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Photo shows 'Willie Pete' went to Gaza

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Despite Israeli denial, newly found photographic evidence proves that Israel has used controversial white phosphorus shells on Gazans.

While the use of the solid, waxy synthetic chemical -- also known by the military as WP or Willie Pete -- against civilians is prohibited under international law, there is evidence that Palestinian civilians have been subjected to the chemical weapon.

The Times says it has identified stockpiles of M825A1, an American-made WP munition, from high-resolution pictures taken from Israeli artillery units on the Gaza border.

White phosphorus is used in munitions, to mark enemy targets and to produce smoke for concealing troop movement.

It can also be used as an incendiary device to firebomb enemy positions.

If particles of ignited white phosphorus land on a person's skin, they burn right through flesh to the bone. Toxic phosphoric acid can also be released into wounds, risking phosphorus poisoning.

Exposure to white phosphorus smoke in the air can also cause liver, kidney, heart, lung and bone damage and can even lead to death.

There has been evidence that Palestinian civilians have been injured by the incendiary bombs. A doctor at al-Shifa hospital in Gaza City Hassan Khalass told *The Times* that he had been treating patients who he believed had been burnt by white phosphorus.

According to Muhammad Azayzeh, 28, an emergency medical technician in Gaza City "The burns are very unusual. They don't look like burns we have normally seen. They are third-level burns that we can't seem to control."

Following earlier reports that Israeli troops had fired WP shells to screen their assault on the heavily populated Gaza Strip, an IDF spokesman denied using phosphorus, adding that Israel was only using weapons that were allowed under international law.

After the emergence of the recent evidence, an IDF spokeswoman claimed that the M825A1 shell was not of a WP type. "This is what we call a quiet shell - it is empty, it has no explosives and no white phosphorus. There is nothing inside it," she said.

However, Neil Gibson, a technical adviser to Jane's Missiles and Rockets, is of a different opinion and insists that the M825A1 is a WP round.

"The M825A1 is an improved model. The WP does not fill the shell but is impregnated into 116 felt wedges which, once dispersed [by a high-explosive charge], start to burn within four to five seconds. They then burn for five to ten minutes. The smoke screen produced is extremely effective," Gibson said.

Tel Aviv had previously admitted to using white phosphorus during the 2006 war with Lebanon.

The International Red Cross has urged a complete ban on phosphorus being used against humans and the third protocol of the Geneva Convention on Conventional Weapons restricts the use of "incendiary weapons" -- phosphorus is considered one such weapon.

Israel and the United States are not signatories to the Third Protocol.

Earlier last week, Dr. Mads Gilbert, a member of a Norwegian triage medical team in Gaza, told Press TV that **medics had found depleted uranium** in some Gaza residents.

As the Palestinian death toll topped 820 on the fifteenth day of the Israeli offensive against Gaza, the tell-tale shells could spark yet more controversy over Israel's incursion into the impoverished strip.



The pale blue 155mm rounds, marked with the designation M825A1, are US-made white phosphorus munitions.



"These explosions are fantastic looking, and produce a great deal of smoke that blinds the enemy so that our forces can move in," said one Israeli security expert.

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