

September 18, 1985

Dear Freeman,

I take your letter very seriously, as I would anything you say. But you haven't given much reason for your belief that toxin warfare took place. You must know something or think you know something which I do not. What is it?

Last November I was invited to visit Porton specifically to talk about the yellow rain problem. Here is a copy of my memo. It is for your eyes only. If there is good evidence for mycotoxin warfare, why did those studying the problem at Porton not know it?

US government scientists working directly on the question have told me in confidence that they doubt mycotoxins have been used.

I have been told that there was some impressive-seeming intelligence information but that further checking had shown it to have been misinterpreted. I should not be more specific and I cannot be sure that what I was told was right. I mention it only in case it might help you get to the bottom of this.

You say that the skullduggery stopped abruptly after interventions in Moscow. When was this? I know that Hmong refugees continued to report attacks at least until early 1985. This comes from a friend who works in the refugee camp at Ban Vinai helping to relocate orphaned children. In March 1984, I myself interviewed two Hmong men who said they were in a yellow rain attack that made 36 persons ill and killed five. I have detailed interview summaries of about 50 reported attacks in mid 1983. These more recent reports do not seem different in detail from the older ones.

I have been told by one of the original US Army interviewers, by an anthropologist who lived in the camp, by a State Department physician who examined some of the early cases and by a Hmong leader in the United States that they are now sceptical of the reports of chemical warfare. Having studied all the interviews I can get, I am very sceptical.

You do not see much relevance in the fact that the material said to be the vehicle of the toxin warfare is bee feces. But then you must devise another vehicle. What is it? Trichothecenes have negligible vapor pressure. This rules out a gas. An aerosol would have to be released at ground level and should be visible as an impressively dense fog, according to Porton. There is little evidence for this in the alleged eyewitness accounts.

This leaves the possibility of a coarse spray or particles. This is often described by the alleged witnesses. But very few of the them mention anything falling directly on themselves or others -- and a lot would be required. Secondary pickup and food and water contamination involve large dilution factors. And the material the alleged witnesses do collect is bee feces. So what is the vehicle and how does the toxin enter the body?

What is the good evidence for toxin warfare? If such evidence exists, I need to know it. If it does not exist, you need to find that out. Let's not leave the difference between our views unsettled if there is an alternative.

With affection,