

From World War I until the 1970s, dumping of chemical weapons at sea was the accepted practice for disposal. Little documentation of this practice can be found before the mid-1940s. In 1943, mustard (H) was released into the waters of Bari harbor in Italy. Since the end of World War II, ocean dumping has occurred in many areas, including the Baltic Sea, around Japan, in the Adriatic Sea near Bari, and in the coastal waters of the United States. During the period 1945-1948, the US scuttled at sea approximately 32,000 tons of captured German chemical weapons. The British dumped approximately 175,000 tons of chemical weapons at sea, with 100,000 tons coming from Scotland and the balance from the captured German stockpile. During 1955-56, the British dumped a further 17,000 tons of captured German munitions. During 1956-1957, the British disposed of the remainder of their stockpile of chemical weapons, 8,000 tons of World War II vintage mustard and phosgene munitions. News reports indicate that the ocean dumping in the 1950s occurred in the Irish Sea; some of the British dumps in the late 1940s may have occurred in the North Sea. The Adriatic, Baltic, and Japanese ocean dumps have provided evidence of the persistence of mustard under water.

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