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Description Notes	Alvin L. Young filed this item under "Vietnam Veterans Twin Study." Summary is the enclosure in a letter to Alvin Young from Seth Eisen, August 26, 1984.

Medical Center St. Louis MO 63125

Veterans Administration

August 26, 1984 In Reply Refer To: 151A-JB

Dr. Alvin Young
Executive Office of the President
Office of Science and Technology
Room 5005, New Executive Office Building
Washington, D. C. 20506

Dear Alvin,

A "Brief Chronological Summary of the VETS", which I recently assembled, is enclosed. To me, it reinforces how hard some people within the VA are working to see our proposal fail.

I spoke to Hobson a couple of days ago. He said that Greene has successfully frozen him out of all VETS related information and activities. He said he would like to attend the August 30 meeting but wasn't sure he will be permitted to.

Yesterday, Bill True had lunch with Art Blank and Bob Laufer in Toronto, Canada (they are all attending a scientific meeting). Blank heard for the first time that Greene will be presenting the National Needs Assessment Study before the VETS Protocol II merit review group on August 30. Blank was apparently furious and said that he will make sure that he, Blank, makes the presentation. Blank also said that Greene has been acting "bizzare" lately, particularly in relation to the VETS protocol, and continues to talk in very negative terms about the VETS to anyone who will listen. One rumor circulating in VACO is that our protocol will be rejected, but no announcement will be made until after the presidential elections. This will minimize the negative impact of the decision and the ability of interest groups to influence it.

Surely the review committee will make a recommendation about Protocol II before they adjourn on August 30. Somehow, we must force the VA to announce that decision promptly. The longer an announcement is deferred, regardless of what the decision is, the less likely the project will ever be carried out.

John, Bill, and I will remain in Washington on Friday, August 31. I hope that we will be able to meet with you.

Sincerely,

COMBAT

1. Kadushin, C.G.; Boulanger, G.; Martin, J.; 1981. Long Term Stress Reactions: Causes Consequences and Naturally Occurring Ego Systems.

   In Egendorf, A.; Kaushin, C.G.; Laufer, R.S.; Rothbart, C.; Sloan, L. Legacies of Vietnam Combat Adjustments of Veterans and Pals, VA Study 1981.

2. Laufer, R.S.; Yager, T.; Frey-Wouters, E.; Dollen, J. 1981. Post War Psychological Problems on Veitnam Veterans in the aftermath of the Vietnam War.

   In same as above.

3. Wilson, J.; Kraus, G.; The Vietnam ERA Stress Inventory, 1980.

4. Wilson, J.; Kraus, G.; Predicting Post Dramatic Stress Syndrom Among Vietnam Veterans Presented to the 25th Neropsychological Inventory VA Medical Center, Coatesville, PA. October 1982.

STRESS

1. See number 1 above.

2. Laufer, R.S.; Brett, E.; Gallops, M.; 1983. Demostration of Post Dramatic Stress Among Vietnam Veterans May 1983.

BRIEF CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY OF THE VETS

1981

Mid 1981 - RFP from VACO soliciting research proposals in the area of Health Effects of Agent Orange exposure

December - Larry Hobson visits St Louis VAMC. Twin concept presented

1982

June - Submission to VACO by St. Louis investigators of "A Proposal for a Herbicide Orange Protocol Development"

August - Proposal reviewed. The review committee stated that the "notion of studying twins had considerable merit and posed some intriguing possibilities for innovative research and had potential for generating useful information."

1983

January - VACO meeting. VETS co-principal investigators agree to become part of the Cooperative Studies Program.

August - Protocol I approved

September - Contract signed between NAS and the VA to begin identifying twin pairs

October 28 - First CSEC Merit Review of Protocol II. Twenty recommendations made.

December 13 - Meeting of Custis, Shepard, Hobson, Greene (and perhaps others) to discuss Protocol II. Greene is critical of the protocol, particularly the specialized "Agent Orange" tests. He suggests that a "super oversight committee" be formed which will have final decision making responsibility for all aspects of the protocol. Custis is noncommittal

1984

Early January - Response to the 20 CSEC recommendations submitted

January 30 - COG II Merit Review of the revised Protocol II. The minutes of the meeting state that "COG approved the study to go forward with the modifications as noted." Only the following issues remained unresolved: 1) COG II recommended that DZs should be included in the St. Louis sample, 2) some further clarification of the key psychiatric outcome variables is necessary, 3) further consideration of tests selected for the Agent Orange assessment is necessary, taking into account the herbicide exposure data which should soon be available from the CDC Birth Defects Study, and 4) further clarification of the analysis of the recommended immunologic tests is necessary.

