



U.S. troops reported suspicions that they had been exposed to chemical warfare toxins in Iraq, yet the Pentagon failed to adequately treat them or track possible exposures, defense officials have revealed.

Contact with the toxins occurred beginning in 2003 when troops found degraded chemical weapons from the 1980s hidden in underground caches or in makeshift bombs. The information about the large number of potential exposures emerged following an internal review of Pentagon records ordered by Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel after an investigation by the New York Times initially found that 17 service members were injured by sarin or a sulfur mustard agent.

It's likely that other foreign troops, as well as Iraqi service members and civilians were also at risk.

The Pentagon is now setting up a national hotline for troops and veterans to report potential exposures and obtain medical evaluations. It's the first time the Pentagon has taken any action to address the problem.

A veteran activist called the Pentagon's earlier inaction a "stunning oversight."

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