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12 May 2020

Dear Tobias,

Thank you for your letter, dated 27 April 2020, regarding the use of Citriodiol by UK Armed Forces personnel who are currently supporting the Government's response to COVID-19.

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is contributing extensively to the Government's COVID-19 response and some tasks require engagement – albeit limited and strictly controlled – with members of the public, such as the staffing of Mobile Testing Units.

The wellbeing of our Armed Forces personnel is of utmost importance to the MOD, ensuring that they and their families remain healthy and can also continue contributing to the Government's response to this pandemic.

As such, enhanced Force Health Protection Measures have been introduced, many of which are already being employed by NHS trusts and emergency services and provide a layered approach to protecting our personnel.

In addition to ensuring adherence to military self-discipline and guidance on social distancing, hand-hygiene and the wearing of Personal Protective Equipment, military clinicians have also recommended several measures that may offer some additional protection to our personnel when operating in higher risk settings.

Citriodiol is a safe and natural product, often found in commercially available insect repellents. Weaker Citriodiol spray solutions form a barrier on the skin and have been found to provide a barrier against variants of the SARS virus similar to that causing the current pandemic.

The Rt Hon Tobias Ellwood MP
Chair
House of Commons Defence Committee
House of Commons
London
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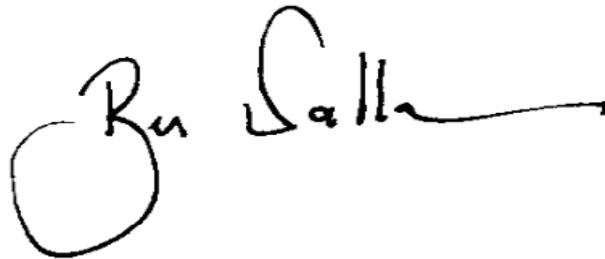
It is not possible to confirm the number of Armed Forces personnel who have used the product, but Defence has provided a Citriodiol-based spray to each of the 10 Joint Military Commands, which have been delegated the authority to provide to their personnel wherever required.

The MOD does not implement such measures without rigorous examination of their effectiveness and suitability. Following consultation with subject matter experts – including infectious disease consultants, pathology advisors, and public health experts – the Surgeon General advised that, albeit in lieu of conclusive research, Citriodiol would do no harm and should be used on a precautionary basis, as an additional layer of protection against exposure to COVID-19.

Providing Citriodiol to other essential workers outside Defence, such as those in the NHS, would be a matter for the bodies employing those essential workers. The Surgeon General has informed the Chief and Deputy Chief Medical Officers for England of his approach. The Surgeon General has also tasked DSTL with a further study to understand specific details of the utility of Citriodiol against COVID-19.

I will be happy to update you when the findings become available.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ben Wallace". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, circular initial "B" and a long, sweeping horizontal line at the end.

THE RT HON BEN WALLACE MP



Defence Committee

Chair, Rt Hon Tobias Ellwood MP

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Rt Hon Ben Wallace MP
Secretary of State for Defence
Ministry of Defence
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27 April 2020

Dear Secretary of State,

You will be aware of the report on Sky News on 24 April that troops are being issued with insect repellent containing Citriodiol as part of what are being called "enhanced for health protection measures" during the Covid-19 pandemic. I understand that the manufacturers, Citrefine International Ltd, believe there is scientific evidence to show that Citriodiol can kill other coronaviruses, and that it is likely that it would have the same effect on the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) that is behind the global pandemic.

In the light of this report, I should be grateful if you could answer the following questions:

1. Are troops involved in anti-Covid-19 work being issued with insect repellent containing Citriodiol? If so, How many?
2. On what basis is Citriodiol being issued? Has there been an assessment by DSTL?
3. Are there plans to issue Citriodiol to other essential workers, such as those in the NHS?

p.p. Yours sincerely,

Rt Hon. Tobias Ellwood MP
Chair of the Defence Committee