll in the Pacific Ocean, where the chemical will be incinerated.

Tuesday's convoy was the first joint-training convoy, said Brig. Gen. Dennis L. Benchoff, 59th Ord Brigade commander.

Benchoff said no shortcuts are being taken on safety issues. He noted that the weapons were "designed to be transported under wartime conditions with no special provisions."

The practice convoy used one of the possible routes the trucks may use this summer.

Truck convoys will travel on secondary roads from Clausen to whichever autobahn the German police decide to use. While on the secondary roads, the convoy vehicles travel at 20 miles per hour and are spaced 165 feet apart.

Intervals. The low speed on the autobahn is a "speed at which we can maintain control of the convoy," said Curd.

Tuesday's dry run took a circuitous route.

The convoy headed west through the towns of Clausen and Donsieders. It made a quick jaunt on route B-270 to autobahn A-62, then headed south to Höheischweiler where the autobahn changed to A-8.

From there, it was west to Zweibrücken, northwest to Neunkirchen and autobahn A-6. That autobahn took the convoy past Niederbexbach, Reiskirchen and several other towns to Miesau.

The trip of 25 to 30 kilometers lasted more than two hours.

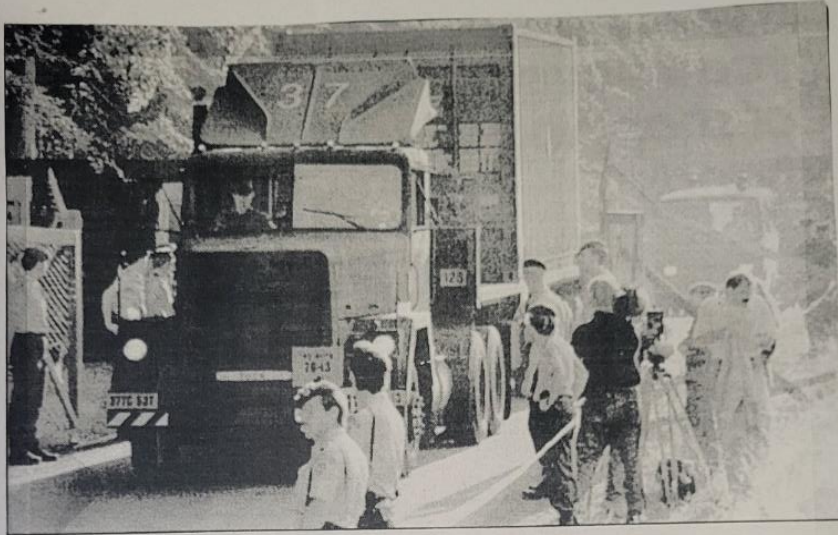
On a secondary road, the convoy took about 25 minutes to pass one point. A second convoy of civilian cars trailed after it because German police would not allow them to pass. On A-8, the military convoy spent about 15 minutes passing a single point. Traffic on both sides of the road was slowed. Cars that followed were not allowed to pass when the convoy was near entrance and exit ramps.

Each 70-vehicle convoy will have 20 tractor-trailers hauling munitions, Curd said. The rest of the convoy will include 17 U.S. military vehicles, and more than 30 German police, fire and safety vehicles.

On Tuesday, a German police van filled with officers rode between each tractor-trailer.

Following along for part of the autobahn drive was a car from the Soviet mission to West Germany. Benchoff suggested that the Soviets might simply have business that brought them onto the autobahn.

Maj. Gen. Roland Oppermann, commander of Wehrbereichskommando IV, said he hoped the Soviets were watching



Loaded: A truck carrying 100,000 U.S. nerve-gas grenades leaves a depot near Clausen, Germany. The weapons are to be destroyed.

## A DELICATE OPERATION

By Steve Vogel  
Special to Army Times

CLAUSEN, Germany — Spec. James Allen watched with disbelief as a vapor cloud floated back to the cab of his truck. Driving a truck carrying nerve-gas shells as part of a convoy withdrawing chemical weapons from Germany, Allen feared the worst and quickly reached for his gas mask.

"All I could think was that it was gas from the truck in front of me," he said. Then Allen recognized the distinct smell of antifreeze and relaxed. A blown radiator hose was not quite as serious as a shell leaking nerve gas.

Since the U.S. Army began removing its arsenal of 102,000 chemical shells from Germany on July 26, members of the 59th Ordnance Brigade, the Pirmasens-based unit safeguarding the weapons, have been working with other units and the West German government to destroy the nerve gas.

Every workday beginning at 8 a.m. in the southwestern state of Rhineland-Palatinate, a convoy rolls through small villages and over winding country lanes and highways amid what officials say is the tightest security ever for such an operation.

"Nothing is going to happen short of some catastrophic act of God," said Brig. Gen. Dennis Benchoff, the brigade commander.

The munitions stored at the depot here are placed in steel containers without fuses or detonators, sealed and loaded into vapor-proof containers. "There's no way they can explode on their own," Benchoff said.

Each convoy, made up of 79 U.S. Army and West German vehicles and stretching four miles, is protected by 1,200 West German police officers, including vans of armed paramilitary police escorting each truck carrying the shells. Included in the entourage are vehicles monitoring the air for any trace of leaking nerve gas; teams of medics; and decontamination squads. Leading the group is a bulldozer to push aside obstacles.

The munitions are carried in military vans on the back of tractor-trailers, which are inspected daily. The most ex-

perienced drivers from the 37th Transportation Command, Pirmasens, haul the chemicals. "It's not like it's brand-new to them," SFC Robert Cunningham said.

Along the route, police seal crossroads, scout bridges and patrol with explosive-sniffing dogs. Surveillance helicopters monitor the operation with television cameras while radar scans the sky; a private plane that strayed over restricted air space Aug. 3 was immediately warned off.

Country roads and village streets used by the convoy are blocked off during the movement and no traffic is allowed to overtake the convoys while they are on the *autobahn*, or German superhighway. Motorists watch from blocked crossroads as the convoy passes. "They'll be out of their cars, waving at us as we pass by," Allen said. "I feel like I'm on parade."

Officials said the \$73 million operation, jointly run by the Americans and Germans, will require 30 convoys to move all the shells from a depot outside Clausen, a town of 1,600 where the shells have been stored for more than 20 years.

After all the shells reach Miesau, Germany, they will be taken by train several hundred miles to the North Sea port of Nordenham, and eventually shipped for destruction to Johnston Island, a U.S. atoll in the Pacific 700 miles south of Hawaii.

Their removal, to be completed by the end of September, will leave the United States without any chemical weapons in Europe for the first time since the 1960s. The operation stems from a 1986 agreement between then-President Reagan and West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl for the removal of chemical weapons by the end of 1992, a timetable President Bush speeded up in 1989 at Kohl's request.

The Army is responsible for the munitions at depots; the German police are responsible for transporting the weapons.

After months of training, the start of the operation was a relief for many soldiers. "You train so much for it you want the day to come," said Pvt. Veronica Madrid, an am-

munition specialist.

The withdrawal has been cautious. "Any of my subordinate leaders can stop the operation if they feel there's a problem," Benchoff said.

