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C-123K = Agent Orange Poison!

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C-123K/UC-123K
1972 - 1982

www.c123agentorange.com vol. 4 Feb - Mar 2012

Seems like the Air Force didn't get around to notifying the aircrews and maintainers assigned to the C-123K at Westover and other Reserve bases that our aircraft were highly contaminated with **Agent Orange** residue left over from Ranch Hand spray missions during the Vietnam War. Actually, various AF agencies **took specific steps** to keep the information "in official channels only", where it remained until May of 2011 as our veterans began uncovering details via Freedom of Information Act requests.

Testing first done in 1994 at the Air Force Museum proved C-123s were **"heavily contaminated, extremely dangerous, extremely hazardous"** with every test sample proving positive for the poison dioxin. **"A danger to public health."**

To solve the contamination, the Air Force finally had to shred all C-123Ks, melting them into scrap ingots! The full list of Agent Orange illnesses is at our site: www.c123agentorange.com with all available source papers for easy download.

Write your Congressman!

Your Ad Hoc C-123K Agent Orange Committee (leaders invited)

Wes Carter - John Harris - Paul Bailey
Dee Holiday - Dan Clancey - Arch Battista
Al Harrington - Joe Curley - Andy Lown

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&

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An amazing week!

First, I got great news about my own application to the AF Board of Correction of Military Records regarding an appeal of the amount of retirement pay I should have been authorized at the time of my retirement.

But our really **GREAT** news was via a letter received 25 Jan 2012 from Dr. Thomas Sinks, Deputy Director of the CDC's Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry. His agency (along with others like the EPA) is responsible for issues like dioxin. In this letter the ATSDR stated their finding that not only were our C-123s contaminated with Agent Orange, but contamination was **182 times the safety standard** set by an Army publication with about a 200-times greater cancer risk! Further, Dr. Sinks concludes that our exposure was likely even more intense than *Patches'* 1994 test results indicated because we were exposed years before that testing, and we were aboard for more hours per day than the Army's standard considered as a base level...and all this for a full decade between 1972-1982.

You might remember that in December the VA admitted the C-123s "may" have been contaminated with dioxin but not enough to "cause long-term health effects." The ATSDR took this piece of voodoo science and shredded it with Dr. Sinks' statement "I believe that aircrews operating in this, and similar, environments were exposed to TCDD (dioxin)."

As the warden said in Paul Newman's great movie *Hud*, "What we have here is a failure to communicate!" Indeed, with two federal agencies contradicting each other head-on. The VA (driven by budget considerations) says one thing and the ATSDR, having greater authority and responsibility for evaluating our exposure, has decided pretty much the opposite. I can't imagine the ridiculous picture we'd have if VA continues to fight in the face of this powerful support...but they probably will.

ATSDR has provided their information to the Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine which has been tasked by the AF Surgeon General with an analysis of our Agent Orange exposure from the C-123, and we can anticipate a very positive finding in the next month or so. This will likely be strengthened even further by a university's outside scientific review of the Air Force report.



That loud noise you just heard? That's ATSDR pulling **out** the nails from our coffin which the VA tried to hammer in last December. God bless 'em and Dr. Sinks!

(continued on page 2)

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And the good news just keeps coming. In December the *Air Force Times* and *Army Times* ran an article about the VA disputing our exposure, and that prompted a reader, Lt.Col J. Goepfner (USA Ret) to contact me minutes after he read the piece. Colonel Goepfner also happens to have a doctorate and a career of service with the Army's Chemical Corps and Medical Service Corps...but his civilian career just after college began with a stint with Dow Chemical. Simply put, Colonel Goepfner is one heck of an expert on Agent Orange and he flat-out disputes the VA's statement that we were not exposed aboard the C-123s.



Colonel Goepfner wrote "I have generated an evaluation and concluding assessment of the Veterans Administration conclusion regarding the validity of the claimants' (that's us, folks) position that these veterans did in fact develop health problems and physical disabilities as a consequence of exposure to Agent Orange chemical residues (namely dioxin) in operating Agent Orange-contaminated aircraft in the performance of their duties." Further, "It can be positively confirmed that these aircraft, specially designated by tail number in this investigation, were indeed contaminated with an indeterminate amount of ... dioxin." The stated conclusion advanced by VA representatives and other legal authorities which agrees that the claimants did in fact become contaminated with some degree of dioxin but did not incur a sufficient amount of such contamination to cause injury, disease or disability is not scientifically credible."

He concludes "it is my professional judgement that the conclusion presented by the Veterans Administration with this claim in no wise represents a scientifically accurate and creditable adjudication of the claimants' petition in which they maintain they became diseased and disabled as a consequence of exposure to dioxin residues remaining on aircraft."

Another loud noise = another VA coffin nail pulled out by Dr. Goepfner!



We've provided these new items to the VA and the Air Force, of course, yet we can expect serious VA push-back as usual. If you have a claim before the VA now for Agent Orange, get copies (downloadable from our blog at www.c123kcancer.blogspot.com) to support your application.

