

AUG 14 1970

THE PRESIDENT'S SCIENCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

EXECUTIVE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506

11 March 1970

Dear Josh:

I am writing to request your advice and opinion on some issues raised by changes during the past year in this country's policy on the use of biological agents and toxins in warfare. As you undoubtedly know, by the terms of the President's statements of November 25, 1969 and February 14, 1970, the United States has now renounced all use, development, procurement, and stockpiling of biological and toxin weapons.

I am chairman of a panel of the President's Science Advisory Committee that is concerned with some aspects of implementing this policy decision by the President. The discontinuation of military research and development directed at acquiring an offensive capability in biological and toxin warfare means that certain research and development installations are no longer needed for their original military purposes. Our panel has examined alternative civilian uses for these facilities and has received recommendations from several advisory groups and from individuals from within and outside the government.

The termination of offensive research and development also raises the question of a national need for research to improve and maintain our defensive capability in the event that these weapons should be employed against our armed forces or our civilian population. It is concerning the need for and the nature of such a defensive research program that we seek your advice at this time.

We would be particularly interested in your answers to the following questions, but any additional comments that you might have would be welcome.

1. Does the threat posed by possible deliberate artificial dissemination of biological agents or toxins differ qualitatively or

quantitatively from that of naturally occurring disease to such an extent that a program of research directed specifically to defense against attack by an aggressor is required above and beyond existing civilian research programs in microbiology, prevention and control of infectious disease, and epidemiology?

2. To what extent should a research program on biological and toxin defense be carried out within government laboratories and to what extent might the research objectives be better accomplished through the use of grants and contracts in non-governmental laboratories in universities, research institutes, and industry?

3. To what extent do you think university scientists would be willing to engage in the defensive-purposes-only program in view of the apparently growing distrust of and opposition to defense-related research on many campuses? Do you believe that this opposition is now or will become so extensive that it would be unwise to design the research program to rely upon universities for any great share of the work?

4. How should a defensive research program include the screening of agents and toxins for their potential as weapons that might be used against us?

5. Do you believe that all elements of a defensive research program could be conducted openly and still serve the purposes of national security? (If you believe that some portion of the work should be classified, please describe the nature of the research that should be done in secret.)

Please be assured that all information that you supply will be held in confidence and that it will not be attributed to you personally unless you first give specific permission for its release.

It would greatly facilitate the work of our panel if we could have your comments by August 20, 1970. If your summer schedule will not permit a response at that time, please do not hesitate to send your answers at a later date.

Since one of the purposes of our panel is to serve as a channel for the opinions of the scientific community at large in the development of national policy, I hope that you will be willing to make your views known to us in as much detail as possible.

The enclosed envelope is for your convenience in replying.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ivan L. Bennett". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name.

Ivan L. Bennett, Jr., M.D.
Chairman, PSAC BW-CW Panel

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