### Safety concerns raised

Nonetheless, the plan has raised fears all along the route. The Greens, the West German environmental political party, filed suit to stop the transfer, contending it is unsafe. Their case was rejected by the courts. Officials in Miesau and Nordenham have expressed concern about having the weapons stored near their communities.

And governments and environmental groups in the Pacific have protested the plans to burn the weapons at Johnston Island, which they fear could cause severe pollution. A legal challenge in Hawaii is pending.

Officials said an accidental chemical discharge is virtually impossible, but acknowledged that a convoy could be vulnerable to a well-orchestrated terrorist attack. "The only conceivable danger is a terrorist attack," said Rudi Geil, interior minister for Rhineland-Palatinate.

"We've trained for every situation," said Spec. Joseph Rich, a driver. "But if a terrorist did have determination, he could inflict damage."

But the likelihood of such an attack is "not real at all. There is no known threat," Benchoff said.

A more immediate concern is keeping soldiers' attention focused on the repetitive work. "It's very important work, but not very exciting," Benchoff said.

Twice during the first week, pallets holding the chemical munitions fell off fork lifts as soldiers loaded them. Inspections showed no damage to the shells, but pallets are now strapped together before being lifted.

On the first day of the operation, two F-16 fighters from nearby Ramstein Air Force Base flew in the area of the convoy. U.S. officials said the flights were not over the convoy path and posed no danger but under pressure from the German media and politicians, the Air Force agreed several days later to suspend all flights when the munitions approach the base.

Tuesday, August 28, 1990

## Last nerve agent convoy rolls Saturday

KAISERSLAUTERN, West Germany (S&S) —The Army expects to move the last of 100,000 artillery shells filled with deadly nerve agents out of the Clausen Army Depot on Saturday, a spokeswoman said Monday.

The Saturday transport, the first one scheduled on a weekend, will be the 28th truck convoy moving the shells from the Clausen depot to the railhead at Miesau, about 30 miles away.

The shells will be moved by train from Miesau to the seaport at Nordenham on the North Sea. There, the munitions will be loaded onto two Navy ships and

taken to Johnston Atoll in the Pacific, where they will be destroyed.

Army officials estimate that it will take seven nights to transport the chemicals by train to Nordenham. The date of the first train shipment has not been released.

Accompanying the rail shipments will be U.S. soldiers and fire, medical and security forces from the West German army, police and border patrol.

The first phase of the operation began July 26 amid wide news media interest. The convoys quickly became commonplace to media as well as the residents of the towns of Clausen and Donsieders, through which the convoys passed.

September 1, 1990

# Last convoy rolls out of Clausen

**Enkenbach** - The last road convoy of chemical munitions transport is scheduled to roll over the Western Palatinate roads Saturday, September 1, at 8 a.m.

The original estimate of 30 convoy days allowed some days for inclement weather and other circumstances. According to a spokesman for the U.S. - German Press Information Center, the road transport will be completed in 28 convoys if the operation continues to run as smoothly as it has so far.

Until now, road transports had run Monday through Friday. This Saturday's convoy will

permit completion of the road transport phase this week, thereby freeing up some security forces and enabling operators to position themselves for the rail and ship loading phases of the withdrawal operation later in September. Polizei will block all autobahn entrance ramps and rest areas while the convoy is passing.

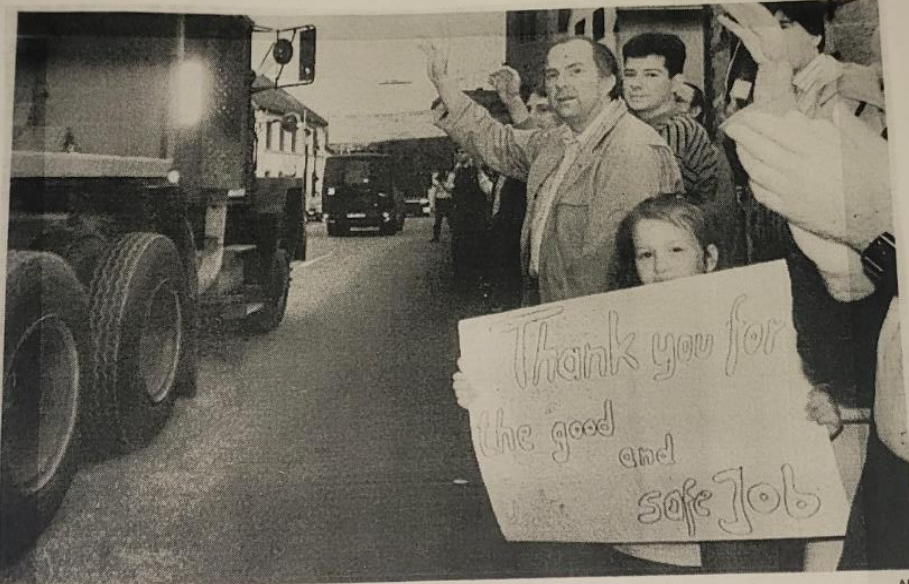
On other roads, all intersections will be blocked until the convoy passes.

Each convoy has an average of 80 vehicles; 20 U.S. Army tractor trailers hauling munitions; 17 Army military support vehicles; and more than 30 West German police, fire and safety vehicles.

The decision on final routes will be made by the Polizei.

Approximately 100,000 chemical artillery rounds are being transported from their storage area near Clausen for interim storage at the U.S. Depot at Miesau. Later this month, the munitions will be transported by rail over an estimated seven nights to the Nordenham North Sea harbor. Upon arrival at Nordenham, the chemical munitions will be trans-loaded to two U.S. ships.

Following the final rail transport, the ships will transport the chemical artillery rounds to a U.S. facility on Johnston Atoll in the Pacific for storage and ultimate destruction.



A girl holds up a poster as Clausen residents wave to the convoy of trucks carrying chemical weapons Saturday.

## 'The End' of convoy draws cheers from Clausen residents

By PEGGY DAVIDSON  
Kaiserslautern bureau

CLAUSEN, West Germany — Clausen threw a street party early Saturday as the last convoy of trucks carrying U.S. chemical weapons headed out of this southwestern German town.

Spectators applauded, cheered and waved as the last truck, marked with a sign proclaiming "The End," drove by. West German and U.S. Army personnel manning the convoy enthusiastically returned the waves, gave thumbs-up signs and blared their horns as the trucks wended their way through Clausen's main streets.

Tables were set up along the street to offer coffee and pastries, including snake-shaped loaves of bread called *Lindwurm* to symbolize the word the Germans used for Golden Python, the code name of

the chemical removal.

Signs and banners lined the route, many noting that the drivers and passengers, if not the weapons, would be missed. "Goodbye to all of our dear friends," one sign read.

Another, however, made it clear that new weapons would not be welcome in the town: "Thirty years was enough," it said. "Leave the warehouses empty."

Saturday's convoy was the 28th shipment of the shells, which were transported to the U.S. Army's depot at Miesau. From there, the shells will travel by train to the North Sea port of Nordenham, where they will be loaded aboard two Navy ships. The weapons' final destination is Johnston Atoll in the Pacific Ocean, where they will be destroyed.

