

January 11, 1999



Colonel Michael E. Naylor (Ret.)
Executive Director
Special Oversight Board for DOD Invest.
Of Gulf War Chemical & Biological Incidents
1401 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 401
Arlington, VA 22209

E. R. ZUMWALT, JR.
ADMIRAL, U.S. NAVY (RET.)

Dear Mike:

I have received the documents attached to the memorandum for the Special Oversight Board members dated January 7, 1999.

I concur with the substance of these recommendations, but I believe that it is time to consider what I believe to be the fundamental problem of the U.S. Government's present process for coming up with Desert Storm answers.

From our work to date, I think it is clear that the non-government organizations interested in the Desert Storm diseases and the individual Desert Storm veterans will not accept negative or inconclusive findings coming from DoD or VA. When our final SOB report is submitted to the President, to the extent that we indorse any negative or inconclusive findings, we will, in my judgement, not have solved the problem for the President.

We faced the same problem with regard to Agent Orange. The only way in which we finally achieved consensus was to take the responsibility for final conclusions and recommendations away from DoD and VA and to assign the responsibility to the National Academy of Sciences with a requirement that continuing reviews of the science be made and reported every two years so that VA received scientific answers neither tainted nor perceived to be tainted by parochial interest.

This process has achieved widespread support with almost no attack by interested individuals or veterans' organizations. I believe our final report to the President must include a recommendation that a similar system be established for the review of Desert Storm symptoms. In that regard, please note the deep concern expressed by the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight in its second report of 7 Nov 97.

Sincerely,

E. R. Zumwalt, Jr.
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