

August 8, 1969

Frederic J. Brown
Lieutenant Colonel, Armor
Transient Detachment Office
APO
San Francisco California 96307

Dear Colonel Brown:

I trust this letter will find you well in Vietnam. I expect you do not have ready access there to records of Congressional hearings. Therefore, I enclose for your interest a copy of a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on chemical and biological warfare in which I participated last April 30. It should go some distance toward giving you a more accurate picture of my thinking than was conveyed by my review of your book. I very much appreciated your letter of 13 May. I was impressed to learn from your book of the apparent policy of Japan during World War II. I considered commenting on it in my review but frankly, I could not think of anything very interesting to say. In retrospect, I wish I had at least conveyed your findings on the subject.

My general philosophy regarding CB weapons problems should be apparent from the enclosed testimony. However, my specific conclusions are somewhat buried there. Because I would appreciate your comments, I would like to make them more explicit in what follows.

I believe the United States should make a fundamental decision that prevention of the proliferation of CB capability to other nations should be the guiding principal of our own policy. Many nations are capable of acquiring CB capability. The main obstacle is not direct cost. It is largely psychological. We should attempt to maintain and reinforce the restraints against acquiring CB capability. We should ratify the Geneva Protocol and should go beyond it by not

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maintaining any BW capability whatsoever, whether lethal or "incapacitating". I also believe that we should not maintain a capability for using non-lethal chemicals in ordinary military operations. My impression is that the latter are of relatively minor military advantage to us and that this will decline nearly to zero as the enemy acquires masks. I would greatly value your opinion about this view. The real cost to us of maintaining and using a non-lethal chemical capability is the risk of escalation. You are almost certainly familiar with the new Army Training Circular TC3-16. It shows how rapidly we have multiplied the types and varieties of CS munitions. Our use of CS in Vietnam cannot help but lead to assimilation of gas warfare by our military. Nearly forty nations send their officers to the United States for training. When they see our 155mm CS howitzer shells, our aircraft CS cluster bombs, and other large CS munitions, they will want some too. The same goes for less friendly nations. I have no violent objection to the use of CS in war in itself. However, it greatly complicates attempts to obtain a clear prohibition against chemical warfare generally. It also leads to assimilation by the military. I believe it poses a real threat of escalation, if not in Vietnam, then later.

I do believe we must maintain a limited supply of nerve gas weapons in Europe. The argument here is a rather special one but I believe it is outlined in my testimony. Basically it is that we should not tempt Russian commanders into using gas on the supposition that we will be forced into cumbersome protective suits without being able to force them to do likewise.

As you have probably read, President Nixon has ordered a general review of CBW policy, including the question of ratifying the Geneva Protocol. Approximately one hundred congressmen and thirty senators have so far requested that the Protocol be sent back to the Senate for debate. I hope you will be back in this country in time to have some role in the discussions that are sure to lie ahead.

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Thoughtful military men like yourself can certainly make a much needed contribution.

Sincerely yours,

Matthew Meselson
Professor of Biology

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Encl.