Jurgen Dietsen, a spokesman for the Rheinland-  
See CONVOY on back page

## CONVOY

From Page 1

Pfalz Interior Ministry, said Saturday was a good day for Clausen. "They can breathe free," he said.

Interior Minister Rudi Geil, one of the 1,000 or more spectators who turned out Saturday, used a megaphone to thank Clausen residents for their understanding. He also praised police and West German and U.S. military personnel on the success of the first phase of the removal.

True to form, Saturday's convoy went off without a hitch. The sole incident during the operation occurred last month, when police dogs discovered six aging smoke grenades along one of the roads that was to be used by the convoy. Although officials determined that the grenades had been there for some time, the convoy was rerouted.

U.S. and West German officials estimated Saturday that the shells would begin moving by train to Nordenham by the middle of the month. The officials said they will give about a week's notice before the first train pulls out of the Miesau depot.

As the trucks pulled through the Miesau gates on Saturday, the convoy was saluted by Brig. Gen. Dennis L. Benchoff, the 59th Ord Brigade commander, and Lt. Gen. John M. Shalikashvili, the deputy Army commander in Europe.

With the gate closed on the last convoy vehicle, Benchoff praised the drivers and maintenance crews as well as the vast support by the West German police and army.

"Not to be forgotten are the people who have trained and worked hard, who were on standby, just in case of an incident or emergency," he said.

But, he added, "We're not done yet. We've still got more to do."

## CONVOY CHECKLIST

### FLAG COLORS AND MEANINGS

- |           |                            |
|-----------|----------------------------|
| 1. RED    | CHEMICAL ACCIDENT/INCIDENT |
| 2. GREEN  | AMBUSH                     |
| 3. BLUE   | MECHANICAL FAILURE         |
| 4. YELLOW | DEMONSTRATION              |
| 5. WHITE  | CONTINUE MISSION           |

\* DISPLAY FLAGS AT ALL HALTS

### DURING ALL HALTS DO THIS

1. PLACE CHAINBLOCKS UNDER WHEELS OF MISSION VEHICLE
2. STAND AT LEFT FRONT OF VEHICLE FACING THE REAR
3. PERFORM DURING OPERATIONS CHECKS

### DURING ROAD MOVEMENT DO THIS

1. KEEP 50 METER DISTANCE AT ALL TIMES
2. MAINTAIN CONVOY SPACED
3. CHECK ON VEHICLE TO THE FRONT AND REAR



Thursday, September 6, 1990

## Trains to start moving chemical arms

By **HELGE THIELE**  
Staff writer

The first train carrying U.S. chemical weapons from a temporary storage site to a North Sea port will leave next Wednesday, U.S. and German officials said Wednesday.

From the port of Nordenham, two U.S. Navy ships then will take the weapons to Johnston Atoll, a Pacific island, for destruction.

The chemical weapons had been stored at Clausen, West Germany, since the mid-1960s. Beginning in late July, the nerve agents were transported by truck from Clausen to a railhead at Miesau. The last convoy left Clausen on Saturday.

The first train is expected to leave Miesau at 6 p.m. next Wednesday, according to German army 1st Lt. Bernd Steinkamp, a spokesman for the transport operation's press center at Enkenbach, West Germany. The operation will end Sept. 18.

Three trains will be used each night. Two of the

trains will carry the chemical weapons, while the third will be used as a guard train.

"U.S. personnel from the technical escort unit will ride on the two trains that carry the chemical weapons," Steinkamp said. "In addition, medical staffs from the German and American forces will be there, too."

Officials have also stepped up security because of the crisis in the Middle East, he said.

The trains have three different routes they could take. "Of course, the actual route will only be released on the day that the transport starts," Steinkamp said. At Nordenham, the chemical weapons "will be put into the ships right away," he said.

The ships are expected to set sail Sept. 20 on their monthlong trip, he said.

The ships going to Johnston Atoll will also have three different routes. "According to our information, there is a timetable so that the ships will not get into the fall storms," Steinkamp said.

# U.S. Reserve ships await chemical weapons cargoes

By **HELGE THIELE**  
Staff writer

Two U.S. Navy Reserve ships that will carry U.S. chemical weapons from West Germany arrived Thursday at the port of Nordenham.

The Flickertail State and Gopher State, 600-foot-long auxiliary crane ships, left Norfolk, Va., on Aug. 26. They will carry the 100,000 artillery shells filled with nerve agents to Johnston Atoll in the Pacific for destruction.

"The destruction is expected to be accomplished

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## The destruction of the chemical weapons at Johnston Atoll in the Pacific is expected to be completed by 1997.

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by 1997," said U.S. Army Capt. Edd Hingula of the Joint Information Bureau in Nordenham.

The ships are expected to leave West Germany on Sept. 19.

"Each crew has 38 civilian mariners on board. They all received special training," Hingula said. "In addition to the mariners, U.S. Army and Navy personnel are on board."

The chemical weapons had been stored at the U.S. depot in Clausen since the mid-1960s. Beginning in late July, they were moved by truck to a railhead at Miesau.

The next leg of their journey starts Wednesday, when the weapons will be carried by trains during seven nightly trips to the port. The trains will travel directly to the ships, and the special containers holding the weapons will be transferred onto the vessels.

The U.S. Army has used the harbor at Nordenham since the end of World War II, said Kurt Diekmann, a spokesman for Midgard DSAG, the company that owns the Nordenham harbor. The harbor was used when the weapons arrived in West Germany between 1958 and 1967, he said.

Out of 300 harbor workers who work for Midgard DSAG, two refused to work with the chemical weapons. The company chose about 100 workers to move the weapons because of their experience.

"Anybody who will help loading the chemical weapons from the train into the ships will do that voluntarily," Diekmann said.

However, the workers will not receive extra payments. "We think it is stupid to give any extra money to workers, like a special danger supplement. We think the work is safe. Money does not make it any safer," Diekmann said.

Work will continue as normal in other parts of the harbor, he said.

However, "there will be American and West German security guards all over the place," Diekmann said.



Monday, September 10, 1990

## Judge upholds chemical-arms transfer plan

HONOLULU (UPI) — Environmental groups say they will appeal a federal judge's second refusal to halt the transfer of U.S. chemical weapons from stockpiles in West Germany to Johnston Island in the Pacific for destruction.

U.S. District Judge David Ezra, who earlier rejected a bid for a temporary restraining order, refused late Friday to issue a preliminary injunction sought by environmentalists and two native groups.

"The court does not, nor can it, pass on the wisdom of the decision made by Congress and the president to remove the European stockpile from the Federal Republic of Germany to Johnston atoll," Ezra said in a 44-page ruling.

The judge also said the Army and Defense Department appear to have complied with their obligations under the National Environmental Policy Act and he cited enhanced risks associated with halting the stock-

pile in transit.

Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund attorney Skip Spaulding said he was disappointed with the decision and planned to appeal Monday to the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

Spaulding said he was told by Justice Department attorneys that the weapons are still at a German railhead at Miesau and will not be taken to the North Sea port of Nordenham for several more days. The Army last month agreed not to ship any of the weapons before Sept. 10.

