

A Tribute to Major General John J. Hayes

By Mr. Al Mauroni



Major General John J. Hayes died of cardiorespiratory failure on 6 February 2004 at his home in Annandale, Virginia. He leaves behind his wife Mary and five children, two of whom are retired Army colonels. Major General Hayes was a Chemical Corps officer from 1937 to 1972, serving during an era of chemical and biological (CB) weapons development and testing from World War II through the Cold War. While CB weapons are viewed as controversial today, during this era of heightened anxiety, they represented a keystone of the defense policy designed to protect the armed forces from adversarial use.

Major General Hayes began his military career in 1934 as a private in Company D, 138th Infantry Regiment, Missouri Army National Guard. He graduated from Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1935 with a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering and went on to pursue his master's and doctorate degrees in public welfare administration from Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. He was originally commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Coast Artillery Corps in 1935, but transferred to the Chemical Warfare Service reserve in 1937, where he served on an extended tour of active duty service. In 1942, following the beginning of World War II, the then Major Hayes was transferred to England for duty with the Services of Supply headquarters, European Theater of Operations. In November 1942, following the invasion of North Africa by Allied Forces, he was assigned to II Corps as the Assistant Chief of Staff, G4 (Logistics) (G4) for the Mediterranean Base Section. In May 1944, he was promoted to lieutenant colonel (US Army Reserve), detailed to the Free

French Forces as a combat liaison officer, and later transferred to the G4 position in the 1st French Corps in Corsica and Elba. He participated in the invasion of southern France with French Armee "B" and remained with the 1st French army until the end of the war. He celebrated the end of the war with a family in Dijon, toasting the event with bottles of champagne that had been buried in the backyard—the friendship with the family would last for decades. Major General Hayes returned to the United States in May 1945 and was appointed Commander of the Indianapolis Chemical Warfare Depot. In all, he participated in five campaigns (Corsica-Elba, Rome-Arno, southern France, Rhineland, and Central Europe).

Between December 1945 and October 1949, Major General Hayes worked in the Office of the Chief Chemical Officer and was promoted to colonel in 1946. From 1949 to 1952, he resided as the first comptroller of the Chemical Corps, where he worked on the concept of using industrial funds to support the work at Army depots and arsenals. This concept allowed depots and arsenals to operate in a businesslike manner (breaking even, rather than generating profits or losses). The use of industrial funds allowed the Army to optimize productivity and operational efficiencies at these sites.

In March 1952, the Hayes family moved to Arkansas, where Major General Hayes assumed command of Pine Bluff Arsenal. At the time, Pine Bluff Arsenal was the largest industrial installation of the Chemical Corps. Hayes oversaw a number of classified projects, including the completion of the Army

antipersonnel biological warfare production plant and the movement of chemical weapons to Okinawa. During this time, he was promoted to colonel (US Army), one of few regular Army colonels in the Chemical Corps.

In October 1953, Major General Hayes was assigned to the field office of the Chief Chemical Officer at Fort Detrick, Maryland; in January 1954, he was appointed Assistant Chief Chemical Officer for Biological Warfare; and in February 1956, he was appointed Commander of the Biological Warfare Laboratories. Between March 1954 and June 1957, he also served as Commander of Fort Detrick.¹ During this time, the labs were very busy researching biological warfare agents and defenses against their use. Hayes oversaw the production and testing of wheat stem rust and rye stem rust as anticrop agents. While these agents were never employed, the studies produced a better understanding of the effectiveness of the agents should the method ever be employed against the United States. Because most of the work conducted at Fort Detrick was classified, there are very few public records of what occurred. Mrs. Hayes recalls that her husband received vaccinations for every biological warfare agent being tested so that he could personally inspect the work conducted at every laboratory on the post.

After graduating from the Army War College at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, Major General Hayes was asked to stay for another year as a faculty member—a very rare request. After leaving the Army War College in August 1959, he was appointed as the Chemical Officer for Headquarters, US Army Europe, where he developed war plans and coordinated with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Central Army Group. In September 1961, Hayes returned to Washington, D.C., and assumed the position of Deputy Commander, US Army Chemical Corps Research and Development Command. In 1962, the Army reorganized, reshaping its technical services and eliminating the Office of the Chief Chemical Officer. Major General Hayes was transferred to the Army Chemical Center at Edgewood Arsenal, Maryland, to assume duties as Deputy Commander of the US Army Chemical-Biological-Radiological Agency.²

In addition to working on the development and testing of new chemical-agent munitions, Edgewood Arsenal was developing automatic chemical-agent detectors and collective-protection systems during this time period. The M17 mask (type-classified in 1959) was being fielded to Army units, and Edgewood

Arsenal was releasing the M24 aviator mask (type-classified in 1962) and the M25A1 protective mask (type-classified in 1963). New efforts had just begun on the M256 chemical-agent detector kit, a simpler detector kit than the M18A1 chemical-agent detector kit (type-classified in 1964). Edgewood Arsenal released the M12 Power-Driven Decontamination Apparatus in 1962 to utilize Decontaminating Solution Number 2 (DS2).

