

Mustard-Filled Munitions Uncovered in Utah Desert

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Tooele, Utah Mustard-filled munitions were found during the cleanup of a Utah chemical depot, according to Army Spokeswoman Elaine Grieser. The Deseret Chemical Depot, a 19,000-acre facility whose Chemical Agent Disposal Facility was closed in 2012, still contains 27 informal dumps where weapons and debris were burned in the years before the environmental impact of such actions were understood. Among the munitions found were buried containers of mustard, a liquid blistering agent, contained in non-explosive mortar cartridges.

Ms. Grieser said, "We anticipate we'll find a few more." About 40,000 munitions, discarded at the depot from 1945 to 1978, have already been removed. Brad Maulding of the state's Department of Environmental Quality said, "Back then it wasn't uncommon to dig trenches and take the munitions and dump them in there, and light them on fire with diesel [fuel]." It is believed the munitions pose no threat to the community.