Greenpeace, the Institute for the Advancement of Hawaiian Affairs and the World Council of Indigenous Peoples-Hawaii contend that the Army did not comply with environmental laws before starting the movement.

The groups said the shipment to the atoll, 825 miles west-southwest of Hawaii, where the weapons are to be burned, would threaten the Pacific environment.

A U.S. government study on the potential hazards of transporting the weapons concluded that explosions, fires, or grounding of transport vessels would result in only slight environmental damage. Opponents disagree.

Ezra said the "speculative harm" the plaintiffs complained of was inherent in any form of movement. He said every phase of the movement was given a "hard look."

"An injunction at this time would interrupt the defendants' carefully timed operation and require munitions to be left in temporary and less secure storage in Miesau or Nordenham," the judge said.

He said it could also force rescheduling of detailed plans for movement and security and possibly subject the West German people and the environment to the risk of a repeat of the entire process if the groups' lawsuit is unsuccessful.

Thursday, September 13, 1990

Thursday, September 13, 1990

# 3 trains with chemical arms heading for North Sea port

By PEGGY DAVIDSON  
Kaiserslautern bureau

MIESAU, West Germany — Three trains loaded with chemical weapons pulled out of the Miesau Army Depot on Wednesday afternoon and headed to the port of Nordenham.

The two lead trains carried part of the 100,000 artillery shells filled with deadly nerve agents and the third train carried escort forces of American soldiers and West German police.

As the trains reached the first underpass, dozens of reporters, camera crews and spectators waved down to the police and soldiers, who leaned out of the windows and waved back.

Traffic on roads that cross the tracks — overpasses, underpasses and vehicle road crossings — were being blocked off as the trains passed.

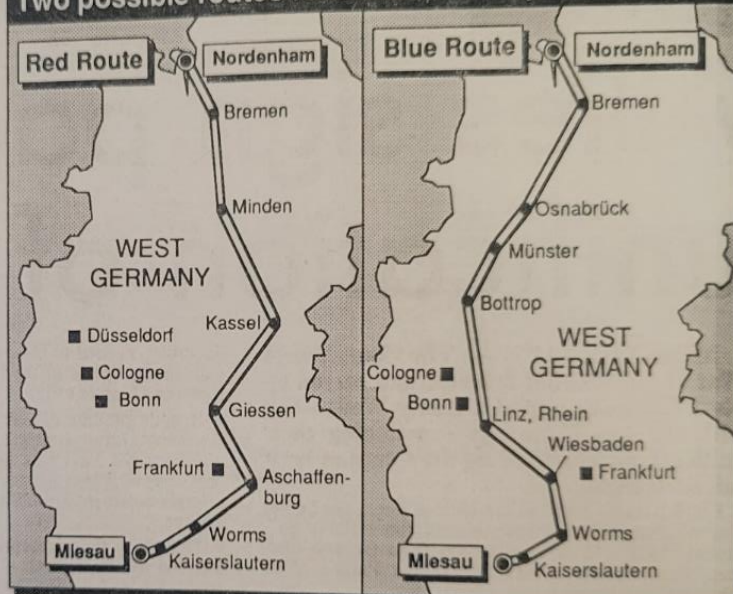
Overpasses and underpasses will be blocked only when a train is actually passing. Police will open up the roadblocks during the 10 minutes between the trains. On roads where traffic crosses the tracks, the crossing will be blocked until all three trains have passed, an Army spokesman said. It should take about 30 minutes for all three trains to pass any one point.

The trains were expected to arrive at the North Sea port early Thursday, and the military vans holding the shells will be immediately loaded onto one of two Navy ships waiting there. It will take about eight to 10 hours for Nordenham workers to move the shells, according to Army officials.

It will take seven train convoys to transport the munitions to Nordenham by Sept. 20.

The two ships will leave the port by Sept. 21, clearing out the Army's entire chemical weapons stockpile in West Germany. The weapons had been stored at the Army depot at Clausen for more than

### Two possible routes for chemical weapon transport



S&S: Susan Harris

20 years. They were carried by truck convoys from Clausen to Miesau earlier this summer.

The Navy ships will take the chemical weapons to Johnston Atoll in the Pacific Ocean for destruction in a voyage that is expected to take a month.

West German police and railroad officials have laid out two possible routes for the trains to follow. One route, designated the red route, goes through Worms, Aschaffenburg, Giessen, Kassel, Minden, Bremen and Nordenham.

The blue route is through Worms, Wiesbaden, Linz, Bottrop, Münster, Osnabrück, Bremen and Nordenham.

The first convoy used the red route.

Like the truck convoys, the train routes will be selected daily by German officials. During the transport, more than 10,000 federal border patrol officers, rail police and police from the German states will be guarding the route.

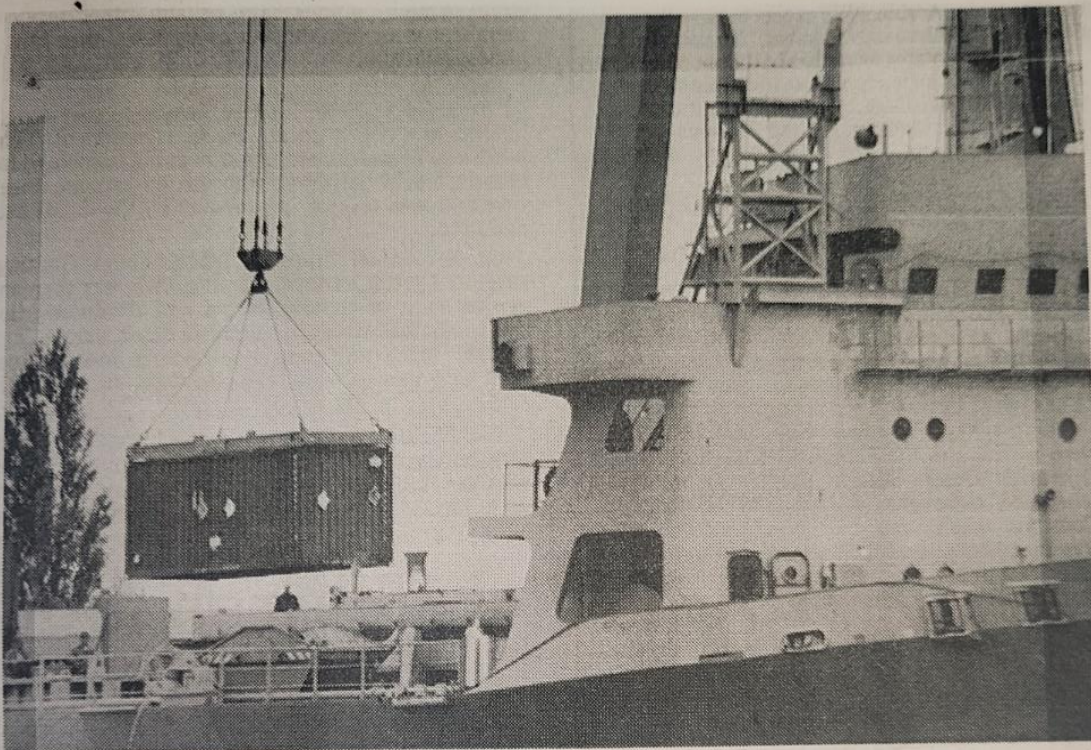
Rail officials have taken other precautions:

- The trains' speed will be maintained at 55 mph.

