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September 9, 1969

Professor Matthew Meselson
Harvard Biological Laboratories
16 Divinity Avenue
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138

Dear Matt:

Many thanks for sending me a copy of the Committee print on your hearing on CBW before the Foreign Relations Committee. I actually read it, which is not usual with documents of that length that arrive in the mail. As you know, I have had a considerable interest in that subject for some time; I shall enclose the summarizing parts of a discussion on that subject included in a report I did for ACDA about four years ago. (The report as a whole was classified, but there is nothing classified about the enclosed passages.)

We seem to be a good deal closer on this subject than apparently has been the case in missile defense. I am not as sure as you are about the case of harassing agents. I am not unsympathetic to the arguments, as you will see in the enclosed excerpt; however, I am also not unsympathetic to the argument that lethal and non-lethal agents could and should be distinguished.

As you will also see from the enclosure, the wisdom of attempting to reopen U.S. ratification of the 1925 Geneva Protocol is less than clearly obvious. If you could somehow wave a wand and do it quietly, that would be fine, but I fear that you would get a good deal of debate you might prefer not to have and the ratification would be a cliff-hanger at best, and might actually fail. If you tried it and it failed, we should certainly be worse off than we are now. Of course, if it does come up for ratification, I shall certainly support it myself.

It was not clear to me if you were aware that Dean Rusk once said (in a news conference on March 24, 1965) "We are not engaged in gas warfare. It is against our policy to do so, . . .". At about this same time, Cyrus Vance wrote a letter to Congressman Kastenmeier in which he said

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that national policy proscribes the first use of lethal gas. It was not clear from the hearing record if you were aware of these statements, and I thought you would wish to know of them if you didn't, especially the Rusk statement which has not been widely noticed.

I have been trying off and on for over two and a half years to find out just what it was going on in the Yemen. If you know anything about that, I should be grateful if you would call me collect so that we might discuss it on the phone. || ←

I also read the short piece "Escalation of Chemical Warfare" that you wrote with Perry-Robinson in the New Scientist issue of 14 August. That issue arrived in my mail, by coincidence, four days after your hearing arrived. It may well be this article more than your hearing to which I am responding ⁱⁿ and remarking that I am not as strong as you are about harassing agents. However, I am certainly friendly to the arguments you made on the subject, and do not regard any of them as incorrect.

Somewhat in retaliation, I shall enclose a copy of my own most recent statement to a Congressional Committee, this one dealing with MIRV.

Best personal regards.

Sincerely,

Don

D. G. Brennan

DGB:jr

Encl.

Statement 7/17/69

HI-504-RR, pp 30-31