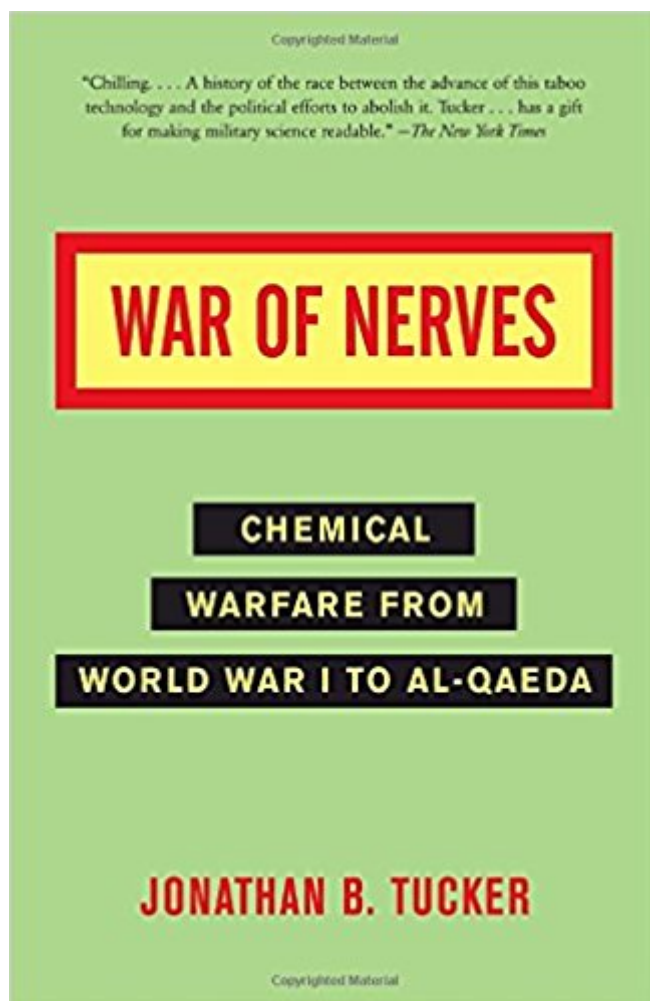


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# War Of Nerves: Chemical Warfare From World War I To Al-Qaeda



## Synopsis

In this important and revelatory book, Jonathan Tucker, a leading expert on chemical and biological weapons, chronicles the lethal history of chemical warfare from World War I to the present. At the turn of the twentieth century, the rise of synthetic chemistry made the large-scale use of toxic chemicals on the battlefield both feasible and cheap. Tucker explores the long debate over the military utility and morality of chemical warfare, from the first chlorine gas attack at Ypres in 1915 to Hitler's reluctance to use nerve agents (he believed, incorrectly, that the U.S. could retaliate in kind) to Saddam Hussein's gassing of his own people, and concludes with the emergent threat of chemical terrorism. Moving beyond history to the twenty-first century, *War of Nerves* makes clear that we are at a crossroads that could lead either to the further spread of these weapons or to their ultimate abolition.

## Book Information

Paperback: 496 pages

Publisher: Anchor; 1 Reprint edition (February 13, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1400032334

ISBN-13: 978-1400032334

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 1 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 15.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 17 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #69,319 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #14 in Books > History > Military > Weapons & Warfare > Biological & Chemical #125 in Books > Textbooks > Humanities > History > Military #135 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Specific Topics > Terrorism

