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## 60-90 days to know whether Guam soil has traces of Agent Orange

Haidee V Eugenio, [heugenio@guampdn.com](mailto:heugenio@guampdn.com) Published 8:44 p.m. ChT May 2, 2018



In about two to three months, Guam may know whether soil samples collected in April within Andersen Air Force Base have traces of Agent Orange, a hazardous defoliant.

The Guam Environmental Protection Agency on Wednesday said the Herbicide Orange or Agent Orange investigation reached a milestone, with soil samples collected from April 23 to 26 for laboratory analysis.

(Photo: Photo courtesy of Catherine Norton of NAVFAC Marianas)

"Based on proposed project timelines, sample analysis and data validation is expected to be complete in approximately 60 to 90 days," Guam EPA said in a statement.

This comes more than a year after Gov. Eddie Calvo issued a directive to Guam EPA in January 2017 to test for traces of Agent Orange on island.

At the time, the governor's office cited public statements by veterans who said they sprayed Agent Orange on Guam during the Vietnam War.

Adelup and Guam EPA at the time said it's deeply disturbing, considering that the contaminant in Agent Orange is a carcinogen. There are veterans suffering life-debilitating illnesses attributed to their exposure to Agent Orange, Adelup had said.

"This is welcome news for all of us in the community as this sampling event marks an important milestone in this process," Calvo said in a statement Wednesday. "While the collaborative spirit of the 'One Guam' approach is alive and well in this effort, it is incumbent that GovGuam and the

Department of Defense continue to work in the spirit of togetherness, no matter what the analysis reveals.”



**Guam and the U.S. military conducted fieldwork to collect soil samples for Agent Orange analysis in April, more than a year after Gov. Eddie Calvo instructed the testing.** *(Photo: Photo courtesy of Catherine Norton of NAVFAC Marianas)*

## **From fuel pipelines to fence lines**

Guam EPA, in a May 2 statement, said the soil sampling took place within the footprint of Andersen Air Force Base.

AECOM, a private contractor hired by the military, collected soil samples from areas surrounding former fuel pipelines, airfield perimeter fence lines, and a fence line surrounding the aboveground storage tanks, the statement said.

Officials from Guam EPA, Joint Region Marianas and Andersen's 36th Civil Engineer Squadron were present during the four-day sampling.

Soil samples collected from the four-day sampling were shipped to two different laboratories for analysis and validation, Guam EPA said.

Split sampling protocols were built into the investigation work plan at the request of Guam EPA with the support of the US EPA.

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## **Veterans' sworn affidavits**



Site selection for soil sampling was based on information gathered from veterans who have issued statements and testimony in the form of sworn affidavits to Guam EPA, the agency said.

This information was conveyed to the Joint Region Marianas leadership, along with public concerns over the accessibility of sites within Andersen footprint.

Over the course of several months, discussions were held between local and federal authorities to ensure that veterans' concerns were heard while accessibility issues were properly addressed.

"I am pleased with our continued partnership with federal and local agencies in this effort. We have come together on this issue and brought to bear the appropriate expertise and support for this important process," Rear Adm. Shoshana Chatfield, commander, Joint Region Marianas, said in a statement.

Guam EPA Administrator Walter S. Leon Guerrero said his agency is pleased with Chatfield's leadership.

"The admiral's commitment to this effort demonstrates true environmental stewardship," he said.

AECOM, a private contractor selected by Naval Facilities Engineering Command Marianas, assisted in developing the work plan and defining the quality assurance procedures, then later performed the soil sampling, Guam EPA said.

Vice Speaker Therese Terlaje said earlier this year she's encouraged by the December 2017 visit to Guam by the U.S. Government Accountability Office to conduct an independent review of the U.S. government's handling of possible Agent Orange use on Guam.

The U.S. military has said Agent Orange was not used on Guam.

Terlaje said GAO officials met with and interviewed veterans on Guam as part of their investigation into the possible use of Agent Orange and other dioxin-based herbicides, on Guam.

*Reporter Haidee Eugenio covers Guam's Catholic church issues, education, government, business and more. Follow her on Twitter [@haidee\\_eugenio](#). Follow Pacific Daily News on [Facebook/GuamPDN](#) and [Instagram @guampdn](#).*

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