On 1 August 1964, Hayes was promoted to brigadier general and transferred to the US Army Advisory Group, Korea, as a Senior Logistics Advisor to the Republic of Korea (ROK) army. He and his family stayed in Seoul, where he supported the ROK army through the procurement and distribution of equipment to the two ROK divisions deploying to support US forces in Vietnam. Major General Hayes remained very concerned about the welfare of “his” soldiers in Vietnam, going so far as to procure kimchi pots and other ethnic cooking materials that were not regular supply items. The ROK soldiers never forgot his efforts. Thirty-three years later, the veterans threw a formal celebration at which they recollected the support provided to their divisions.

In June 1966, General Hayes was appointed Commander of the Desert Test Center. During this time, he oversaw the execution of two Project 112 exercises: the testing of riot control agent munition dispersion patterns in Panama and biological warfare simulant releases in the Pacific. However, he would not stay long. Hayes was promoted to major general in November 1966 and was briefly assigned as the Director of Procurement and Production. He was later assigned as the project manager for the T53 and T55 turbine aircraft engines—an unusual assignment for a chemical officer, but there were no pilots available for the acquisition position. During this assignment, Major General Hayes attended a special rotary-wing training course at the Army Aviation School in Fort Rucker, Alabama, to obtain flight-qualified status. He quickly fell in love with flying and spent much of his free time flying helicopters around the Washington, D.C., area.

In late 1967, Major General Hayes was appointed Director of Supply, US Army Materiel Command (AMC) and, in July 1968, Director of Material Requirements. In October 1968, he was appointed Director for Supply and Logistics for the Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics. In February 1970, Major General Hayes received his final and most demanding assignment—the Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics.

In July 1969, 23 American soldiers repainting depot buildings in Okinawa were hospitalized for exposure to low levels of sarin leaking from munitions in a nearby bunker. While all soldiers were back on duty within 24 hours, the resulting media blitz revealed the presence of overseas US chemical-weapons stockpiles. The Japanese government demanded that the United States remove the agents. This was a particularly delicate time, as the US government was discussing the potential return of Okinawa to the Japanese government. The Japanese government had already called for assurance that their policy of rejecting the presence of nuclear weapons would apply to any US forces in Okinawa. In November 1969, President Nixon announced the agreement between the two nations to transfer the island to the Japanese government. After political considerations to move the chemical munitions to Alaska and Oregon were rejected, the Army moved the weapons to the remote location of Johnston Island (southwest of Honolulu, Hawaii). This movement was called Operation Red Hat, as identified by the red, baseball cap-shaped pin worn by each member.

To execute Operation Red Hat, Major General Hayes assumed command of the 2d Logistical Command in August 1970. The operation required the safe movement of more than 12,500 tons of chemical munitions across the Pacific Ocean. Prior to moving the munitions, Major General Hayes and his staff planned the construction of storage facilities on

Johnston Island, identified the routes of travel for ships, trained personnel (using the Army's Technical Escort Unit as trainers), and coordinated between the military services and numerous government agencies, while simultaneously directing Army logistics operations in Southeast Asia. The commander and deputy commander of AMC came to inspect the effort, as well as General William Westmoreland, the then Chief of Staff of the Army.

As the weapons were transferred from the depot to the ships by trucks, Major General Hayes inspected the operations from overhead in a UH-1 helicopter. The operation was similar to chemical-weapons transportation and disposal operations of today. The Okinawa natives welcomed, but feared, the weapons movement. At the same time, the natives were protesting the low salaries paid to them by the American government, to the point of obstructing the trucks transporting the munitions to the ships. They carried large bowls of rice behind the trucks and threw rice in the tracks to "dispel evil spirits."

Between January and September 1971, six separate movements of munitions resulted in the successful and uneventful transfer of all munitions from Okinawa to Johnston Island. The last ship leaving the docks carried a sign on its stern, with a picture of Porky Pig and the words "Th-th-th-that's all, folks!" Hayes overcame adverse public opinion and heated national opposition over the movement, successfully transporting all chemical munitions without any safety

incidents or danger to the public. For his efforts, Major General Hayes received the Distinguished Service Medal. Following the deactivation of the 2d Logistics Command in May 1972, he was assigned to the Office of the Chief of Staff of the Army until his formal retirement. His last act on Okinawa as the ranking military officer, was to formally turn over the "keys to the island" to the Japanese government on 15 May 1972. In August of that same year, Major General Hayes retired with 37 years of service to his country.

Major General Hayes was inducted into the Ordnance Corps Hall of Fame in 1977 (when the Chemical School was under Ordnance Center command) and the Chemical Corps Hall of Fame in 1989. His career, spanning the Chemical Corps surge of growth during World War II and through



Aerial view of Johnston Island



Major General Hayes (far left) escorting General Westmoreland (left of center) on a tour of Okinawa

the Cold War, stands as a testimony to the heady days when the Chemical Corps supplied the US Army with an offensive CB warfare capability and robust CB defensive capability. His devotion to service represents great credit to him, the Chemical Corps, the US Army, and the nation.

Endnotes

¹Prior to 1972, the commanders at Fort Detrick were primarily from the Chemical Corps. After 1972, the Medical Corps assumed command of the post.

²The US Army Chemical-Biological-Radiological Agency was redesignated the Edgewood Arsenal complex in May 1963.

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