

Miller

ARC

Arms Control Research Center
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TO: Matthew Melesson

May 15, 1991

Dear Matthew,

The Gulf War is turning out to be one of the greatest environmental disasters and some of its more dramatic effects are yet to come. With oil fields ablaze for the last two months, reports of black rain on the Himalayas and oil continuing to spill into the Gulf we have, as Dr. Richard Small so succinctly put it, a "major pollution event."

Unfortunately this is not news to many of you receiving this correspondence. In fact collectively we make up the group of "alarmists" that warned the war would have dire environmental consequences. That is why we're writing to you now. We'd like your feedback on, and support for our proposal to send a scientific team to the Gulf on a Fact Finding mission in mid-summer.

At the Arms Control Research Center, we are becoming increasingly concerned that the data from the Gulf is being politicized. Much of the news coverage has focused on aspects of the predictions made in early January that have not occurred, such as the dispersion of oil field smoke into the stratosphere. None of the reassuring voices we now see on TV or read in the newspapers state that these impact may worsen as the seasons progress.

We are concerned that this politicization of the information will tend toward minimizing the reported scope of the disaster. It is a sad but true fact that the complexion of history is often the product of its chronicler. We are already seeing reports that the Pentagon has discouraged reporting on the air pollution problems caused by the fires. Other reports indicate that the coalition governments are controlling access to data and that is having a determining factor on the public's perception of this event.

However it is clear that many of the concerns raised about the consequences of the war are going unanswered. The environmental affects of the bombing of the chemical, biological and nuclear facilities have, for example, gone uninvestigated and virtually unnoticed. To us it appears that much of the analysis is being accomplished by scientists within the agency structures of coalition governments, raising additional concerns about the impartial nature of the findings.

ARC is proposing to depoliticize this history by organizing a scientific fact-finding mission to the go to the Gulf: 1) to make some assessment of the present situation; 2) to review the response now underway and make recommendations on how to improve it; and 3) to report on the possible progress of effects over the next year. It is our hope that by undertaking this mission we might be able to present

a more accurate picture of the risks posed by the current situation - and if necessary provide the analysis necessary to building an international constituency for an accelerated response.

Components:

- 1) Advisory Committee of approximately 10-20 scientists
- 2) 6 person Gulf scientific research team
- 3) 6 person Gulf team support group.

The project's products would include;

- 1) A report of the findings
- 2) A film documentary of the expedition and its concerns
- 3) Symposia in Europe, the US and elsewhere where the report presented
- 4) An international debut for the documentary

The six scientist delegation would be composed of individuals representing a mix of relevant disciplines. Currently our thinking includes experts in the following areas: climate; marine biology; desert ecology; radiation; oil and air pollution; environmental toxicology; and health physics. The research team would be supplemented by a support staff of four research assistants; a trip coordinator; and media coordinator. A photo-documentation crew would accompany the mission but under a separate budget.

The delegation would prepare a report of its findings. The report of the delegation would be subjected to review by an advisory committee of scientist established prior to the initiation of the actual tour. The advisory committee could also be involved in consultations with delegation scientists during the trip and could coordinate peer review for the report.

As we envision it, the trip would be scheduled for late July/early August. The delegation would spend two to three weeks visiting Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Oman. Visits to Iran & Iraq, would be desirable, as would an on-the-water investigation of the Gulf if possible.

The report would be written in late August, with possible peer review taking place in early September. The goal would be to present the report at a symposium in Geneva in late September/early October. Other symposia would follow in London, and New York in late September. A symposium in the Gulf/ Mid East region would be desirable if they can be arranged as would a major presentation in a Pacific/ Asian nation. Reports written by the individual delegates will of course remain the property of the author beyond its initial release in the symposia report.

As one of the scientists involved in the early prediction of environmental dangers posed by the war, you have demonstrated the ability to look beyond the immediate politics of the situation to gauge its long-term effects. This is precisely the quality we are looking for in the delegates and peer review group. The Arms Control Research Center would be honored to have your participation in and

support for what we consider to be an essential endeavor.

If you are interested, there are a few specific things you can do to assist us in this stage of the project. The first is, of course, agreeing to participate in the project -- either as a delegate or as a member of the advisory committee -- and allow us to identify you as a participant in our effort to raise the funding necessary for an investigation of this magnitude. The second thing you can do, is assist us in framing the plan for the investigation. Your feedback on: the logistical needs, how we can best utilize the limited time we would have in the Gulf region and the types of investigations best suited to a tour of this kind would be of enormous help. Because this project will be expensive, your recommendations of any potential sources of funding for this project would also be most welcome. Finally, your recommendation of additional scientists to contact to participate in this project is critical to its success.

Your willingness to participate in the contacting of these individuals would greatly expedite the process. Once you have agreed to participate in the program, you should expect to be fully involved. ARC will endeavor to ensure that you are incorporated into all the decisions relevant to the project and your participation.

In the months and weeks before the shooting began, we all felt the need to bring the war frightening realities to the public and the world. The work we did brought the issue to the world's attention. Now that many of these concerns have come and continue to come into being it is even more important to analyze the future the war has wrought. I hope we can look forward to your participation and assistance. We believe this project will play an essential role in focusing the worlds attention. Thank you.

P.S. We have obtained a copy of the Sandia Report (Potential Impacts of Iraqi Use of Oil as a Weapon). Would you be interested in receiving a copy and letting us know of your critique?

Saul Bloom
Director

John M. Miller
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on the Military & the Environment