

This military handbook was produced by the Medical Operations Office of the Armed Forces Radiobiology Research Institute at Bethesda, Maryland. The purpose of this handbook is to provide concise supplemental reading material for the Medical Effects of Ionizing Radiation Course, which is the only course in the Department of Defense for training health care professionals in the management of uncontrolled ionizing radiation exposure. The introduction states: Medical defense against radiological warfare is one of the least emphasized segments of modern medical education. Forty years of nuclear-doomsday predictions made any realistic preparation for radiation casualty management an untenable political consideration. The end of the Cold War has dramatically reduced the likelihood of strategic nuclear weapons use and thermonuclear war. Unfortunately, the proliferation of nuclear material and technology has made the acquisition and adversarial use of ionizing radiation weapons more probable than ever. In the modern era, military personnel and their nations population will expect that a full range of medical modalities will be employed to decrease the morbidity and mortality from the use of these weapons. Fortunately, treatment of radiation casualties is both effective and practical. Radiation Threat Scenarios - A radiation dispersal device (RDD) is any device that causes the purposeful dissemination of radioactive material across an area without a nuclear detonation. Such a weapon can be easily developed and used by any combatant with conventional weapons and access to radionuclides. The material dispersed can originate from any location that uses radioactive sources, such as a nuclear waste processor, a nuclear power plant, a university research facility, a medical radiotherapy clinic, or an industrial complex. The radioactive source is blown up using conventional explosives and is scattered across the targeted area as debris. This type of weapon would cause conventional casualties to become contaminated with radionuclides and would complicate medical evacuation within the contaminated area. It would function as either a terror weapon or terrain-denial mechanism. Many materials used in military ordnance, equipment, and supplies contain radioactive components. U.S. forces may be operating in a theater that has nuclear reactors that were not designed to U.S. specifications and are without containment vessels. These reactors may be lucrative enemy artillery or bombing targets. Significant amounts of radioactive material may be deposited on surfaces after the use of any nuclear weapon or RDD, destruction of a nuclear reactor, a nuclear accident, or improper nuclear waste disposal. Military operations in these contaminated areas could result in military personnel receiving sufficient radiation exposure or particulate contamination to warrant medical evaluation and remediation.

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