



Phosphorus Bombs

For Prelims: Phosphorus Bomb, Donbas region, Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), Australia Group

For Mains: Important International Institutions, Russia-Ukraine War

Why in News?

Recently, Ukrainian police has accused Russian forces of launching **phosphorus bomb attacks** (chemical weapon) in the **Lugansk and Donetsk regions of eastern Ukraine, collectively known as the Donbas.**

- **International law** prohibits the use of white phosphorus shells in heavily populated civilian areas, but allows them in open spaces to be used as cover for troops.

What is Phosphorus Bomb?

- **Allotropes:** White phosphorus munitions are weapons that use one of the common allotropes of the chemical element phosphorus.
- **Pyrophoric:** White phosphorus is pyrophoric (it is ignited by contact with air), **burns fiercely, and can ignite cloth, fuel, ammunition,** and other combustibles.
 - Apart from this, it is also used in **smoke, illumination, and burning elements** of tracer ammunition.
- **Chemical Reaction:** In addition to its offensive capabilities, white phosphorus is a **highly efficient smoke-producing agent, reacting with air to produce an immediate blanket** of phosphorus pentoxide vapour.
- **Effects:** In addition to direct injuries caused by fragments of their casings, white phosphorus munitions can cause injuries in two main ways: **burn injuries and vapour inhalation.**

What are Chemical Weapons?

- A Chemical Weapon is a **chemical used to cause intentional death** or harm through its toxic properties.
- **Munitions, devices** and other equipment specifically designed to **weaponize toxic chemicals also fall under the definition of chemical weapons.**

What is International Law regarding Use of Chemical Weapons?

- **Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)** is a multilateral treaty banning chemical weapons and requiring their destruction within the stipulated time.
- Negotiations for the **CWC began in 1980 at the United Nations Conference on Disarmament.**
- The convention was drafted in **September 1992** and opened for signature in January 1993. It became effective from April 1997.
- It makes it mandatory to **destroy old and abandoned chemical weapons.**

- Members should also declare the **riot-control agents (sometimes referred to as ‘tear gas’) in possession of them.**
- **India** signed the treaty in January 1993. The **Chemical Weapons Convention Act, 2000** was passed to implement the CWC.
- **Convention Prohibits:**
 - The development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, or retention of chemical weapons.
 - Transferring of chemical weapons.
 - Using chemical weapons.
 - Assisting other States to indulge in activities that are prohibited by the CWC.
 - Using riot-control devices as ‘warfare methods’.
- Apart from CWC, **Australia Group** seeks to check proliferation of chemical or biological weapons.

What is the Australia Group?

- The Australia Group (AG) is an informal forum of countries which, through the harmonisation of export controls, seeks to ensure that **exports do not contribute to the development of chemical or biological weapons.**
- The formation of the Australia Group (AG) in **1985 was prompted by Iraq’s use of chemical weapons during the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988)**
- Coordination of National export control measures assists Australia Group members to fulfil their obligations under the **Chemical Weapons Convention and Biological & Toxin Weapons Convention.**
- It has **43 members (including the European union).** The members work on a consensus basis. The **annual meeting is held in Paris, France.**
- **India joined (as 43rd Participant) the Australia Group (AG) on 19th January 2018.**
- The Australia Group decided to admit India as the **Group’s through a consensus decision.**

PYQ

Consider the following pairs: (2020)

International agreement/set-up	Subject
1. Alma-Ata Declaration :	Healthcare of the people
2. Hague Convention :	Biological and chemical weapons
3. Talanoa Dialogue :	Global climate change
4. Under2 Coalition :	Child rights

Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 4 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 2, 3 and 4 only

Ans: (c)

Source: TH

PDF Refernece URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/printpdf/phosphorus-bombs>