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Report/Article Title Correspondence Regarding Assignment of Alvin L. Young to the Veterans Administration for a Two-Year Term, February 26, 1981

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Memorandum

Date: February 26, 1981

To: Chief Medical Director (10) *NO*

Subj: Assignment of Alvin L. Young,
Major, USAF, to Office of
Environmental Medicine

1. The purpose of this memorandum is to solicit your approval and support of a request that the Air Force assign Major Alvin L. Young to the Office of Environmental Medicine for a period of approximately two years following completion of his current assignment in July of this year. Major Young has frequently voiced his personal desire to work with the Veterans Administration on the Agent Orange program. The recent reversal of the plan to assign Major Young to the U.S. Air Force Academy has made his detail to this office a very real possibility which in my opinion would be of great benefit to the VA.

2. Major Young holds a PhD in Herbicide Physiology, and has been intimately associated with the Agent Orange program for the past twelve years. He is a recognized expert on dioxins and the phenoxy herbicides and has published two books on the subject. Of particular interest is his involvement in the development of the protocol for the Air Force Ranch Hand Study.

3. It is my belief that Major Young's assignment to this office would materially enhance the performance of our mission in the following areas:

- a. Provide additional expert guidance in the conduct of the literature analysis mandated by P.L. 96-151.
- b. Help with managing the contract for the design of the epidemiological study mandated by P.L. 96-151.
- c. Aid in maintaining close liaison with the Air Force's conduct of the Ranch Hand Study.
- d. Provide an additional in-house source of expertise in a number of areas related to the whole agent orange issue.

2.

Chief Medical Director (10)

4. Major Young has stated to me his strong conviction that an assignment to the Office of Environmental Medicine would give him great personal and professional satisfaction and that it would have considerable potential for the enhancement of his military career. In addition, he has told me that he has received informal assurances of support from his present commanding officer as well as the Office of the Air Force Surgeon General.

5. In the event that he is assigned to us, it would be most beneficial to Major Young to be assigned for administrative purposes to the Air Force Surgeon General. This would provide eligibility for housing and other benefits at Bolling Air Force Base.

6. Attached is a proposed letter from you to General Myers and a second letter from the Administrator to the Secretary of Defense soliciting their support for this initiative. Major Young's orders to the Air Force Academy have recently been cancelled and since he is a line officer he is potentially available for a wide variety of assignments. Therefore, provided you agree with my proposal, it would be desirable to act expeditiously in this matter.



BARCLAY M. SHEPARD, M.D.
Special Assistant to the
Chief Medical Director for
Environmental Medicine (102)

Attachments



Lt. Gen. Paul W. Myers, USAF, MC
Surgeon General
United States Air Force
Bolling AFB, D.C. 20332

Dear Paul:

This will confirm my telephone conversation with General Chesney and our mutual agreement supporting the request to have Major Alvin Young assigned to our Office of Environmental Medicine for a period of approximately two years to help with our Agent Orange program. In addition we have agreed that the Veterans Administration will reimburse the Air Force for his salary. Dr. Barclay M. Shepard who coordinates our Agent Orange activities assures me that Major Young, whose assignment to the Air Force Academy has been deferred, would very much like a 2-year "hitch" with us, since it would keep him in his area of greatest interest and expertise. We in turn would be very pleased to have him join us.

Major Young has been very helpful to us on a number of projects in the past, including his work on our recently released film on Agent Orange and his participation in several VA meetings and conferences. For these efforts we are most grateful to him as well as the Air Force for permitting him to take part in these activities.

I have asked the Administrator to forward a similar request to the Secretary of Defense, enlisting his support for this assignment.

Since you concur, it would be beneficial to Major Young if he could be attached to your office for administrative purposes, so that he might be eligible for base housing at Bolling. Thank you very much for your help in this matter.

Sincerely,

DONALD L. CUSTIS, M.D.
Chief Medical Director



**Veterans
Administration**



Honorable Caspar W. Weinberger
Secretary of Defense
Pentagon - Room 3E880
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The Agent Orange issue remains a major concern to many Vietnam veterans and therefore, to this agency. The Veterans Administration is proceeding to carry out the mandate of P.L. 96-151 which requires us to conduct a long-range epidemiological study of veterans exposed to phenoxy herbicides and a review and analysis of the world's literature on these chemical agents. The successful completion of these efforts will require the specialized knowledge and skills of those individuals most familiar with the many aspects of this complex issue.

It has been brought to my attention that one of the most widely recognized experts in the use of herbicides by the Department of Defense is Major Alvin L. Young, USAF. Major Young, who holds a Ph.D. in Herbicide Physiology, has been intimately associated with the Agent Orange program for the past twelve years and has been the principal author of two major publications on the subject.

In view of these considerations and the fact that he will soon complete his present assignment at Maxwell Air Force Base, I would very much appreciate your support in requesting that Major Young be assigned for a period of approximately two years to the VA's Office of Environmental Medicine which serves as this agency's focal point for coordination of Agent Orange activities. During the past two years Major Young has worked closely with several members of our staff on a number of Agent Orange related projects and for this we are most grateful to him and to the Air Force. He is familiar with our organizational structure and interagency activities, and he has developed many contacts with the scientific community both inside and outside the federal government.

2.

Secretary of Defense

Major Young's assignment to the Veterans Administration would, I believe, prove to be mutually beneficial in that he could serve as an additional point of contact in this agency for Air Force personnel involved in the conduct of the Ranch Hand Study with which he has had considerable personal experience. The VA views this study as probably the most significant research effort currently underway in the search for answers to many of the questions related to the possible health effects of exposure to Agent Orange.

I am most grateful for all the help which the Air Force and other elements of the Department of Defense have provided to this agency and I look forward to our continued cooperation in our efforts to arrive at a more complete understanding of the many facets of the Agent Orange issue.

Sincerely,

RUFUS H. WILSON
Acting Administrator

cc: J. H. Moxley, III, M.D.
Assistant Secretary of Defense
for Health Affairs

Berne Orr
Secretary of the Air Force

Lt. Gen. Paul W. Myers
Surgeon General, USAF