

May 17, 2005

Mr. Clement Laforce  
Deputy Director General  
Defence Research Development Canada – Suffield  
Box 4000, Stn. Main  
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Dear Sir:

My purpose in writing this letter is to request information regarding Operation Vacuum which was conducted at the Suffield Experimental Station during September 1968.

I have been advised that you and Major Rob Poisson have done a considerable amount of research on gas tests done in Suffield. Mr. Andre Marin, the Ombudsman for DND stated in a published report on complaints concerning Chemical agent testing, that you were now very receptive to inquiries and would help with providing information regarding tests and exercises done at Suffield.

The background information that I have been able to uncover to date has provided a basis for real concern about the risks that members of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Queens Own Rifles of Canada, were exposed to as Chemical Warfare Test Subjects during Operation VACUUM.

I have learned that many different Chemical and Biological Agent Tests were conducted in Suffield during the 1960's prior to the Queens Own Rifles arriving at Suffield Experimental Station in Sept. 1968. Some of the toxic chemicals that were used in the earlier tests are known to be very deadly. There are reports of the use of live nerve agents, **GA (TABUN)**, **GB (SARIN)**, **GD (SOMAN)**, and **VX**. These agents are highly toxic and were reportedly disbursed and used within the 2600 km training area. The Minister of National Defence stated that no humans were deliberately exposed to these toxic nerve agents at the time and that there was no lingering contamination from those nerve agents. There is little information available about the toxic life of those chemicals once they were spread over the test field and this is one area where your assistance is required. One of the things that concerns me about the residual toxicity is that during Operation VACUUM dead horses were found 12 km east of the camp area and they appeared to have been healthy young animals that had just dropped dead.

I understand that there are many classified files in regards to the types of Chemical and Biological Agents used during tests conducted at Suffield prior to September 1968. However, I have been able to learn that Operations RAPID TAN ONE, TWO and THREE did report using **SARIN GAS**, **VX** and two other deadly nerve agents. Given that the use of those agents has been reported publicly I must assume there was a

considerable volume of toxic chemicals that were used on and over the Operation VACUUM training area before the arrival of the troops.

During the Battalion and Brigade Exercise phase of Operation VACUUM, Sept - Oct 1968, most of the Battalion took part in Mustard Gas Testing. At one of the grids laid out for the Exercise we both crawled and walked through an area, within that same 2600 km training area, that had been freshly contaminated with Mustard Gas and other chemicals. One of the problems we are faced with in trying to determine what risks we encountered from that contamination is that we really don't have all the information of what was actually used on us or, how what was used would have reacted to what was already in place from earlier contaminations.

The film, Operation VACUUM, shows the use of many different chemicals that include **CS GAS, MARK 4 & 5 US RIOT GAS and TA66/1(Y)** which all have human hazard reports on them. On Operation VACUUM there were reportedly about 500 support staff and scientists acting as Observers and conducting tests on those of us that were contaminated. It is my view that all of these scientists were not there just to see CS Gas used, but that they were there because of the use of Mustard Gas in combination with the other chemicals selected for the Trial carried unknown potential consequences.

Many of my former comrades that participated at Suffield in 1968 have serious respiratory conditions. This fact begs the question: if the chemical cocktail used in Operation VACUUM was a harmless training agent, why do so many of us have very similar medical conditions?

The information I would appreciate from you is as follows:

1. I would like to know who authorized the use of **TA66/1(Y)** as a training agent and where it is recorded in Canadian Forces Medical Orders?
2. A copy of the Post Exercise Report, together with a complete listing of all the chemicals used in Operation Vacuum as well as any reports that deal with the issue of how the chemicals used in Operation VACUUM were expected to, or how they did, react with the contaminated soils within the training area.
3. Any records that show that the soil and surface water in the training area was tested either immediately prior to Operation VACUUM or after the last Chemical or Biological Field Test that preceded it.
4. Copies of the reports prepared by the Field Superintendent, Field Experiment Officer and the Chief Superintendent who were assigned to Operation VACUUM.
5. A list of all other Chemical or Biological Field Tests or Exercises conducted at Suffield from January 1, 1960 to September 15<sup>th</sup>, 1968 together with a list of all chemical or biological agents utilized.

I realize that the information I have requested may take some time to put together; in the interim your written acknowledgement of your receipt of this letter would be appreciated. Thank you in advance for your assistance.