Even if you haven't filed with the VA for anything, you should at least register at 1-877-222-8387 with their Agent Orange hotline. I convinced a good buddy (Navy 06 rotor head) to register and at his

physical the VA discovered an aortic aneurism. This life-threatening problem can now be addressed instead of sneaking up on him.



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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Public Health Service

Agency for Toxic Substances
and Disease Registry
Atlanta, GA 30341

January 25, 2012

Wesley T. Carter, Major, USAF, Retired
2349 Nut Tree Lane
McMinnville, Oregon 97128

Dear Major Carter:

Thank you for your letter of November 17, 2011 regarding past Agent Orange exposures to Air Force C-123 aircrews operating this equipment outside of the Vietnam War theatre from 1972-1982. You describe a recent conversation with a representative of the United States Veterans Administration (VA). You were told ... *aircrews inside a 'heavily contaminated' airplane could not be exposed via dermal contact because the skin is a good barrier. Neither could exposure occur via inhalation because there wasn't much dust for the dioxin to adhere to*". You ask that the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) provide you our opinion if you have been exposed.

In this letter, I provide a summary of my discussions with the United States Air Force (USAF), our review of screening criteria used by the Department of Defense for exposure to 2,3,7,8 tetrachlorodibenzo-p-dioxin (TCDD), and a comparison of the screening criteria to the measured results from wipe samples taken from a contaminated plane on November 20, 1994. I summarize the limitations of the data and provide an opinion about exposure to TCDD in contaminated C-123 aircraft.

I contacted our liaisons for the Department of the Army and the USAF. I was referred to the following information currently posted on the VA website. It states ... (the) *VA has concluded the potential for long-term adverse health effects from Agent Orange residues in these planes is minimal. Even if crew exposure did occur, it is unlikely that sufficient amounts of dried Agent Orange residue could have entered the body to have caused harm*¹. I was also put in contact with Captain Kendra Fletcher at Air Force Medical Support Agency Bioenvironmental Engineering. I offered this agency's expertise to the USAF in reviewing the available data, determining the likelihood of exposure, and (if possible) the health risks from the exposures that had occurred. Captain Fletcher stated that she would share this offer within the USAF and contact me should the USAF desire our assistance.

Following that initial conversation, ATSDR staff located a technical guidance from the United States Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine – *Technical Guide 312 - Health Risk Assessment Methods and Screening Levels for Evaluating Office Worker Exposures to Contaminants on Indoor Surfaces Using Surface Wipe Data (June 2009)*.² In this document, the Army derives screening levels for long-term office workers using surface

¹ <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/residue-c123-aircraft.asp>

² http://phc.amedd.army.mil/topics/envirohealth/hrasm/Pages/EHRAP_TechGuide.aspx

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Page 2 – Major Carter

wipe samples analyzed for TCDD concentrations. Technical Guide 312 includes a screening value for TCDD of $3.5E-05 \mu\text{g}/100\text{cm}^2$, or $0.035 \text{ ng}/100\text{cm}^2$. This screening level incorporates incidental ingestion, dermal, and inhalation (both particulate and vapor) pathways. The screening level is set at a threshold of $1E-06$ cancer risk, (equivalent to a one-in-a-million increase in the risk of cancer). ATSDR calculated an average value $6.36 \text{ ng}/100\text{cm}^2$ for the three C-123 interior wipe samples collected on November 20, 1994.³ This average value exceeds the Army screening level by 182 times and is equivalent to a 200-fold greater cancer risk than the screening value. I shared this information with Captain Fletcher.

There are many limitations to the information available to us. We know of only 3 wipe samples taken from a single aircraft in 1994. We do not know if these samples are representative of TCDD contamination in other contaminated C-123 aircraft in 1994 or earlier when contamination levels were likely higher. Additional air or wipe sampling or analyses of aircrew blood TCDD levels would have more accurately established past exposures. It is probably too late to analyze current blood TCDD levels because twenty to forty years have passed since these exposures occurred. I understand that the contaminated aircraft have been destroyed and further environmental sampling (air or wipe) is impossible. Finally, the office worker scenario used in Technical Guidance 312 likely underestimates the daily exposures of Air Force flight personnel inside confined contaminated aircraft, but this depends upon exposed skin surface area, duration of exposure, hand washing, and food intake.

In summary, I cannot exclude inhalation exposures to TCDD in these aircraft. The only available environmental samples indicate that the sampled aircraft was contaminated with TCDD at a level greatly exceeding current screening levels established by the Department of Defense. Given the available information, I believe that aircrew operating in this, and similar, environments were exposed to TCDD. The information available is insufficient to establish with accuracy the degree of exposure (low or high) or the risk of adverse health effects to this population. However, it is important to note that even precise environmental or biologic testing data are not predictive of adverse health effects in any individual.

I have provided a copy of this letter to Captain Fletcher. I hope this information is helpful.

