



Senator Feinstein Urges Secretary Powell to  
Reassess Lariam Use by State Department Employees  
July 16, 2004

**Washington, DC** – Citing the potential threat that Lariam use by State Department employees may pose to national security, U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (*D-Calif.*) has urged Secretary of State Colin Powell to reassess the State Department's use of the drug. Eleven U.S. soldiers who recently served in the Middle East have been diagnosed with vestibular damage stemming from their use of Lariam – three of these service members lost their security clearances due to adverse reactions from taking the drug.

Following is the text of the letter sent to Secretary Powell:

July 15, 2004

The Honorable Secretary Colin Powell  
U.S. Secretary of State  
2201 C Street Northwest  
Washington DC 20520-0229

Dear Secretary Powell:

I am writing to express my concerns about the anti-malarial drug Lariam (mefloquine) and to ask that you reassess the Department of State's use of mefloquine for chemoprophylaxis and consider the use of existing alternatives that are just as effective for Department of State personnel. As you may be aware 11 military service members have been diagnosed with vestibular damage associated with mefloquine toxicity.

I am particularly concerned about this drug's use within the State Department and the potential hazard it may pose to our national security. In at least three instances, adverse reactions to mefloquine have resulted in the revocation of a service member's security clearance, a reflection that he or she is no longer capable of maintaining or processing information important to national security. I feel that it is imperative that all Department of State employees on mefloquine are provided with information informing them of the side effects of the drug listed in the drug's medication guide and in labeling. The information should also specifically describe potential security risks associated with the drug's side effects and offer actions for affected individuals to take when they observe side effects of the drug having the potential to impact the security of information they are responsible to protect.

The protection of State Department personnel from contracting malaria while overseas is paramount. Your consideration of effective alternatives is important to prevent additional personnel from being adversely affected and preserve the integrity of information crucial to our nation's security. Unfortunately, because side effects of this drug can be very subtle, they may not be easily identified. Unfamiliarity with mefloquine's side effects (impairment of; memory, perception, balance, attitude, cognitive processing and behavior) could diminish the recognition of limitations in their ability to function effectively and protect our national security. Therefore, if Department of State personnel are taking mefloquine it is important that they are made aware of the side effects of the drug, the risks associated with the side affects and the possible impact on their protection of information vital to the nation's security.

I thank you in advance for your attention to this matter, and look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator

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