

HOLD UNTIL AFTER NEWS CONFERENCE 2:00 PM Tuesday February 14,
1967. Cabinet Room, Hotel Willard, Pennsylvania Ave. and
Fourteenth St., Washington, D.C.

PRESS RELEASE

U.S. SCIENTISTS ASK REVIEW OF CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS
POLICY

More than five thousand American scientists, including seventeen Nobel Prize winners and one hundred twenty-nine members of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences have sent a petition to President Johnson recommending a review of U.S. policy toward chemical and biological weapons. The petition, initiated in September and delivered to the White House today, urges a clear-cut U.S. policy of not starting the use of gas or biological weapons and requests a high-level study aimed at finding ways to maintain and reinforce world-wide restraints against chemical and biological warfare. Cautioning that the combat use of any chemical or biological weapon seriously weakens the barriers to the use of others, the scientists believe that a dangerous precedent is being set by the current large-scale use of riot gas and anti-crop chemicals by U.S. forces in Viet Nam.

In a covering letter to the President, the scientists who originated the petition cite a recent resolution of the United Nations General Assembly calling upon all nations to observe the 1925 Geneva Protocol prohibiting gas and bacteriological warfare. The scientists commend the United States for supporting the United Nations resolution and recommend that the U.S. now move to ratify the Geneva Protocol. In their letter to the President, the scientists note that the United States, almost alone among the nations of the world, has not yet acceded to the Geneva Protocol.

President Lyndon B. Johnson
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

We, the American scientists whose names appear below, wish to warn against any weakening of the world-wide prohibitions and restraints on the use of chemical and biological (CB) weapons.

CB weapons have the potential of inflicting, especially on civilians, enormous devastation and death which may be unpredictable in scope and intensity; they could become far cheaper and easier to produce than nuclear weapons, thereby placing great mass destructive power within reach of nations not now possessing it; they lend themselves to use by leadership that may be desperate, irresponsible, or unscrupulous. The barriers to the use of these weapons must not be allowed to break down.

During the Second World War, the United States maintained a firm and clearly stated policy of not initiating the use of CB weapons. However, in the last few years the U.S. position has become less clear. Since the late 1950's, Defense Department expenditures on CB weapons have risen several fold — and there has been no categorical reaffirmation of the World War II policy.

Most recently, U.S. forces have begun the large-scale use of anti-crop and "non-lethal" anti-personnel chemical weapons in Vietnam. We believe that this sets a dangerous precedent, with long term hazards far outweighing any probable short term military advantage. The employment of any one CB weapon weakens the barriers to the use of others. No lasting distinction seems feasible between incapacitating and lethal weapons or between chemical and biological warfare. The great variety of possible agents forms a continuous spectrum from the temporarily incapacitating to the highly lethal. If the restraints on the use of one kind of CB weapon are broken down, the use of others will be encouraged.

Therefore, Mr. President, we urge that you

- Institute a White House study of overall government policy regarding CB weapons and the possibility of arms control measures, with a view to maintaining and reinforcing the world-wide restraints against CB warfare.
- Order an end to the employment of anti-personnel and anti-crop chemical weapons in Vietnam.
- Reestablish and categorically declare the intention of the United States to refrain from initiating the use of chemical and biological weapons.

Nobel Prize Laureates Who Have Signed the Petition

John Bardeen	Urbana, Illinois	Physics
Felix Bloch	Stanford, California	Physics
Konrad E. Bloch	Cambridge, Massachusetts	Biochemistry
Owen Chamberlain	Berkeley, California	Physics
Carl F. Cori	Boston, Massachusetts	Biochemistry
Donald A. Glaser	Berkeley, California	Physics
R. Hofstadter	Stanford, California	Physics
Arthur Kornberg	Palo Alto, California	Biochemistry
Fritz Lipmann	New York, New York	Biochemistry
Maria Goeppert Mayer	San Diego, California	Physics
Severo Ochoa	New York, New York	Biochemistry
Linus Pauling	Santa Barbara, California	Chemistry
E.M. Purcell	Cambridge, Massachusetts	Physics
Dickinson W. Richards	New York, New York	Medicine
Albert Szent-Gyorgyi	Woods Hole, Massachusetts	Biochemistry
E.L. Tatum	New York, New York	Genetics
Harold C. Urey	San Diego, California	Chemistry

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