



---

## Uploaded to the VFC Website

▶▶▶ February 2015 ◀◀◀

---

This Document has been provided to you courtesy of Veterans-For-Change!

Feel free to pass to any veteran who might be able to use this information!

For thousands more files like this and hundreds of links to useful information, and hundreds of "Frequently Asked Questions, please go to:

[Veterans-For-Change](#)

---

*If Veterans don't help Veterans, who will?*

---

**Note:**

VFC is not liable for source information in this document, it is merely provided as a courtesy to our members & subscribers.



**Edward V. Burns**  
**5550 Windridge View**  
**Cincinnati, Ohio 45243-2977**

November 4, 2011

Regarding: Exposure of Sgt Don Paul Collins Jr. US 51 777 027 to Herbicides in the Republic of Korea during 1968.

To Whom It May Concern:

I am Edward V. Burns, Captain, Field Artillery, United States Army, Separated. My serial number is 05235189,

My status on my Department of Defense/Armed Services Identification and Privilege Card is "DAVPRM", or permanently disabled veteran, with the Grade of O3. I am 100% Totally and Permanently Service Disabled due to exposure to herbicides during my service on the DMZ in South Korea in 1968. My VA identifier is Edward Vincent Burns 7022.

I was assigned to Headquarters, Headquarters Service Battery, 6th Battalion, 80th Field Artillery (WALKTOA), Seventh Infantry Division, Eighth United States Army, USARPAC from 4 January 1968 to 16 December 1968. The unit was garrisoned at Camp Knox, Pobwanni, Paju, Korea in the Second Infantry Division Area and operated throughout the western sector of the DMZ, including operations north of the Injin River. Although the Seventh Infantry Division was located in reserve south of the Second Infantry Division, my unit was positioned well forward in the Second Division Area to provide general support and reinforcing fires well into the Demilitarized Zone and North Korea when necessary. Field Artillery, historically the deciding factor in battle, is not held in reserve. The Battalion consisted of three 155 mm Towed Howitzer Batteries and one 8 Inch Self Propelled Artillery Battery, along with a Headquarters and Service Battery.

The subject of this letter, Sgt Don Paul Collins Jr., was assigned to B Battery, a 155 mm Towed Howitzer Battery. His Military Occupational Specialty began as 13A10, Cannoneer, and was changed to 13 B40, Chief of Section, as he gained skills and experience through on the job training. Records provided by Sgt Collins indicate he was assigned to B Battery from 24 August 1968 to 9 September 1969. While in the Field, his duty assignments with B Battery took him to areas adjacent to the South Tape of the DMZ on a regular basis.

During my assignment to the 6th Bn 80th FA I held the following duty positions: S1 (Unit Personnel Officer), S2 (Intelligence Officer), S4 (Supply Officer), and Headquarters and Service Battery Commander. This Battalion operated under a Modified Table of Organization and

Equipment due to resources diverted to Vietnam during and following the TET Offensive. We had from sixteen to twenty officers assigned to the unit, although a full Table of Organization and Equipment called for thirty five. Enlisted ranks were similarly strained and individuals were called to fill multiple roles with long hours of work and responsibility often well above their pay grade. At the time of his service in the unit Sgt Collins was nineteen years old and held the Permanent Grade of Private First Class (E-3). His duty position called for a Staff Sergeant (E-6). His conduct and efficiency were rated as Excellent.

During the period of my service in the Unit (which coincided with Sgt Collins service from 24 August 1968 to 16 December 1968), the Unit was under attack from small groups of North Korean Army forces infiltrating south of the Demilitarized Zone. Extraordinary measures were taken to protect the Guns, which has Special Weapons and Selected Ammunition missions classified as Top Secret.

In this hostile environment, I recall two programs which introduced herbicides into the Battalion's Operating Area. Over seven hundred infiltrators from North Korea were identified as being in the Second Division Area in 1968. The Unit's garrison at Pobwanni was divided by a stream and the Mission required that one six gun Howitzer Battery be laid and prepared to fire from a position on the north side of the stream twenty four hours a day. That area of the compound included motor pools, fuel and ammunition dumps as well. Quonset Hut barracks and administrative buildings were on the south side of the compound, connected by a ford in the stream for tracked vehicles, and a Bailey Bridge for wheeled vehicles. The constant threat and fact of North Korean infiltration required that the compound be transformed from an administrative garrison to a well defended tactical site.

The compound was bordered on the north and west side by rice paddies. They extended for several kilometers. The site had originally been a Japanese Army communications center, and much of the chain link fence protecting the perimeter had been long compromised by heavy growth of shrubs and weeds. That gave cover to infiltrators and obscured fields of fire over likely avenues of approach. Quantities of herbicides were issued by higher headquarters to suppress vegetation on the compound's perimeter. We received no cautions regarding contact with herbicides, nor instruction on their use.

The urgency of the situation saw work parties drawn from all sections of the Battalion, and all ranks assigned to brush clearing and the application of herbicides. The perimeter was repeatedly contaminated by re-application of herbicides over time, particularly in the summer and fall months.

Night time defenses included "Operation Lightning Bug", a continuing operation which consisted of moving wheeled vehicles up to the perimeter fence into shallow dug out positions. When infiltrators were detected during hours of darkness, headlights would be switched on to illuminate fields of fire for 7.62 mm machine guns and grenade launchers positioned between the vehicles. Stopping infiltrators short of the perimeter was essential because of the tactic of using

“Satchel Bombs” thrown over the fence. A neighboring Infantry Battalion lost its ammunition dump to such an attack, so good attention was given to this program. Brush free fields of fire were essential. Sgt Collins was regularly rostered for assignment to Guard and Quick Reaction Force duties, and was thus continually exposed to herbicides.

Another major source of exposure occurred during 1968. Intelligence received indicated that the North Korean Army planned a contingent high speed armor attack through the Second Division Area. This was after the capture of the USS Pueblo, and at the height of the Vietnam War. Opening of a second front by North Korea made sense at the time. Indication were that the line of attack would be through the valley systems running north and south from the DMZ through the Second Division area. This was one of the primary routes of attack used at the onset of the Korean War in 1950. New static defenses were planned, and troops from all area units were assigned the additional duty of constructing a series of defensive “phase lines” to hinder armor attacks.

The 6th Bn, 80th FA was assigned “Phase Line Papa”, a series of steel reinforced bunkers with interlocking fields of fire on the DMZ and immediately south of the DMZ. This area had been restricted and free of civilian occupancy since the armistice of 1954, and was heavily overgrown. Clearing of foliage and brush were critical to mine laying and opening up necessary fields of fire. Quantities of herbicide were hand sprayed throughout the area in the presence of all unit members.

This is my clear recollection of exposure to herbicides during the period Sgt Collins and I served in my unit.

In recognition of his Service, Sgt Collins was awarded the Army Good Conduct Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, the Korean Service Defense Medal and the Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edward V. Burns". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line at the end.

Edward V. Burns  
Captain, FA, USA (DAVPRM)