

Ketchum

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## Urgent. Meselson (Harvard U) re: Khatchadourian article Dec 17

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Matthew Meselson <msmeselson@gmail.com>

Mon, Dec 17, 2012 at 4:13 PM

To: themail@newyorker.com

Bcc: Matthew Meselson <msmeselson@gmail.com>, Jeanne Guillemin <jguillemin6@gmail.com>, Janet Montgomery <jmontgom@mcb.harvard.edu>

Dear Editor,

I wish to comment on the December 17 article by Rafi Khatchadourian "Operation Delerium" which included a reference to his correspondence with me. Please see the attached letter (also copied below).

December 17, 2012

To the editor:

Raffi Khatchadourian's article ("Operation Delirium," December 17) deftly characterizes Col. James S. Ketchum's career in testing psychochemical weapons for the US Army. In July 1969, Ketchum, having heard me on the media urging constraints against chemical and biological weapons, wrote me a letter seeking dialogue with "a fellow scientist" on our "differing perceptions." I replied with a 2-page letter thanking him for his "frank and friendly letter" and proposed that we communicate further by mail or meet in Cambridge or in Washington.

As explained in my letter and in Congressional testimony included with my letter, my chief concern was that while the US had little need for such weapons, our pursuit of them would spur their proliferation to lesser states and block efforts to outlaw them, greatly to our disadvantage. Specifically as regards psychochemical weapons, my letter expressed the concern that they could "open up an entire new spectrum of methods for killing and controlling people". Fortunately, in November 1969 President Nixon renounced biological weapons on behalf of the United States, paving the way for the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention, which sets the international norm against their development, production and possession. In 1975, the United States ratified the 1925 Geneva Protocol, which forbids the use in war of both chemical and biological weapons. In 1993, after the Cold War build-up of chemical arsenals, the United States, Russia and many other nations signed the Chemical Weapons Convention, whose mandate includes the declaration and verified destruction of those stockpiles. Today, nearly all nations are party to these three conventions. These were the arms control goals I had argued for in my testimony and personally to Col. Ketchum. My door was always open to him, but our meeting never took place.

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