

# INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

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## SECOND PUBLICATION BY ICRC ON THE USE OF CERTAIN WEAPONS

In its November 1973 issue, *International Review* included a review of a report, published by the ICRC, on weapons that may cause unnecessary suffering or have indiscriminate effects, summarizing the work of a group of experts convened by the International Committee.<sup>1</sup>

Pursuant to the wishes of the XXIIInd International Conference of the Red Cross (Teheran, November 1973) and of the United Nations General Assembly (resolution 3076 [XXVIII]), the ICRC accepted to organize in 1974 a Conference of Government Experts to study in depth, at the humanitarian level, the question of prohibition or restriction of the use of conventional weapons which may cause unnecessary suffering or have indiscriminate effects.

The programme of this Conference, held at Lucerne (Switzerland) from 24 September to 18 October 1974, has already been made known to our readers.<sup>2</sup> The Conference constituted a further significant step forward in the general work being undertaken by the United Nations, the Red Cross and specialized institutions with a view to prohibiting, or at least restricting the use of those weapons which would be recognized as being particularly cruel.

A report, published by the ICRC, on the deliberations of this Conference, has just been issued.<sup>3</sup> It will help governments to supplement

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<sup>1</sup> *Weapons that may Cause Unnecessary Suffering or have Indiscriminate Effects* (ICRC, Geneva, 1973).

<sup>2</sup> See *International Review*, June 1974.

<sup>3</sup> *Conference of Government Expert on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons* (ICRC, Geneva, 1975). This 115-page volume, available in English, French and Spanish, may be obtained from the Documentation Department of the ICRC, price Sw.fr. 15.—.

their information and will urge them to continue tests and research regarding those data which appear to be still not sufficiently advanced for them to make decisions on concrete proposals in respect of prohibition or restriction.

In an introductory chapter, the International Committee of the Red Cross noted that the participants in the Lucerne Conference assembled government-appointed experts from about fifty States. Experts appointed by national liberation movements and representatives of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the World Health Organization, the Red Lion and Sun Society, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the International Confederation of Former Prisoners of War and the NGO Special Committee on Disarmament also took part in the proceedings.

This was the first meeting in forty years to examine, at intergovernmental level, the possibility of prohibiting or restricting the use of certain conventional weapons. The Conference achieved its purpose, namely the drawing up of a report primarily intended for governments. Where differing views were expressed and the discussion did not result in generally acceptable conclusions, the various opinions were recorded in the report. In accordance with its Rules of Procedure, the Conference adopted no resolutions and put forward no recommendation, nor was any question put to the vote. A considerable amount of work therefore still remains to be done and most of the delegations, as indicated in the report's conclusions, expressed a wish that a second conference might be convened by the ICRC. But this conference should not take place before the autumn of 1975 at the earliest and should not confine itself to the mere drafting of a report on its deliberations. After having completed the necessary tests, the experts will have to state their views on the possibility of prohibiting or restricting the use of certain weapons, with the determination to bring their work to a successful conclusion. They will have to determine the essential facts that will form the basis of international regulations and consider the possibility, contents and form of proposals to prohibit or restrict the use of such weapons. A special committee of the Diplomatic Conference on International Humanitarian Law Applicable in Armed Conflicts (Geneva, February-April 1975) will have the opportunity to study this report and to co-operate with the ICRC in working out the mandate for the second Conference of Government Experts on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons.

So as to allow readers to gain a clearer idea of the contents of the report now issued by the ICRC, we give below the general headings:

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

A. *Legal criteria*

B. *Incendiary weapons*

1. Definition and classification
2. The use of incendiary weapons
3. The military characteristics of incendiary weapons
  - Air weapons
  - Ground weapons
  - Flame field expedient weapons
4. Substitutes for incendiary weapons
5. Medical effects of incendiary weapons
  - General features of burn injury
  - Burn injuries from incendiary weapons
6. Evaluation

C. *Small calibre projectiles*

1. Definition and scope
2. Military requirements for SCPs
3. Wound ballistics and medical considerations
  - Evidence from computer modelling
  - Evidence from gelatin-block experiments
  - Evidence from animal experiments
  - Evidence from gunshot casualties
4. Evaluation

D. *Blast and fragmentation weapons*

1. Definition and classification
2. The use and military characteristics of blast and fragmentation weapons
  - Fragmentation weapons
  - Blast weapons
3. Substitutes for blast and fragmentation weapons
4. Medical effects of blast and fragmentation injuries
  - Blast effects
  - Fragmentation effects
  - Shape, mass and velocity
  - Flechettes
5. Evaluation

E. *Delayed action and treacherous weapons*

1. Definition and classification
2. Military aspects
  - Time-fused weapons
  - Naval mines
  - Emplaced landmines
  - Scatterable mines
  - Booby-traps
3. Medical considerations
4. Evaluation

F. *Future weapons*

1. Technical, military and medical considerations
  - Laser weapons
  - Microwave devices
  - Infrasound devices
  - Light-flash devices
  - Geophysical warfare
  - Environmental warfare
  - Electronic warfare
2. Evaluation

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It may be noted that at its last session the United Nations General Assembly took into consideration the results of the Lucerne Conference and adopted resolutions 3255 A (XXIX) and 3255 B (XXIX), reproduced in our January 1975 issue, welcoming the work so far accomplished and, taking extensively into account the Lucerne Conference's conclusions, noting with appreciation the expressed readiness of the International Committee of the Red Cross to pursue the work already begun under its auspices.