

NAPALM Newsletter

WHAT IS NAPALM?

It is a highly flammable sticky jelly made by adding to aviation gas a chemical compound of aluminum naphthenates and palmitates. These thickening substances, developed in 1944-45 under contract to the Chemical Warfare Service, cause the flaming jelly to adhere to its target, whether structures or human bodies.

Recently, a new thickener has been discovered—polystyrene—which produces a more adhesive type of napalm known as Napalm-B. This new napalm, which United Technology Center plans to manufacture in Redwood City, contains 50% polystyrene, 25% benzene, and 25% gasoline.

The polystyrene is made by Dow Chemical at Torrance, California. *Chemical and Engineering News*, March, 1966, reports that the forthcoming use of polystyrene in Napalm-B will be so great (25 million pounds a month) that the normal industrial supplies will be over-strained.

HOW WAS NAPALM USED IN WORLD WAR II?

As an incendiary bomb, napalm was found to be able to create a firestorm which could not be quenched by any kind of equipment, if dropped on a city having at least 25% of the space covered by roofs. Although napalm was used in flame-throwers in Pacific island combat, it was designed and used primarily as an anti-city weapon.

According to Maj. Gen. Alden H. Waitt, chief of Chemical Warfare Service during World War II: "Sixty-six of Nippon's war centers with . . . 20 million population received more than 100,000 tons of incendiaries in 15,000 sorties. More than 100 square miles were burned out in five major cities, while incendiary destruction amounted to about 40% in the urban areas involved. . . ."

HOW IS NAPALM USED IN VIETNAM?

The cities of South Vietnam are along the coast and all are in government-controlled areas. In the Viet Cong areas, there are only thatch-roofed villages and small groups of huts where peasants live and where guerrillas make brief stops for food and rest.

A typical napalm raid on this kind of target was described in the *San Francisco Chronicle* of February 9, 1966, by a reporter who flew as a passenger in a carrier-based Phantom II F4C:

Our Phantom stood on the bomb-deck, being loaded with two fat cylinders painted red and each



NAPALM AT WORK:
A peasant at Son: He recovers burnt bones of his son, May 11, 1965

"In front of us a curious figure was standing a little crouched, legs straddled, arms held out from his sides. He had no eyes, and the whole of his body, nearly all of which was visible through lattices of burnt reeds, was covered with a hard black crust speckled with yellow pus. A native woman by his side began to speak, and the interpreter said, 'He has to stand, sir, he cannot sit or lie.' He had to stand because he was no longer covered with a skin, but with a crust-like cracking which broke easily." R. Cufforth, BBC, London

marked "1000-lb. firebomb"—otherwise napalm, the most popular bomb in Vietnam, because it's both cheap and deadly: a mixture of low-grade jet fuel and gelignite which sticks to anything it touches and burns with such heat that all oxygen in the area is exhausted within a split second. Death is either by roasting or suffocation.

He describes the blinding attack from 35,000 feet over the Mekong Delta, an area of rice paddies:

The whole delta tipped onto its side, as the speedometer needle flickered up over 700, and my head was heavy as a great stone. I tried to grab the sides of my helmet to stop it lolling onto my shoulder, but found I could not even move my hands.

With a terrible emptiness in my gut, we flattened out over the target, with the trees racing past the wings, and I had a glimpse of three thatched huts burning along the edge of some water. Then I closed my eyes, and could not open them again until we were several thousand feet up. Below,

