

# Chloropicrin Chemical Gas Russia Is Using Against Ukraine

## Why In News

- **US Department of State on accused Russia** of using chemical weapons in Ukraine, such as the choking agent chloropicrin against Ukrainian troops, and announced sanctions against over 280 individuals and entities for foreign aggression and internal repression. **Washington also accused Russia** of violating an international chemical weapons ban and using riot control agents "as a method of warfare" in Ukraine.



- The allegations, which US officials said were not an **"isolated" incident**, would contravene the **Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)**, which Russia signed.
- The Kremlin rejected the accusations, calling them "baseless".
- Spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters in Moscow that Russia stood by its obligations under the CWC, which prohibits states from developing or acquiring new weapons. **Some 193 states have ratified the convention.** The **Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)**, a global watchdog that oversees implementation of the CWC, says a chemical weapon is a substance used to cause intentional death or harm through its toxic properties.



OPCW

## What Is Chloropicrin

- **Chloropicrin** - which the US says Russia has used to "dislodge Ukrainian forces from fortified positions" - is an **oily substance which was widely** used during World War One. It causes irritation of the lungs, eyes and skin and can cause vomiting, nausea and diarrhoea, according to the US Centre for Disease Control (CDC).



- The **chemical's use in war is expressly** banned under the CWC, and is listed as a choking agent by the OPCW.
- The state department also said Moscow had regularly used "riot control agents," or tear gas, during the war.

## US Imposed Sanctions

- **President Joe Biden has previously warned Russia** against deploying chemical weapons in Ukraine. In March 2022, weeks after Moscow launched its invasion, Mr Biden vowed that President Vladimir Putin would pay a "severe price" if he did authorise the use of chemical weapons.

- "We would respond if he uses it. The nature of the response would depend on the nature of the use," Mr Biden said.



- But there have been consistent reports that **Moscow has ignored that warning**. US Assistant Secretary for Arms Control Mallory Stewart has previously said Russia was using riot control agents in the conflict.
- And Ukraine says its troops have faced mounting chemical attacks in recent months.
- The report added that at least **500 Ukrainian soldiers have been treated** for exposure to toxic gases, and that one had died after suffocating on tear gas.



- **Three Russian bodies** linked to the country's biological and chemical weapons programme were sanctioned by the state department for their links to the **production of chemical agents**. Other firms that contributed to the government entities were also sanctioned.
- **In 2017, the OPCW said Russia** had destroyed the last of its Cold War-era stockpile of the weapons, as required under the CWC.
- But Moscow has since been accused of making incomplete declarations of its stockpile, according to the UK's House of Commons library.
- **Since 2017, Russia** has been accused of at least two chemical attacks - the Salisbury attack on a former Soviet intelligence officer and the 2020 poisoning of the late Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny.



- The allegations come as part of a broader tranche of **US sanctions which targeted 30 individuals**, including three people officials say were involved in Navalny's death.
- In response to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, the US on Wednesday imposed new sanctions against Moscow on hundreds of firms, countries and people tied to Russia's weapons development program.
- The Treasury and State departments have accused over a dozen Chinese firms of aiding Russia in circumventing sanctions and individuals associated with the death of **Russian dissident Alexey Navalny**.



- The sanctions imposed by these departments target various aspects of Russia's military-industrial complex, including its **chemical weapons programs**. Additionally, they focus on entities in third countries that facilitate Russia's acquisition of weapons components. These actions come as Russia's invasion of Ukraine enters its third year.
- The **Treasury Department imposed sanctions on nearly 200 entities**, while the State Department designated over 80 individuals and entities. Specifically, the US imposed sanctions on 20 companies based in China and Hong Kong.
- This move follows **repeated warnings from Washington** regarding China's assistance to Russia's military, notably highlighted during recent visits to China by U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and Secretary of State Antony Blinken.
- **Firms in several countries, including** China, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Slovakia, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates are alleged to have assisted Russia in acquiring technology and equipment from abroad. These penalties are intended to restrict their access to the US financial system and prohibit American citizens from engaging in transactions with them.