- Each train will have two diesel engines, with one serving as a backup.

- All train traffic will be carefully monitored during the transport, allowing no train going in the opposite direction to pass if it is carrying dangerous cargo.

Friday, September 14, 1990



A metal crate filled with chemical weapons is loaded onto the ship Gopher State Thursday in Nordenham. AP

## Unscheduled stops delay trains carrying chemical weapons

By KEN CLAUSON  
Staff writer

NORDENHAM, West Germany — The first trains carrying U.S. chemical weapons to this North Sea port arrived 90 minutes late Thursday, following three delays on the overnight journey from southwest Germany.

The rail convoy, made up of two trains carrying munitions plus an escort train, left the railhead at Miesau about 15 minutes late because a communications link between the trains was not working properly.

The trains were halted once along the way while security personnel inspected what turned out to be a typewriter in its case left near the tracks, according to Senior Lt. Werner Weiss, a German navy spokesman at the operation's press center. The convoy stopped a second time, in the German state of

Hessen, so that a loss of brake pressure on the escort train could be repaired, he said.

The trains used the so-called red route, through Worms, Aschaffenburg, Giessen, Kassel, Minden and Bremen. That is one of two possible routes to be used by the train convoys.

After the trains arrived at Nordenham at 6:30 a.m., dockworkers began transferring the sealed containers of artillery shells from the trains into the cargo hold of the U.S. Navy auxiliary crane ship Gopher State.

When the Gopher State is full, the remaining munitions will be loaded into a second crane ship, the Flickertail State. The cargo holds will be sealed after each day's loading and constantly monitored for leaks, said Fred Milton, another spokesman for the operation.

Train convoys are scheduled to arrive daily in

See **WEAPONS** on back page

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# WEAPONS

From Page 1

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Nordenham until Wednesday. In the first convoy, each munitions train contained 20 freight cars, each carrying two sealed containers loaded with the artillery shells, Milton said. He would not say how many shells were included in the transfer. The escort train carried medical and security teams.

The second train convoy was to leave Miesau on Thursday evening, Milton said.

Once loaded, the two ships will head for Johnston Atoll in the Pacific Ocean, a 30- to 50-day trip, depending on the route taken, Milton said. The weapons will then be stored on the island and later destroyed there. The destruction is expected to be completed by 1994.

The nerve agents had been stored at the Army depot at Clausen, West Germany, for more than 20 years. They were carried by truck convoys from Clausen to Miesau earlier this summer.

## Crowds gather to watch last convoy

Residents, family members, reporters, camera crews and dignitaries line the streets of Clausen to cheer on the soldiers, Bundeswehr and Polizei as the last convoy carrying chemical munitions passed through the village, Saturday, September 1, on their way to the Miesau Army Depot.

During the next phase of the operation, over 100,000 rounds of chemical munitions will be transported by rail to the North Sea port of Nordenham. Once there, the munitions will be loaded on to a ship bound for Johnston Atoll in the Pacific.



To show their appreciation, for the safe removal of chemical munitions from the Clausen Depot, the citizens of the town suspended a banner over the main street expressing thanks to all participants in the operation as well as to the world leaders who's decisions led to the removal. (Photo by Warren J. Field).



Crowds line the streets of Clausen to cheer the participants of Golden Python/Steel Box as they move through the village for the last time. (Photo by Kathy Ports).



A little girl stands along the curb clutching a sign that says, 'Thank you for a good and safe job.' (Photo by Kathy Ports).

The last truck carrying chemical munitions pulls into the Miesau Army Depot signifying the end to the first phase of the chemical retrograde. (Photo courtesy of Glöckner).

Thursday, September 20, 1990

# Weather to delay 2 ships moving chemical weapons

From staff reports

A storm front will delay two Navy ships loaded with chemical weapons from leaving a West German port for at least 48 hours, a spokesman said Wednesday.

The trains carrying the last load of the chemical munitions reached Nordenham without a hitch just before 6 a.m. Wednesday, and the military vans filled with deadly nerve agents were put onto the ships before the storm front moved into the area.

Two Navy auxiliary crane ships had been expected to leave Wednesday night for Johnston Atoll in the Pacific Ocean, where the weapons will be destroyed.

The Navy commander in charge of the two ships made the decision not to sail, said Maj. John Curd, a 59th Ord Brigade public affairs officer. Weather forecasters at the port predicted 20-foot seas when the storm hit.

A ceremony marking the end of the complex security and transport operation was planned for Wednesday night at the port. Speakers were to include Lt. Gen. John M. Shalikashvili, deputy USAREUR commander; Lt. Gen. Siegfried F. Storbeck, the West German army inspector general; and Gerhard Glogowski, the

Niedersachsen interior minister.

Commemorative coins were to be presented to representatives of the various American and West German military, police and civilian agencies involved in the operation.

The removal of chemical weapons from West Germany began in July. Truck convoys carried the nerve agents from the Clausen Army Depot, where the shells have been stored for more than 20 years, to the railhead at the Miesau Army Depot. It took 28 convoys to move the 100,000 artillery shells.

At Miesau, the munitions were loaded onto trains and moved by rail to Nordenham. Seven train convoys of three trains each made the trek.

The nightly rail shipments began Sept. 12. The sixth train faced 90 minutes worth of delays while the West German police investigated a fake bomb and minor mechanical problems were repaired.

Security was tightened for the last rail shipment after the fake bomb was discovered Monday on the tracks near Kassel and a message that terrorists were going to "play some music."

# General doubts Iraq will use chemical arms

By PEGGY DAVIDSON  
Kaiserslautern bureau

MIESAU, West Germany — The man responsible for getting chemical munitions out of West Germany thinks Saddam Hussein won't use similar weapons on U.S. troops supporting Operation Desert Shield.

"I think that the world has already condemned him (Saddam) for the aggression that he's already started," Brig. Gen. Dennis L. Benchoff, the departing 59th Ord Brigade commander, said during a recent interview. "It would be very foolish on his part to use chemical weapons."

The general said troops from all the countries involved in Saudi Arabia are

prepared to face Saddam's chemical weapons. "The only people who would be injured would be the ones without protection," he said. "You're talking civilians. I think he would be roundly condemned even more were he to use chemical weapons."

Benchoff, who was relinquishing command of the brigade to Brig. Gen. George E. Friel on Tuesday, commanded the U.S. Army units that moved 100,000 artillery shells filled with deadly Sarin and VX nerve agents from their secret home at the Clausen Army Depot to the North Sea port at Nordenham this summer. Two Navy ships carrying the shells left Saturday for Johnston Island in the Pacific Ocean, where they will be destroyed.

