

2133 Bellamah Drive
Las Cruces, New Mexico 88001
18 February 1980

Doctor Matthew Meselson
Biology Department
Harvard Medical School
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138

Dear Doctor Meselson,

I am respectfully requesting your assistance on a matter of grave concern in regards to my husband. We feel that my husband was a victim of involuntary exposure of toxic chemical(s) while serving in the U.S. Army. To date, our attempts to find the answers have been futile. We do not seek retribution, we only seek solutions to the living hell my husband has been forced to live in. Any help you can supply will be eternally appreciated.

The following is a sequence of events that has effected my husbands life since 1964:

During the time frame of November 1964 thru June of 1965 me husband was the Commanding Officer of A Company, 1st Battalion, 67th Armor, 2nd Armor Division, Fort Hood, Texas. While conducting tank company field training, he was subjected to a possible CBR(gas) training attack or a possible " covert experimental " testing of chemical agents. He was " doused " with a chemical(gas) dispensed from a military 3/4ton truck, the chemical(gas) was odorless, colorless and tasteless. He had severe burning of the nasal passage, throat and lungs. In using his protective mask, which is designed to relieve the effects of a CBR attack, only increased the severity. He was blinded for a period of 20 minutes and had difficulty in breathing. Once the effects of the chemical(gas) had disapated, he then took up where he had left off as if nothing had happened, even though earlier on he had felt he was in a life threatening situation. To this date he has been unable to identify this chemical(gas) in spite of extensive CBR training and schooling. No army prescribed methods taught to combat a CBR attack were of any value. His subsequent assingment to Viet Nam in March of 1966 and probable exposure to more chemicals (Agent Orange, White and Blue, Matathion and DDT) we believe has had further adverse effects on his health.

As a result of his exposure to chemicals he is suffering a bizarre pattern of maladies. The symptoms are cyclical and have subtly increased in severity. We have found that his condition resembles other ex-military personnel who served in Viet Nam, the only difference seems to be in the severity of my husbands neurological degeneration. He has been diagnosed as suffering from a toxic-organic cerebral syndrome, denoted by personality changes, impairment of memory, slight tendency

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towards confusion, and depression. The type of memory block that he shows is not characteristic of that due to anxiety or functional disorder, he reaches for words which are lost to him, in the nature as someone who has recovered or is recovering from aphasia.; according to Doctors that he had been seeing prior to our moving to New Mexico, for his health. The cold Winters of the North East seemed to be causing him to become worse. We hope the climate here will help him.

While on the way to New Mexico the week of 20 January 1980 we heard a 5 minute segment on radio by Walter Cronkite, he was reporting on the use of nerve gases by the Russians in Afghanistan. In the report he said that this was not the first reported use of nerve gases in recent years, that the South Vietnamese Army had been accused of using a similar, less lethal, nerve gas during our countries involvement. The effects described in that report were those experienced by my husband in the CBR attack that took place at Fort Hood.

The following is a list of symptoms as they occurred since the first exposure and his return from Viet Nam:

1965- Personality change (apathy), confusion, inability to memorize, hearing loss, memory loss.

1966- Tumor, stomach pains (severe), joint pains, inability to concentrate, severe weight loss.

1967- headaches, vision problems.

1969- Reduced auto-immune system, fatigue, sensitivity to the sun.

1970- Uncontrollable temper, drowsiness, loss of balance, slurred speech.

1971 thru 1975- Loss of co-ordination, numbness in arms and legs, enlarged liver, inability to tolerate mild cold weather, sensitive skin, red blotches, blisters.

1975 to Present- Blurred vision, flashes of light in the eyes, brittle and cracked nails, dizzy spells, and bleeding gums with loss of teeth.

Are you aware of any chemical agent (gas) that would cause the problems my husband is experiencing? Do you know of any testing procedures that would be able to detect and identify the chemical he was exposed to? If we were able to identify the chemical and if what we suspect is true, is there any way of reversing the effects, or retard the degeneration? Would you have any way of knowing if the Army or Department of Defense were testing nerve gases for use by the South Vietnamese Army for use in Viet Nam Conflict?

Thank you for your time and consideration, I pray that you will be able to give us some answers.

Sincerely,

Mary Honditch

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