## Customer Reviews

According to arms control expert Tucker, chemical weapons and efforts to ban them are almost as old as war itself. The ancient Greeks and Romans tried to outlaw poison, and in 1675 the French and German empires signed a treaty that outlawed poisoned bullets. By WWI, the "futile slaughter of trench warfare" made toxic gases more attractive to the German High Command and then everybody else. Fear of reprisal precluded the use of nerve agents in WWII battlefields, but the Nazis found Zyklon B, an insecticide, to be an effective instrument of death in their gas chambers. In the 1950s and '60s, virtually every major power was

developing and testing chemical weapons, and this deadly technology was often granted to client states: Egypt used nerve agents in its 1962 war against Yemen, and Iraq frequently used nerve agents against its Kurds. Despite current debates about weapons of mass destruction, Tucker's main points are not about warfare: his description of the 1995 Tokyo subway attack proves that with enough money, any madman can develop nerve gas. In his final pages, Tucker does point out that we have "grounds for hope as well as concern," but many readers will only find cause for pessimism. Regardless, this is a sobering, detailed and necessary book. (Feb. 7) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Nerve agents have been in existence since the 1930s, when German scientists invented them. But not even Hitler had the nerve to use them; for crossing that Rubicon, the world has fallen dictator Saddam Hussein to blame. Both tyrants appear in Tucker's history of nerve agents, which is notably informative and clearly written. Though readers will learn how the poison is manufactured and the morbidity of its biological action, they will cleave to Tucker for his accounting of the rationales for making the stuff in the first place. An arms-control expert who has worked in Washington's agencies and think tanks, Tucker imparts the shock of the Allies upon discovering what the Nazis had wrought. At first merely keeping the German stockpile, they built their own production complexes in the 1950s. Yet strategists could never clarify the military sense of nerve agents, while technicians were forced to contend with the inevitable leaks, which cultivated sentiment favoring abolition. Undeterred by international conventions, terrorists' interest in nerve agents generates Tucker's disquieting conclusion to his essential background history. Gilbert Taylor Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Although this is an engaging, page-turning read, it also is extremely scholarly with notes, references and an amount of historical detail that was surprising. The accounts of the twists and turns of Hitler's "to use or not to use" saga is nail biting and extremely well written. As other reviewers have said, you won't get info on bacitracins, secret CIA transdermals etc. as this focuses on nerve gases predominantly. There is a LOT known about China but not a lot said here but that's not a fault, the coverage is broad and deep with few exceptions. If you enjoy historical novels or well written "reader friendly" history, the author is amazing in the amount of very human detail he gives, including the horrific treatments of conscripted workers in many of these plants. When having a bad day I think of

the guy the author describes who watched thousands of his co-workers die of poisoning, marched while thousands of others died like walking skeletons to other prison camps and factories, only, after being one of a few to survive, to be hunted down and murdered by the Gestapo for "knowing" too much!!! I'm not suggesting this topic is entertaining, but the author gives so much detail, you have to keep reminding yourself it is NOT a novel. Highly recommended not just for those interested in the narrow topic of nerve agents, but also the human side of to use or not to use decisions, and anyone that wants a very detailed look at this aspect of military history.

As a cadet moving into the Army as a Chemical Corps officer I was looking for an introduction of the history of the Chemical Corps and chemical warfare. This book gave me exactly that and provided some details on the live agent training that I was not expecting to find. A good read for all interested and a valuable historical resource that will remain on my shelf for my entire career.

Great book for anyone who wants to learn more about Bio and Chemical Warfare since WWI.

Interesting and quick read (read it on a three day business trip). Illustrates the simultaneous revulsion and attraction to this weapon of mass destruction. Although it is heavy on science it does not feel unapproachable. Good Read.

Good reference and informative! Acknowledged author.

As a scientist in this field I was looking for a historical overview of chemicals weapons. This is a very comprehensive overview of nerve agents. While it does contain a lot of technical details, it is still very readable and moves at a good pace. This is a fascinating and revealing history and the author does a great job of explaining why countries put so much effort into developing these weapons yet only rarely used them.

I bought the book specifically for one subject area but, once reading those few references I found myself unable to put the book down. It's written at a level to satisfy both a scientist and one just interested in the history. Dr. Tucker's other writings are also of this quality...

Good book. Helped with research paper.

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