Benchoff, who was nominated this summer for a second star, is moving to the U.S. European Comd headquarters in Stuttgart as the senior staff officer responsible for logistics and security assistance for Europe and Africa.

"I'm sure I'll be involved in moving equipment from Europe that's needed in Desert Shield," he said.

One thing Benchoff is sure won't be going to Desert Shield is the chemical weapons that just left West Germany. "There are no plans to use these chemical weapons," he said. "They are destined for Johnston Island."

"I'm sure they'll go there because they're now packaged in such a way that it

makes them not usable for combat. They would have to be unloaded, and it would take months to put them in any kind of condition that would let them be used as intended."

The change of command is not the only change facing the brigade. Benchoff said four units that played an integral part in the transfer of the chemicals will be deactivated in the coming fiscal year, probably by Feb. 1. The 330th Ord Co, 110th MP Co, 98th Chemical Co and 763rd Medical Det (Chemical) are scheduled for deactivation because the removal of the munitions has left them without a job.

All of the units are stationed at Munchweiler.

Golden Python/Steel Box anniversary

## Clausen commemorates ChemRetro with forest memorial and Fest

One year after the successful completion of Operation Golden Python/Steel Box/Lindwurm (the removal of U.S. chemical munitions from Germany), the villagers of Clausen will dedicate a 9 foot commemorative cross on the forest road leading to the former Clausen Depot, Sunday, September 1, at 2 p.m.

Clausen village officials invite all Pirmasens community members to attend an ecumenical service conducted by Clausen Pastor Franz-Georg Kast and Pirmasens Community Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Paul Bolton.

The road-side cross dedication ceremony, on the 1st anniversary of the last chemical munitions convoy through the village, is to express the villagers' thanks for the safe removal of the chemical munitions from the Clausen Depot.

Following the dedication, the public is invited to a Fest celebrating the event.

To get to the ceremony, follow the main road through Clausen towards Merzalben. Turn left at the last road on the left before leaving the village. There will be parking on the right just before the woods. The ceremony will be approximately 100 meters down the forest road.



**This 9 foot sandstone peace cross will be dedicated in the forest outside of Clausen Sept. 1, to commemorate the safe removal of all U.S. chemical munitions from the former Clausen Depot last year. (Photo by Kathy Ports)**

# Town celebrates end of chemical removal

By PEGGY DAVIDSON  
Kaiserslautern bureau

CLAUSEN, West Germany — West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl turned out Friday to celebrate the end of the West German and American effort that removed some 100,000 chemical weapons from this small southwestern town.

"It's a wonderful day for everyone," said Kohl, whose early evening arrival was greeted with chants of "Helmut, Helmut, Helmut." "It's a day in which an important wish for Clausen and the Federal Republic became real," he said.

The withdrawal of the chemical weapons is "a good sign for the future," he added.

The festivities began at noon, with a review of the units and organizations involved in the removal operation. A crowd of more than 5,000 then headed for a festival tent to cap the celebration with beer and other refreshments. There, convoy drivers, weapons handlers and West German police mingled with townspeople, finally meeting and shaking hands with the folks they had only waved to before.

Pvt. 2 Jose Horta, Pvt. 2 Crispin Baldwin and Pfc. Russell Spearow were among the crowd. The soldiers, assigned

to the 10th Chemical Co at Miesau, were members of one of the emergency crews that accompanied the convoys "in case something happened," Spearow said.

"Thank God, nothing did," he added.

Sitting at a mug-littered table, the three were wearing not-quite-regulation uniforms. Each sported a West German army hat garnered in the frantic trading that went on between fest participants. At the next table, Frank Fendel, a German soldier, wore an American battle dress hat while he toasted his American counterparts.

With a blue beret from a German police officer tilted stylishly over one eye, Pfc. Kenda Bodamer of Hq Co, 3rd Ord Bn, in Piramsens, expressed relief that the sometimes boring operation was finished.

The chemical munitions, which had been stored at the Clausen Army Depot for more than 20 years, were moved by 28 truck convoys to a railhead at Miesau. From there, the weapons traveled by train to the North Sea port of Nordenham, where they were loaded onto two Navy crane ships that departed Saturday for Johnston Atoll in the Pacific Ocean, where the chemicals are to be destroyed.



# Chemical transport

Moving chemical munitions from Germany was a complex mission.

By Spec. John Deniston and Spec. Terri Ferguson

**S**afety, security and efficiency guided the transport of some 100,000 U.S. Army chemical munitions from their Clausen storage site to an incinerator on a far-away island this summer.

The weapons were in excellent condition—not unstable—and designed to be transported under wartime conditions without any special provisions, according to Brig. Gen. Denis Benchoff, 59th Ordnance Brigade commander. Nevertheless, Benchoff said, no shortcuts were taken on safety measures.

Convoys and escorts operated by Germans and Americans, and led by German police, moved the munitions from Clausen to Miesau. They were later transported to the port of Nordenham for U.S. Navy shipment to Johnston Atoll in the Pacific Ocean.

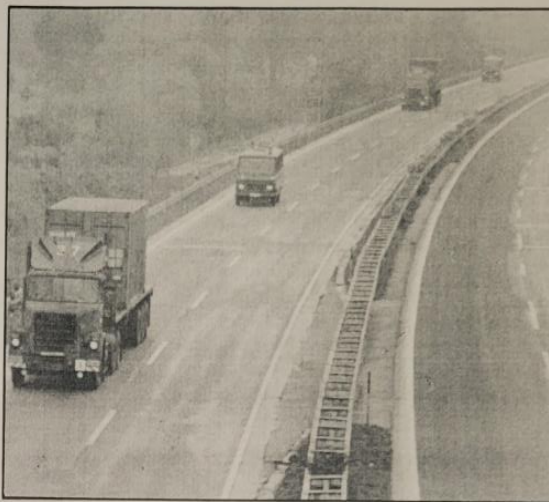
The Technical Escort Unit, a special U.S. Department of Defense team formed during World War II, helped the brigade make the chemical removal safe.

The operation was unusual, according to Maj. William Batt, chief of operations for the Technical Escort Unit. "We haven't done one like this in about 20 years," he said. "Even in the past, by those standards, this was a fairly large event. I've been involved in this chemical removal for the past two years, one way or another."

## Safe, slow speeds

Convoy vehicles traveled an average of 30 kilometers per hour at 50-meter intervals on secondary roads, and an average of 50 kilometers per hour with 100-meter intervals on autobahns.

Each convoy averaged 70 vehicles, including Army tractor-trailer rigs, support vehicles and West German police, fire and safety vehicles. West German police determined travel routes on a daily basis.



Army truck drivers practice the chemical removal during a 70-vehicle-long training exercise. (Photo: Spec. Terri Ferguson)

During the ground convoys, the Technical Escort Unit provided custody of the munitions and stood ready to supervise any emergency response required with West German officials.

## Prepared to respond quickly

Batt's team was trained for quick reaction to preserve lives, determine the condition of the munitions and containers, and determine the presence and extent of any chemical contamination. Evacuation of nonessential personnel, re-containerization of munitions and decontamination of personnel, equipment and terrain were essential items on their task list.

