

March 26, 1965

Mr. Robert W. Komer  
National Security Council Staff  
Executive Offices Building  
Washington 25, D.C.

Dear Mr. Komer,

At the suggestion of Karl Kaysen, I am writing to you about a conversation I had with an Israeli biologist on the subject of toxic warfare in the Middle East.

Last month in Geneva I attended a small private meeting of persons interested in discussing possible arms control measures in the field of biological and chemical warfare. Unofficial representatives of several countries, including Israel, were present. The Israeli Representative was Robert Goldwasser, Director of the Nesszion Institute. Goldwasser was born in the United States but immigrated to Israel in the late 30's. He is an epidemiologist specializing in fluorescent antibody techniques for the identification of viruses. His institute is active in this field and amongst other things, conducts a continuous sampling program of viruses borne by wild birds.

Goldwasser said that at present, chemical and biological weapons do not play an important role in the Egyptian-Israeli confrontation. However, he said a number of things have happened which may cause his government to review its policy in this area. The events to which he referred are the following:

- 1) Some recently captured Syrian soldiers had Soviet gas masks of a recent model.
- 2) Egypt has obtained from other countries cultures of certain organisms which might be used as biological warfare agents.
- 3) Some Egyptian microbiologists have been sent abroad for training in areas which are potentially related to biological warfare problems.
- 4) Certain microorganisms, possibly of use in biological warfare, have been detected on migratory birds coming into Israel from the UAR.

Goldwasser did not convey an attitude of alarm with regard to the above matters. Rather, he indicated that they might very well be quite unrelated and not indicative of any particular UAR intentions in the chemical-biological warfare field. Nevertheless, he said that out of prudence the Israeli Government must consider the purchase of gas masks inasmuch as they do not have substantial numbers of masks at present.

The only indication I have that Goldwasser is directly concerned with Israeli policy in this area is that he stated that he wished to speak with Levi Eshkol about some of the matters which arose during our discussions in Geneva.

It seems to me that the widespread distribution of masks on either side could bring the possibility of an actual use of chemical or biological warfare much closer - - and, assuming neither side yet possesses large numbers of masks, it would be to the benefit of all sides if their acquisition could be avoided.

Sincerely yours,

Matthew Meselson

cc: Paul Doty  
Karl Kaysen