

Johnstone



EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Paris, France

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Professor Matthew Messelson
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Cambridge, Mass. 02318

Dear Matt:

It has been an age since we have been in touch but I have thought of you often, particularly of late as the subject (what an association!!) of poison gas use in Laos has come up frequently.

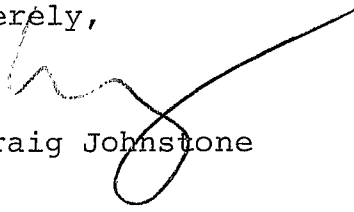
I don't know if you have seen the attached set of reports. In my opinion they are the result of a fairly amateurish effort. Nevertheless, I would be greatly interested in your views on any common threads which you think may be of significance. I confess that I am not yet convinced that any lethal gases are being used in Laos or Cambodia, though I think we should be looking into the charges with greater seriousness than we have shown so far.

I note also that we (the USG) have been backgrounding the press on possible poison gas use in Afghanistan. The evidence to suggest that the Soviet's have been using gas there is terribly weak and, in my opinion, raising an alarm is not justified. In fact, I wonder if we may not be seriously compromising the "taboo" associated with the Geneva Protocol by crying "wolf" too easily.

In June I will be taking over the political/military position in the Embassy. My first duty (in preparation) was to sit in on recent CW strategy sessions in preparation for the next CD round. Like old home week. All the same old faces, same problems, same institutional positions.

I hope you and Sarah and Amy and Zoe are all well. We are holding up well under the privations of Paris (hah!) although the workload is quite heavy. In addition to talking to the Vietnamese (about gas among other things) I handle Asia, including Cambodia and Afghanistan.

Sincerely,


L. Craig Johnstone