"It's all been hard work, but we've gotten good cooperation from the people over here," Batt said.

In the years after World War II, chemical munitions stocks were recovered, and they were in bad condition, according to Batt. "They were old, thin-skilled munitions," he said, "and those caused quite a few problems. But we've taken the lessons learned from those missions and applied them to this movement."

The brigade's munitions, in the form of 155-millimeter and eight-inch artillery projectiles, were "overpacked" for transport. The hard-shelled projectiles were placed in vapor-proof secondary steel containers, then enclosed in steel military transport containers. Both enclosures met the Maritime Dangerous Goods Code adopted by West Germany.

Spec. Deniston and Spec. Ferguson are staff writers for the 59th Ord. Bde. newspaper, the *59th Courier*.

# Nerve agent depot found to be free of contamination

BONN, Germany (S&S) — The depot where the U.S. military stored 400 tons of deadly nerve agents has been declared free of contamination and suitable for civilian use.

Gerhard Stoltenberg, the German minister of defense, announced recently that a study found no traces of residual pollution at the Clausen Army Depot.

Now that the area has been declared agent free, procedures to return the area to the Federal Republic of Germany can begin.

A similar investigation is being carried out at the Gerbach depot in Rheinland-Pfalz, where chemical weapons were stored prior to 1967 and their transfer to Clausen.

Since 1967, only conventional ammunition has been stored at Gerbach, said Col. John Schaufelberger who, until recently, headed the directorate of engineering and housing for the 21st Theater Army Area Comd in Kaiserslautern.

A U.S.-German inspection team began evaluating the Gerbach site Wednesday. Its findings will be released after a report is made to the U.S. Army Europe and the German Defense Ministry.

The chemical weapons were removed from Germany this year. Convoys of 70 vehicles transported the stockpile of 100,000 shells filled with the liquid nerve agents VX and sarin from Clausen Army Depot to a railhead at Miesau.

From there, the cargo was shipped by rail to the North Sea port at Nordenham and then by Navy ships to the Johnston Atoll in the Pacific Ocean, where it will be destroyed.

# European stockpile of chemical arms reaches Johnston Atoll in Pacific

WASHINGTON (S&S) — The 39 tons of chemical weapons removed from Clausen Army Depot in Germany have reached their final destination, officials said Thursday.

Two ships carried the European stockpile to the Johnston Atoll Chemical Agent Disposal System, or JACADS, on a tiny island 700 miles southwest of Hawaii. The ships arrived Nov. 6 after setting off from the port of Nordenham, Germany, on Sept. 22.

The chemical weapons, now in metal vans, will be stored in concrete igloos, said Marilyn Tischbin of the Army's chemical demilitarization office at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md.

Destruction of the island's current chemical stocks should take until 1994, Tischbin said. Then, the weap-

ons from Europe are expected to take about four months to destroy.

Army officials figure there is less than one chance in a million that an accident will occur with the weapons on the island.

Despite months of setbacks caused by mechanical problems with the unique disposal system, the facility has incinerated 4,750 rockets and 34,094 pounds of nerve agent, as of Tuesday.

The Army plans to build eight more chemical disposal facilities in the United States, but none is expected to be in operation before 1993. About 94 percent of chemical weapon stocks stored by the military are maintained at these stateside facilities.



The program sponsor, the Military Sealift Command, brought in the prestigious naval architecture firm, George G. Sharp, INC of New York City as project manager to oversee the design-development efforts to modify and outfit the two crane ships for the mission and assigned former Electric Boat submarine engineer Jim Ruggieri, P.E. as project engineer. The vessels were outfitted with a collective protection system – or a positive pressure system used to pressurize the house relative to the cargo hold as a means of preventing inadvertent weapon gas migration in the event of a containment failure; manned Laboratories – to provide a safe and comfortable environment to scientists to perform analyses of the products; unmanned “sniffer” and alarming modules to sample cargo hold air to detect containment failures, as well as detect and alarm positive pressure system failure; power generation modules to supplement ship power and emergency power provisions, and specialized communications modules to permit coordination with security forces.

Operation Steel Box began on July 26, 1990, and ended on September 22, 1990, but the weapons did not reach their destination until November. The move from the storage facility to an intermediate facility at Miesau utilized trucks and trains, civilian contractors, and U.S. and West German military personnel. The weapons were repacked and shipped by truck from their storage facility until they reached the railway in Miesau. The truck transport portion of the mission involved 28 road convoys which delivered the munitions the 30 miles from Clausen to Miesau.



*SS Gopher State*, one of two ships that carried chemical weapons to Johnston Atoll, pictured here upon arrival at the atoll during Steel Box.

The munitions were carried by special ammunition train from Miesau to the port of Nordenham. The train transport was well publicized and escorted by 80 U.S. and West German military and police vehicles. At the port the munitions were loaded onto two modified ships, the *SS Gopher State* and the *SS Flickertail State*, by the Army's Technical Escort Unit. The ships were operated by the U.S. Military Sealift Command and upon leaving Nordenham they sailed for 46 straight days. The ships arrived at Johnston Atoll and on November 18 unloaded the last of their cargo containers.



Security and emergency response were both concerns during Steel Box. Besides the police and military escort for the trains, the road convoys had restricted airspace overhead. Along the route, emergency response teams were on stand-by. While the ships were in port U.S. Navy EOD Detachments provided underwater hull sweeps to ensure limpet mines were not attached to the ships. The 46-day trip at sea was non-stop, with refueling taking place along the route.

The ships were also escorted by the U.S. Navy guided missile cruiser USS Bainbridge and USS Truxtun. The transport ships avoided the Panama Canal, for security reasons and took the route around Cape Horn, the tip of South America. There were no reported chemical agent leaks or security breaches during the transport phase of Steel Box. The 1990 shipments of nerve agents from Germany to the Johnston Atoll Chemical Agent Disposal System facility caused several South Pacific nations to express unease. At the 1990 South Pacific Forum in Vanuatu, the island nations of the South Pacific indicated that their concern was that the South Pacific would become a toxic waste dumping ground. Other concerns raised included the security of the shipments, which were refueled at sea and escorted by U.S. guided missile destroyers, while they were en-route to Johnston Atoll. In Australia, Prime Minister Bob Hawke drew criticism from some of these island nations for his support of the chemical weapons destruction at Johnston Atoll.

