Chemical Weapons Research Consortium

Dr. Juniper L. Simonis (they/them/their)
Chemical Weapons Research Consortium
chemicalweaponsresearch@protonmail.com

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# Homeland Security Agents Weaponized Lethal Smoke Grenades Against Protesters

*At least 26 used on racial justice protesters; grenades are commercially available to law enforcement*

**Present-day Portland, OR:** Community-driven scientific research documents weaponized use of Hexachloroethane (HC) smoke grenades, which produce lethal Zinc Chloride gas, by US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) agents acting under Presidential Executive Order and Operation Diligent Valor. Such grenades are cheaply available to law enforcement agencies around the United States and pose imminent human and environmental health risks.

The research is led by Dr. Juniper L. Simonis (they/them/their), who has authored a report estimating that

> *"DHS deployed 26 … HC grenades. Given the toxicity of $ZnCl_2$, that … could have killed hundreds of people."*

Dr. Simonis has conducted months of direct research in response to an unknown chemical weapon that caused novel severe, mass symptoms in those exposed. They combined first-hand accounts from protesters, media reports, videos and photos of munitions, primary literature, and analytical chemistry to identify the weapon as gaseous Zinc Chloride from Hexachloroethane (HC) smoke grenades.

Independent investigations into the impacts of HC by The Intercept and Future Human underscore the immediate and lasting toll the gassings had on the health of protesters, press, medics, legal observers, and bystanders. Given the long-term poisoning potential of HC and Zinc Chloride, including damaging the liver and causing cancer, this report by Dr. Simonis provides a critical quantification that will aid necessary epidemiological studies.

Hexachloroethane smoke grenades pose substantial environmental dangers, as well, producing superheated heavy metals (Zinc, Lead, Hexavalent Chromium) and chlorates (highly corrosive):

- Environmental toxins have been found at extremely elevated levels (10-fold increases) in the stormwater system that flows directly into nesting and rearing habitat for Chinook Salmon. This pollution will negatively affect bone development and bioaccumulate in salmonids.

- Salmon from the Willamette are consumed recreationally and by protected sea lions.

- Trees at the site of HC deployment have elevated heavy metal concentrations, displayed the expected defoliation, and will likely have reduced lifetime growth.

Research by Dr. Simonis indicates that HC is a threat to humans and the environment well beyond Portland Oregon:

- Manufacturer Defense Technology® removed mention of toxic and lethal aspects of their HC grenades from federally regulated Safety Data Sheet over the past 25 years in response to a lawsuit brought by a Federal Bureau of Prisons employee exposed to HC during a training exercise in rural Minnesota in 1998.

- In advance of the Democratic National Convention, the Milwaukee Police Department requested and received a bid for 60 HC smoke grenades, with a unit price of just $32.89.

**The Chemical Weapons Research Consortium** is an intentionally unincorporated collection of researchers and activists studying the use and impacts of chemical weapons. Founded in response to the use of chemical agents in present day Portland, Oregon against Black Lives Matter and racial justice protests that started in the wake of the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis Police in 2020, The Consortium Website is a hub for research, education, and collaboration.