



THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS
WASHINGTON

MAY 17 1995

Mr. John F. Sommer, Jr.
Executive Director, The American Legi

Dear Mr. Sommer:

This is in response to your letter of March 24, 1995, concerning the recent decision by the Australian government to recognize a link between prostate cancer and herbicide exposure in Vietnam. You have asked that VA recognize prostate cancer as a condition for which service connection can be presumed based on herbicide exposure.

VA is required by Pub. L. 102-4, the Agent Orange Act of 1991, to take into account reports from the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) in determining which conditions should be compensated based on exposure to herbicides in Vietnam. After reviewing the 1993 NAS report, I determined that the credible evidence against an association between prostate cancer and herbicide exposure outweighs the credible evidence for such an association. The decision that a positive association does not exist was published in the Federal Register on January 4, 1994.

I have requested NAS to address prostate cancer in its next report, which is due to be published later this year. I have also asked the Under Secretary for Benefits and the Under Secretary for Health to contact the Australian government for evidence concerning their determination regarding the association of prostate cancer with Agent Orange exposure.

VA is also aware that the Environmental Protection Agency has published a draft report on the health effects of dioxin. We believe that NAS will review this information in



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their next report. When that report is received, we will reassess the evidence concerning a possible association between prostate cancer and herbicide exposure.

I appreciate your interest in this important issue. Please let me know if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely yours,


Jesse Brown

JB/lw