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Dr. Ivan Bennett
New York University School of Medicine
New York, N.Y. 10003

Dear Ivan:

I have read the draft of the Secretary-General's Report and have some comments to put before you.

Generally speaking, I was impressed to find that a first draft by so heterogeneous a group could be so good. Nevertheless, it seems to me that the report is rather consistently misleading and even inaccurate in dealing with "non-lethal" agents. Let me list some examples.

Chapter 1, p.3, last par., last sent. - "For this reason they are often called riot control agents." The sentence is correct but gives an incomplete impression. It would be more accurate to say something like "When used in this manner, they are classed as riot control agents. Lachrymators have also been used in war for harrassment purposes and to enhance the effectiveness of conventional weapons as well as to reduce the risk of death to noncombatants in certain combat situations."

Chapter 1, p.13, par.10, line 2 - "Tear gases are sensory irritants which cause temporary tear flow and irritate the skin. They are widely used in riot control." This description omits any reference to the use of lachrymators in war. It would be consistent with the other descriptions in this section to add the sentence, "They were also used extensively in World War I, and have been used in the Vietnamese conflict."

Chapter 2, p.9, par.6, line 6 - Is there really any good scientific basis for ranking riot agents according to their lethality to man? Two reservations come to mind. First, animal experiments might be quite irrelevant. In World War I much amazement resulted from the fact that horses and dogs

seemed unperturbed by lachrymator concentrations as much as one thousand times greater than those effective against men. Second, there may well be two or more distinct human populations with respect to sensitivity to these agents. In that case, some men may be able to stand high concentrations of a given agent, while others are killed at much lower concentrations.

Chapter 2, p.10, par.3, line 11 - "The toxin is an agent, which might be considered as an incapacitating chemical warfare agent." As you know, staphylococcus enterotoxin could well be lethal to man when administered by the respiratory route.

Chapter 5, p.10, par.4, line 4 - "Riot control agents have been used by many countries to minimize destruction and the risk of death to noncombatants and children." The possibly unintended implication that riot control agents have been used by many countries in this fashion in war is quite false. In World War I, tear gas of various kinds was used in large quantities in ordinary lethal military operations. In World War II, Hitler produced 7,800 tons of chloroacetophenone loaded into a wide variety of munitions. In terms of area coverage capability, Germany made approximately as much chloroacetophenone as the other two chief war gases produced during World War II, namely mustard and tabun. Would anyone assert that chloroacetophenone was produced in order to "minimize the destruction and risk of death to noncombatants and children." The U.S. also made a large quantity of chloroacetophenone loaded into 75-mm, 105-mm, and 155-mm artillery shells, and a variety of other munitions.

As you know, I strongly feel that the United States has much more to lose than to gain by promoting the use of "nonlethal" CB agents. I consider that the large scale use of such agents in war would run a high risk of wrecking the Geneva Protocol. At this time, when positions have not yet irreversibly hardened, it seems to me terribly important for political leaders to receive from technical people as balanced a description as possible of these agents.

I am leaving for Europe next Thursday and look forward to seeing you in Czechoslovakia the following week.

With best regards,

Sincerely yours,

Matthew Meselson

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