

MEDIA RELEASE

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The United States and Great Britain are urged to open their military archives and disclose the location of all weapons that have been dumped in the seas:

Conventional and chemical munitions must be recovered from the seas

After World War II, the allied forces (the USA, the United Kingdom, France and the Soviet Union) took over a total of approximately 300,000 tons of chemical weapons unused by Germany. Thirty-nine percent of these included yperite (mustard gas), 18 percent tabun (a neurotoxin), 11 percent teargas and 9 percent phosgene. At the Potsdam Conference, the allied powers decided to drop these agents of chemical warfare into the Atlantic Ocean at a depth of more than 1000 meters. Regrettably, not all of the parties complied with the agreement, and it is now known that these chemical munitions were dumped in the North and Baltic Seas and in the Mediterranean, some of them at a depth of no more than ten meters. According to the Russian scientist Alexander Korotenko, the chemicals are expected to leak into the sea between 2020 and 2060 because the containers are corroding. If they were released, 16 percent of the chemical substances would suffice to eradicate any form of life in the Baltic Sea.

Study documenting chemical weapons dump in the Caribbean

Chemical weapons, such as mustard gas, cyanogen chloride and tabun have been dumped in the Caribbean as well - south of Vieques Island (Puerto Rico), for example, where approximately 20 tons were deposited at a depth of approximately 610 meters. This is documented by a study carried out at the initiative of Green Cross Switzerland under the direction of Dr. Hans Sanderson of the University of Aarhus (Denmark) about the health impact of the chemical weapons dumped near Vieques. As in the Baltic Sea, these locations must be marked in the nautical charts to prevent chemical injuries to fishermen and the dissemination of contaminated fishery products. Furthermore, the study shows that the remnants of conventional munition increase the risk of cancer for the local population in Vieques. According to Nathalie Gysi, Executive Director of Green Cross Switzerland, the exposure pathway study shows that the main routes of concern are grains, leaf vegetables and dairy products produced in Vieques, in addition to fishery products from the disposal sites and their vicinity. The all-clear cannot be given until samples have been taken and the results of in-depth analyses are known. Other than the increased cancer risk, which is attributable to benzo(a)pyrene, additional health threats are caused by the explosive TNT (trinitrotoluene). TNT also adversely affects the reproduction of animals. The highly toxic hexogen (RDX), which causes damage to the nervous system, was also found in quantities that are hazardous to health. Based on these results, the recovery of 8000 tons of artillery ammunition and remnants of munitions dumped in Lake Thun, Lake Brienz and Lake Lucerne between 1948 and 1967 should perhaps also be considered.

The study can be downloaded at [.greencross.ch/en/news-info-en/case-studies/sunken-munition/](http://greencross.ch/en/news-info-en/case-studies/sunken-munition/).

Disclosure of military archives regarding munitions dropped in the sea

The consequences of the conventional and chemical munition dumps along the shores of the Baltic and North Seas will be significantly worse than in Puerto Rico. As part of the disarmament programme, Green Cross Switzerland, in cooperation with a number of scientists, has long been planning to recover and dispose of these weapons and is urging the United States and Great Britain to open their military archives which have been kept under

wraps so far. To recover the munitions from the Baltic Sea and dispose of them in an environmentally responsible way by 2020, the USA and Great Britain have to grant access to the nautical charts in the military archives, showing where such weapons have been dumped.

The situation in Europe's northern waters with hotspots in the Skagerrak and in the Baltic Sea is particularly challenging because of the shallow water and the isolated location. A lack of international regulations concerning accountability and limited access to the military archives showing the disposal sites are a stumbling block to resolving the problem and providing information to the affected population.

From the outset, Green Cross Switzerland has supported the destruction of chemical weapons and is working closely with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and its member states. To build trust among the population, Green Cross operated twelve information offices in Russia near communities with chemical weapons deposits and by mediation, it has contributed significantly to building consensus between the state and local communities in Russia and in the USA.

With its programmes "Legacy of the Cold War" and "Social and Medical Care" Green Cross Switzerland is committed to surmounting the consequences of industrial and military disasters. Specifically, Green Cross Switzerland stands for the worldwide phase-out of nuclear power and with its programme "Legacy of the Cold War", it pursues the safe and environmentally compatible elimination of nuclear and chemical weapons. Round tables focusing on zones that are free of weapons of mass destruction are taking place to broaden the non-proliferation treaty into a nuclear arms reduction treaty.

For further information, please contact Nathalie Gysi, Executive Director, Green Cross Switzerland, phone +41 79 620 18 14.