

Subject: Sooo good to see you in DC
From: "Lin, Herb" <HLin@nas.edu>
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To: <msm@wjh.harvard.edu>

Matt - it was soo good to see you in DC after all these years, and I'm tickled beyond belief that you remembered that we had talked about the ethics of working in the system. I wound up spending 3 years on the staff of the House Armed Services Committee, chaired then by Les Aspin, and moved to the National Academies in 1990.

Anyway, I thought you might be interested in one incident during which I thought of you. Les sometimes cast around for interesting ways to tweak the defense department during a staff meeting. At the time (late 1980s), the war on drugs was going strong, and Les wanted to find ways to divert Star Wars research money into more useful pursuits. I had the idea of doing R&D to develop a genetically engineered virus that would attack the coco plant—and if I had offered it, Aspit would have jumped on the idea and run with it immediately. I thought for about 10 seconds, and decided to keep my mouth shut. The reason was that I did not want to do anything to legitimize the Army's biowarfare efforts, and doing a project like that would surely have granted it some. By keeping my mouth shut, i delayed public recognition of the idea for 2 years, and then Tom Clancy wrote about it in a novel and spilled the beans. Nevertheless, to the best of my knowledge, it never was introduced as a serious idea.

Both because of our conversation and because of your own history regarding BW weapons, I have always associated this story with you - and I'm happy to share it with you here.

Next time you're in DC, I'd love to buy you lunch--I owe you big time.

All the best

herb

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