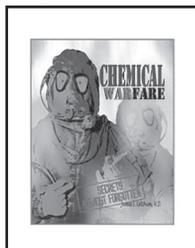


Book Reviews

By Mr. Reid Kirby

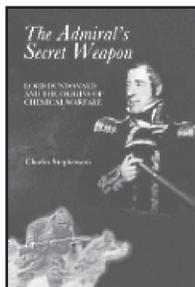


Chemical Warfare Secrets Almost Forgotten, James S. Ketchum, MD, self-published, 2006.

First person narratives are usually not worthwhile reading. But this book is an exception! This self-published book has the aesthetics of a high school yearbook, with numerous illustrations and photographs in the layout. It is a detailed account of the career of Colonel James Ketchum (U.S. Army Retired), a military surgeon in the Chemical Corps psychochemical program.

This book is a significant contribution to Chemical Corps history. In 1978, because of a potential conflict of interest, medical defense research was separated from the Corps and, consequently, from the command historian at Edgewood Arsenal, Maryland, leaving few to tell the history of these researchers. Dr. Ketchum recounts the research, people, and events of the medical laboratories at Edgewood Arsenal, describing the actions of such figures as Colonel Douglas Lindsey, Specialist Ephraim Goodman, and Dr. Frederick Sidell.

Chemical Warfare Secrets Almost Forgotten is also an excellent resource on the effects of incapacitating chemical agents, with firsthand accounts of human exposure to lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), 3-quinuclidinyl benzilate (BZ), and other agents. In this respect, the book is narrowly focused on agent medical research, rather than other areas in the psychochemical program. The underlying conflict in this book is Chemical Corps research experiments using human volunteers and the questionable research activities of the Central Intelligence Agency (such as LSD research on unwitting victims).



The Admiral's Secret Weapon: Lord Dundonald and the Origins of Chemical Warfare, Charles Stephenson, Boydell and Brewer, 2006.

It is a well-known fact that Thomas Cochrane (later known as Lord Dundonald) planned to use stink ships loaded with burning sulfur to reduce the fortifications at Sevastopol during the Crimean War (1853–1856). What is less known is how the agent idea developed and how the British government debated carrying out the attack. Charles Stephenson, using family archives, completes the missing historical facts.

Bold, courageous, and brash, Thomas Cochrane was a brilliant naval tactician. In the Napoleonic wars, he gained fame for setting French ships ablaze with fire ships. Cochrane devised the concept when the British Navy blockaded the bottled French fleet, embarking on a lifelong quest to gain acceptance for the use of this early form of chemical warfare.

The Admiral's Secret Weapon is well illustrated and details numerous proposals in history to use chemical warfare, including the War of 1812 and World War I (before Germany used chlorine in Ypres, Belgium, in 1915). This book is uniquely Anglocentric (written for a British audience). The revelations in this book show that the main limitations to the British initiating chemical warfare were the fear of other nations adopting similar techniques and a lack of scientific evidence to support chemical effectiveness. Far from a curiosity, the concept of warfare agents received serious consideration. This book details the difficulty of adopting a weapon before its time.

Mr. Kirby is a project manager for Strategic Staffing Solutions (S3). He holds a bachelor's degree in valuation science from Lindenwood College, with a minor in biology and special studies in behavioral toxicology and biotechnology.