REF K: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation\\_Steel\\_Box](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Steel_Box)

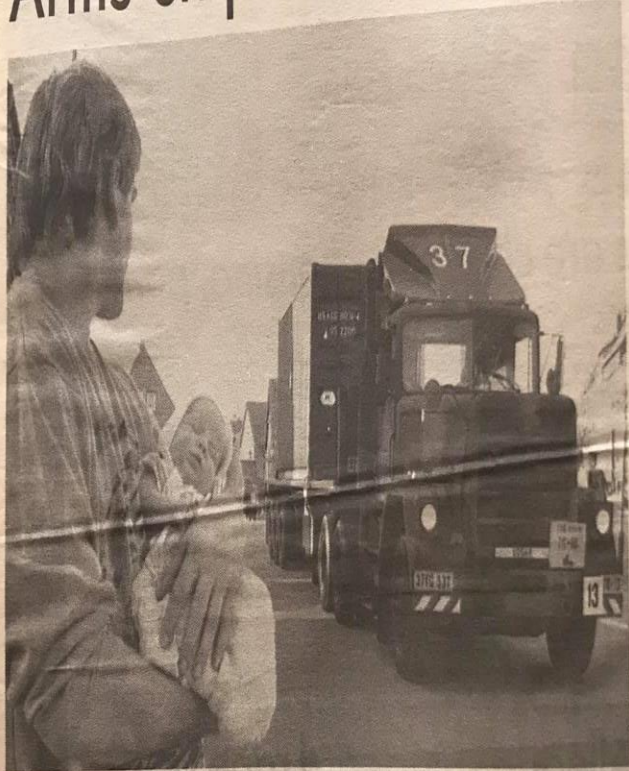


**Clausen Depot at the 330th Ordnance Company, Ammunition Depot, Pirmasens.**

Calm re

By MAR Staff

# Arms shipment starts smoothly



Karl Metzger holds his baby son, Nikolaus, as he watches the military convoy pass through Clausen, West Germany.

By PEGGY DAVIDSON  
Kaiserslautern bureau

CLAUSEN, West Germany — On a forest road outside the small town of Clausen on Thursday, the first shipment of chemical weapons began the long trek to destruction in the Pacific Ocean.

The early morning convoy included 20 military vans loaded with the first of 100,000 artillery shells filled with the deadly nerve agents sarin and VX. The morning's journey began about 8 a.m. and ended 2½ hours later at the Miesau mill, where the weapons will be stored until the shells are there. From Miesau, the shells are to go by rail to the seport of Nordensham to be loaded onto Navy ships for the voyage to Johnston Atoll.

Depriving the Clausen Army Depot, the vehicles traveled in close intervals, following the entire 79-vehicle convoy to exit the depot gate in just more than 10 minutes. The convoy then wound its way through the town of Clausen to Autobahn 62. Part of the autobahn, 13 miles from Weselberg to Lindstahl, is still under construction and not open to public traffic.

Once the convoy was on the autobahn, it stretched out over nearly 4½ miles. At Lindstahl, the convoy turned west on Autobahn 6 for the final leg of the journey to Miesau.

"It was just a normal day," said Sgt. James Edgar, one of the drivers.

"It didn't bother me," said Sgt. Keith Pearson, another driver. "I was almost anxious to get the mission started."

Pearson, who has racked up 73,000 miles, said the mission was "just a normal day."   
Continued on Page 3

CLAUSEN, West Germany — In less than 10 minutes, the town would begin. The trucks rolled down the main street of the village, carrying equipment out of the town and into the countryside.

Clausen, however, seemed to be in a state of confusion. An overalls-clad worker was giving a house a coat of paint. The workers were revving up their engines. That was all. Closed shutters were visible in Pirmasens.

"There's a laid-back feeling upon operation," Robert said. "I'm not alarmed. Of course, I'm not if one of those shells goes off."

It took the arrival of the reporters and politicians to find locals to interview. The bus-stop breakfast butchers Jürg Duppre, head of the local party, expressed complete confidence that Wednesday evening would see the withdrawal.

Now, the courts have given the go-ahead for safety," he said. "The withdrawal was out of the question. The town is not moving day. The town is not moving day. The town is not moving day."

Clausen is a rather quiet town. It is not much like the likes of...

Continued from Page 1

accident-free miles during his nearly seven years behind the wheel, said the drivers received a special briefing before the convoy started out. But that's not out of the ordinary, he added.

"There's so many precautions," he said, "but it's really so simple. Just follow the truck in front of you."

The only traffic backup was at an interchange between the autobahns. One West German police officer said he counted 260 vehicles waiting for the convoy to pass. Besides the 20 trucks carrying the weapons, the convoy included decontamination crews, firefighters, West German and U.S. soldiers, police, monitoring teams and medical staff. Hundreds of crack paramilitary West German police troops also lined the convoy route and stood guard on overpasses.

U.S. and West German officials were elated with the results of the first convoy. "The whole thing went so smoothly it was boring," one Army spokesman said. "I hope they (the convoys) all are."

Rudi Geil, the West German minister of the interior, and Brig. Gen. Dennis L. Benchoff, 59th Ord Brigade commander, heaped praise on the thousands of people who worked to make the chemical shipment a success.

The first day's success led officials to announce that the second convoy would leave Friday morning.

Geil also applauded the Münster court decision, which rejected the Green Party's second effort to halt the chemical shipments. "We are very satisfied with that," he said.

Though the injunction was officially rejected, numerous opponents to the withdrawal program wandered the

streets of Clausen on Wednesday night, Geil said. "There were a lot of people who wanted to cause a disturbance. Any influence from the outside will not be suffered," he said.

West German authorities said that someone also phoned in a bomb threat against the convoy.

The exact contents of Thursday's convoy were not disclosed by Army officials. When pressed for an accounting of which size shells and which nerve agent were in the first shipment, Benchoff said, "Suffice it to say that approximately one-third of the chemicals were shipped today, and when we're finished, they'll all be gone."

More seriously, he added, "Twenty containers of the agent VX of both sizes (155mm and 8-inch shells)" were in Thursday's shipment. "The exact number of each size is not available to me nor available for publication for security reasons."

The shells are being shipped in vaporproof containers and military vans. The Army noted that the precautions being taken are more than what is really necessary.

"They were shipped (in West German military vans) as conventional weapons with special precautions," he said. "No special precautions were needed now."

Many of the precautions being taken are to relieve the worries of the West Germans. "The danger is in the minds of the local population to whom they feel they're (the chemicals) being shipped," Benchoff said. "The danger is in the minds of the people who are carrying the weapons for 20 years. I respect them. I don't fear them."

The West German government has spent \$31.2 million of the removal cost. The United States is paying \$52 million. (Contributing to this report: the Associated Press, Clausen, West Germany)

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# More

By PEGGY DAVIDSON  
Kaiserslautern bureau

The second convoy left Clausen to Miesau on Thursday. It was the first one, officials said.

With the successful first shipment, West German police said a third shipment would leave the Clausen Army Depot on Friday.

The Army is moving the weapons with the deadly nerve agents by truck. Once all the weapons are on the military shipping vans, they will be loaded onto trains for transport to Nordensham. At the Nordensham depot, the weapons will be transferred onto two U.S. Navy ships for transport to Johnston Atoll in the Pacific Ocean. The ships will be destroyed.

Friday morning's convoy, 19 minutes — 14 minutes for the convoy, an Army spokesman said. The Army also used the same route as the first convoy. The convoy, en route to Autobahn 6 for the final leg of the journey to Miesau, was delayed by a traffic jam.

The convoy made one stop when an escort vehicle derailed. The weapons were not damaged. Mechanics discovered no problems with the trucks.

Stars and Strips 27 July 1990.

**ORIGINAL SIGNED ON 13 October 2023**

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