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<http://wire.ap.org/?SLUG=CHEMICAL%2dDEPOT%2dALARM>

TOOELE, Utah (AP) - An apparent intruder spotted at an Army depot where chemical weapons are stored never got close to the area where nerve gas and other chemicals are kept, officials said.

A terrorist alert was sounded Thursday, but Col. Peter Cooper, commander of the Desert Chemical Depot, said the security of the depot was never at risk. Normal operations were to resume Friday morning.

``At this time we cannot confirm an intruder," Cooper said Thursday. ``We're not sure if it was an employee who was not in the right area."

The person fled after being spotted within the heavily guarded perimeter by four soldiers during two separate patrols, Cooper said.

In Washington, a senior administration official speaking on condition of anonymity said there was no evidence that anything was stolen or that terrorism was involved.

The apparent trespasser, dressed in dark clothing, was sighted within a fenced area between the stored chemicals and the outer perimeter, authorities said.

Sheriff's deputies set up a roadblock around the depot after the alarm sounded at 9:24 a.m. and state law officers combed the grounds into the night before calling off their search for the possible intruder.

The depot, which is about 45 miles southwest of Salt Lake City and covers 19,000 acres of mostly barren, wind-swept desert, has been destroying a stockpile of deadly chemical weapons since 1996.

Earlier this year, it finished destroying the largest stockpile of sarin nerve gas in the United States. It is scheduled to destroy 1,300 tons of VX, a more toxic but less volatile nerve agent, and 6,100 tons of mustard gas, a blister agent that can dissolve tissue on contact.

On the Net:

Depot: <http://www.tead.army.mil>