Sincerely yours,

Thomas Sinks, Ph.D.
Deputy Director, National Center for
Environmental Health and
Agency for Toxic Substances and
Disease Registry

cc:
CAPT Fletcher, R. Shackelford, D. Carillo

³ See Consultative Letter from Capt Wade Weisman & Ronald Porter; Department of Air Force Armstrong Laboratory Memorandum FOR 645 MedGrp/SGB Dated 19 Dec 94



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Airforce Times 12/05/2011

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Washington

VA denies benefits to veterans who flew in Agent Orange-contaminated planes

By Patricia Kime
pkime@militarytimes.com

The Veterans Affairs Department has denied benefits and compensation to a group of Air Force Reserve veterans who sought relief for what they believe are service-connected illnesses tied to flying aircraft contaminated with Agent Orange.

During the Vietnam War, UC-123K Provider "spray birds" were used for chemical defoliation missions. VA ruled in November that aircrew members who flew the same planes after the war faced "minimal" long-term adverse health effects.

"Even if crew exposure did occur, it is unlikely that sufficient amounts of dried Agent Orange residue could have entered the body to have caused harm," VA officials said.

For one former crewman who suffers diseases that VA lists as associated with Agent Orange exposure, the decision comes as a blow.

"It's really tough for us to believe many of these grievous illnesses aren't service-related," said retiree Maj. Wesley Carter, 64, diagnosed with diabetes, peripheral neuropathy and prostate cancer. He flew C-123s from 1972 to 1982.

Carter began researching the issue after he was diagnosed with several ailments. After contacting fellow crew members, he found at least five had similar diseases and several had died.

"I started wondering about the common denominator," he said. "It was the aircraft."

Carter located a 1994 Air Force report about his old aircraft, nicknamed "Patches" for the number of hits it took from enemy fire during the war. The historic aircraft was destined for a spot in the National Museum of the Air Force, but officials deemed it too contaminated with a known carcinogen to go on immediate display.

Patches was scrubbed by a hazardous materials crew at Wright-

Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, before being moved indoors.

"We ate in that plane, slept on the floor, lived in it on tactical deployments, and it was too contaminated for public display?" Carter said.

In making its decision, VA said it reviewed Air Force reports of samples from the aircraft to test for dioxin. It concluded that because dioxin is not water soluble and the residue could be dislodged only by using the strong solvent hexane, the residual chemicals were unlikely to cause adverse health effects.

A Vietnam Veterans of America spokesman called the VA's conclusion "bull."

"It's flat outrageous. How many reports and studies will they have to review before they get this right?" said Rick Weidman, executive director for government relations for VVA. "It's another sign [that VA] hasn't changed its corporate culture of denial."



One of the planes used to spread Agent Orange, nicknamed "Patches," had to be scrubbed down by a hazardous materials crew before it could be displayed at the National Museum of the Air Force.

An estimated 1,500 to 2,000 service members flew C-123s in squadrons based at Westover Air Reserve Base, Mass.; Pittsburgh

Air Reserve Base, Pa.; and Rickenbacker Air Force Base, Ohio.

It's not known how many are still alive, Weidman said. □

Law makes vets more competitive for jobs

By Rick Maze
rmaze@militarytimes.com

A new veterans employment law signed Nov. 21 by President Obama creates no new jobs but attempts, instead, to make those who served in the military more competitive for jobs that are available.

The Vow to Hire Heroes Act encourages businesses to hire veterans by offering tax credits, improves transition assistance programs for separating service members to help prepare them to look for jobs, creates a new skill-retraining program for chronically unemployed veterans and attempts to streamline placement of separating troops in federal jobs.

The economy has slowly been growing jobs, but Obama said veterans need more help.

"While we've added more than 350,000 private-sector jobs over the last three months, we've got 850,000 veterans who can't find work," Obama said. "And even though the overall unemployment rate came down just a little bit last month, unemployment for veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan continued to rise. That isn't right."

In a message to businesses, he said, "If you are hiring, hire a veteran. It's the right thing to do for you, it's the right thing to do for them and it's the right thing to do for our economy."

First lady Michelle Obama, speaking at the signing ceremony, said the law might not create jobs, but pointed out that businesses have been hiring veterans as part of the Joining Forces campaign led by her and Jill Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden.

"Businesses have already hired more than 18,000 veterans and military families, and they've made commitments to hire at least 135,000 more," she said.

The law is a compromise between the White House and the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs committees, which melded proposals into a final package.

Rep. Jeff Miller, R-Fla., the House committee chairman, described the new law as putting "veterans of all eras on the path to meaningful employment."

"From the combat medic returning home from Afghanistan to the Vietnam veteran who has lost a job due to the struggling economy, the Vow to Hire Heroes Act tackles the barriers too many of our veterans face in today's job market," Miller said.

Ryan Gallucci, an Iraq War veteran and deputy director of the Veterans of Foreign Wars' national legislative service, said the law will have some impact right away on separating service members and veterans looking for work. But one of the most important things it does is try to measure the success of the myriad programs the government already provides.

"In the long run, the VFW believes the reporting metrics included in the bill will be critical to analyzing what works and what doesn't when helping veterans find quality jobs," Gallucci said. "As the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan wind down, more and more veterans will be entering the workforce. ... We need to know how to best serve their transitional needs." □



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