

JUL 31 1991

JANETTE D. SHERMAN, M.D.  
INTERNAL MEDICINE

P.O. BOX 4605  
ALEXANDRIA, VA 22303  
(703) 329-8223

P.O. BOX 1239  
MAKAWAO, MAUI  
HAWAII 96768  
(808) 572-6166

July 22, 1991

Richard S. Christian, Deputy Director  
for Research and Technology Assessment  
Veteran Affairs and Rehabilitation  
The American Legion

Re: Gulf War Burning Oil Well Emissions

Dear Mr. Christian,

I am in receipt of your letter of July 17th containing the New York Times article titled "High levels of Toxic Substances found in Kuwait Oil Fire Smoke."

I became aware and concerned about the hazardousness of the emissions when I first saw news reports of the burning oil wells. As to the emissions from burning oil, the greatest concern is of course the cyclic compounds, and especially the carcinogenic polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons. I am astonished that at this late date that neither the EPA nor the Department of Defense has made a full assessment of the smoke components. To collect data on only soot, carbon monoxide and dusts is poor science, and poor policy. Scientific methods exist to fully characterize these emissions.

The only reason that I can think of for not assessing the emissions is to avoid gathering data. I believe that there is a parallel between the exposure of military and civilian personnel to the oil well emissions and previously, to Agent Orange and other chemical warfare agents. If there are no data, then it is easy for the government to deny or delay responsibility for those exposed. In order to assess the future health effects of exposed persons, full data should be obtained.

To my understanding, the EPA not only has the ability to do hazard assessment, but frequently sets standards as to how testing is to be accomplished. It is my understanding that a number of other U. S. Governmental agencies also have this ability.

I understand that several private groups are collecting environmental data. In addition to National Toxic Campaign, I

believe that Greenpeace is collecting data on the oil well fire emissions. It would be useful to obtain copies of their studies.

I hope this discussion is of help to you. Please keep me appraised of the situation. The scientific literature is replete with information as to the adverse effects of oil fire emissions. Adverse effects upon exposed personnel are to be expected. If you need this sort of information, please let me know.

Sincerely yours,

Janette D. Sherman, M. D.

cc: Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr.

*Best wishes to you  
Janette D Sherman*