(Note: the VETS co-principal investigators were told at the conclusion of the January 30 meeting that the VETS had been approved. The investigators were informed that $2.6 million is available to be spent on the VETS in FY '84.)

February 7 - VETS St. Louis staff give an interview to Constance Holden of Science Magazine on the condition that nothing be published until approval is received from VACO. VACO notified of interview

February 8 (approx) - Nora Kinzer joins Greene in becoming a very outspoken critic of the VETS.

February 15 (approx) - Walters directs Custis to place the VETS on hold and to carefully re-examine the value of the study.

Mid February - Putnam (Staff Asst to the CMD) prepares, at the request of Gronval (Asst CMD) and Christian (Executive Asst to the CMD), an "impact statement" about the probable reaction of the media and service organizations to an announcement by the VA that the VETS will no longer be supported.

February 27 (approx) - Constance Holden notifies VACO that Science Magazine will publish information obtained from VETS co-investigators unless she is given a good reason not to. Cable News Network, about this time, also notifies VA that they are planning to do a story on the VETS

March 1 - Meeting of Custis, Boren, Greene, Shepard, Hobson, and others to discuss the VA's policy towards to VETS. Hobson presents an "Option and Decision Paper" which details the pros and cons of the VETS. Custis confidentially tells Shepard that he supports the VETS and will recommend to Walters that the VETS be submitted to the Science Panel of the AOWG and OTA for review. VETS investigators informally informed that it has now been decided that the January 30 COG II review was not sufficient. Further review by the AOWG and OTA is required before Protocol II can proceed.

March 7 - Lathrop briefs Custis and Walters about the Ranch Hand Study results. Tells both Custis and Walters that he thinks the VETS is excellent and should proceed.

March 12 - Custis sends memo to Walters supporting concept of VETS and recommends that additional scientific reviews be obtained from OTA & AOWG. Subsequently, Walters rejects AOWG review (reportedly because he dislikes Brandt, the chairman).

April 4 (approx) - At a routine staff meeting, Custis asks Shepard about the status of the VETS. Custis requests a briefing in his office on April 18 to resolve the following issues: should the VETS be performed, and which division within the VA should administratively be responsible for the VETS?

April 18 - Custis announces he will retire in early May. Meeting

among Gronval (Deputy CMD), Shepard, Boren and others to discuss VETS. Conclusions were: Research Service will be entirely responsible for the VETS, VETS will remain a VA study (i.e. will not be referred to CDC or some non-VA group), and psychological assessment portion of VETS will be performed as part of the overall contract. Announced that OTA has (unoffically) agreed to review the VETS. However, a formal request must come from the VA via the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee.

April 24 - Revised VETS Protocol II, which includes responses to each of the four issues still unresolved after the January 30 COG II meeting, submitted to VACO

April 30 - OMB directs VA to submit VETS to AOWG. VA refuses.

May 4 - Memo to Deputy CMD from Boren and Shepard which confirms that responsibility for the management and conduct of the VETS remains with the ACMD for Research and Development. The Agent Orange Projects Office will provide support and assistance only as required.

May 11 - COG II review of VETS scheduled for June 22

May 17, 1984 - Eisen briefs Senate Veterans Affairs Committee about the VETS. Committee staffers tell Greene that Simpson is likely to respond favorably to a request by the VA that the VETS be reviewed by OTA. Greene says that the VA will therefore make a formal request.

May 31 - Greene notifies VETS to suspend all Protocol II activity. The previously scheduled meeting of COG II has been "postponed". VACO states the OTA will review Protocol II instead. VETS investigators attendence at a previously planned June 6 meeting with Ranch Hand and CDC researchers is cancelled.

June 6 - Notified that OTA refuses to review VETS

June - VACO trying to decide who will review VETS (since Walters refuses to permit the AOWG to review it and OTA refuses to review it)

July 19 - Officially notified that VETS Protocol II will be reviewed on August 30 by a newly formed committee, composed entirely of non-VA scientists, selected by Greene