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Agent Orange Review

Vol. 16, No. 1

Information for Veterans Who Served in Vietnam

May 2000

IOM Diabetes Report Expected in September; Ranch Hand Study Suggests Link

Last year the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) asked the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine (IOM) for a special expedited interim review of the scientific evidence relating exposure to Agent Orange and other herbicides used in Vietnam to Type II diabetes. The disease is also referred to as non-insulin dependent diabetes mellitus, and adult-onset diabetes.

An IOM committee convened for this review conducted a workshop and meeting to hear current researchers in the field present information on their ongoing investigations and to review relevant material. A key piece of new evidence included a National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) study of industrial workers exposed to dioxin, published since the IOM deliberations held for **Update 1998**. This report is the second in a series of biennial updates of the comprehensive herbicide literature review that IOM is conducting with VA funding in accordance with Public Law 102-4.

The IOM anticipated release of their report on the NIOSH study in May 2000. However, an important study of Vietnam veterans' health was released in late March 2000, just about the time that the IOM reviewers were finalizing their work. The Department of Defense suggested that this latest Ranch Hand report described below "includes the strongest evidence to date that herbicide exposure is associated with diabetes, and some of its known complications."

In view of the new Ranch Hand report, Secretary West requested that the IOM postpone the release of the pending IOM diabetes review and combine those results with the additional review of the recent Ranch Hand study into a single report to be released at the earliest possible date. VA considered that it was critical that all available scientific evidence be reviewed in reaching any conclusions on VA policy for compensating Vietnam veterans based on their exposure to Agent Orange. The IOM agreed and indicated that such a report should be completed by September 30, 2000.

Based on the IOM findings and other relevant information, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs will make a decision as to whether diabetes should be added to the list of conditions presumptively recognized for service-connection for Vietnam veterans. Because of this additional project, the third biennial update, planned for release in December 2000, will be delayed several months.

On March 27, 2000, the Air Force released a report summarizing the results of the 1997 physical examination of Vietnam veterans who were part of the "Ranch Hand" unit responsible for the aerial spraying of herbicides from 1962 to 1971 and a comparison group of other Vietnam veterans. Ranch Hand personnel were exposed to herbicides during loading, flight operations, and maintenance of the aircraft and spray equipment.

Although the Air Force investigators have characterized the latest results as the strongest evidence to date that herbicide exposure is associated with diabetes and some of its complications, it is unclear whether the increased prevalence is larger than that previously observed in this population. The IOM review, requested by Secretary West, will help answer this important question.

The Air Force began planning the Ranch Hand Study in 1978 to assess the possible health consequences of exposure to Agent Orange and its dioxin contaminant. The Air Force conducted the first physical examinations in 1982 to evaluate the health, survival, and reproductive experience of veterans of Operation Ranch Hand. The ongoing study seeks to determine whether Ranch Hand veterans have experienced adverse health effects and whether those effects, if they exist, can be attributable to exposure to herbicides used in Vietnam.

The study involves approximately 1,000 Ranch Hand veterans who have undergone physical examinations in 1982, 1985, 1987, 1992, and 1997. A final examination is planned for 2002. The data gathered during these examination are analyzed, evaluated, and published in various reports. The comparison group is comprised of 1,300 other Air Force veterans who were involved in C-130 aircraft missions in Southeast Asia during the time period that the Ranch Hand unit was active. These "comparisons" were not involved in spraying herbicides. The study is expected to be completed in 2005.

The IOM will evaluate the latest Ranch Hand findings for **Update 2000** along with other available scientific information, in accordance with Public Law 102-4, the Agent Orange Act of 1991. Future issues of this newsletter will describe the latest developments regarding this matter.

1998 IOM Report Hardbound Copies Available

The National Academy Press recently released hardbound copies of **Veterans and Agent Orange: Update 1998**. The prepublication copy was released in February 1999. The third report in the series of comprehensive (*Continued on page 2*)

About the Review...

The "Agent Orange Review" is prepared by VA's Environmental Agents Service (EAS). The "Review" is published to provide information on Agent Orange and related matters to Vietnam veterans, their families, and others with concerns about herbicides used in Vietnam. The first issue was released in November 1982. The most recent edition (prior to the release of this issue) was dated August 1999. The May 2000 release is the thirty-first issue. It was written in mid-April 2000 and does not include developments that occurred since that time.

Comments or questions about the content of the "Review" are encouraged. Suggestions and ideas for future issues should be sent to Donald J. Rosenblum, Agent Orange Review, Deputy Director, Environmental Agents Service (131), VA Central Office, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20420.

Requests for additional copies of this and earlier issues should also be directed to Mr. Rosenblum. Please specify the issue date and the quantity sought. A limited supply of the issues published during the past ten years are available (October 1989, May 1990, August 1990, February 1991, April 1991, August 1991, December 1991, April 1992, September 1992, February 1993, September 1993, October 1994, May 1995, August 1996, February 1997, November 1997, April 1998, March 1999, August 1999, and May 2000).

VA facilities should order additional copies from the VA Service and Distribution Center. Each station has a Publications Control Officer (PCO). VA facilities should place any orders through their PCO using the LOG system.

VA updates the "Review" mailing address listing annually based on IRS records. "Review" recipients who have not been filing Federal income tax returns annually and have moved to another residence are encouraged to send their old and new addresses and Social Security number to the Agent Orange Review, Austin Automation Center (200/397A), 1615 Woodward Street, Austin, TX 78772-0001.

Questions about the Agent Orange **Registry** examination program should be directed to the Registry Physician or Agent Orange Registry Coordinator at the nearest VA medical center. Questions regarding eligibility for health care should be directed to the hospital administration service at the nearest VA medical center. Questions regarding VA benefit programs, including **disability compensation**, should be referred to a veterans benefits counselor at the nearest VA facility. The telephone numbers can be found in the telephone directory under the "U.S. Government" listings. The national toll-free telephone number for information regarding VA benefits is **1-800-827-1000**.

(Continued from page 1)

analyses of health effects of herbicides used in Vietnam, mandated by Public Law 102-4, is 623 (6 x 9 inch) pages. The National Academy Press is selling the report for \$79.00, plus shipping and handling and applicable tax (in certain jurisdiction; see below).

Update 1998 may be ordered by mail, phone, or over the internet. Mail orders should be sent to the National Academy Press, 2101 Constitution Avenue, NW, Lockbox 285, Washington, DC 20055. All orders must be prepaid. To order by telephone using VISA/MasterCard/American Express, call toll-free 1-800-624-6242 or call 202-334-3313 in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. The fax number is 202-334-2451. The National Academy Press web bookstore gives a 20% discount off all titles ordered from their internet site: <http://www.nap.edu>. Report reports are available at this web site.

Quantity discounts are also available — to be eligible for the discount, all copies must be shipped and billed to one address. Standard shipping and handling cost for the first copy is an additional \$4.00 and \$0.50 for each additional copy. Purchasers from California, Washington, DC, Florida, Maryland, Missouri, Texas, or Canada must add the applicable sales tax or GST. Prices apply only in the United States, Canada, and Mexico, and are *subject to change without notice*.

Veterans and Agent Orange: Update 1996, ISBN 0-309-05487-7; 1996, 384 pages, 6 x 9 inch, \$49.00, can also be purchased from the National Academy Press, at the above address.

The initial report, **Veterans and Agent Orange: Health Effects of Herbicides Used In Vietnam**, ISBN 0-309-04887-7; 1994, 832 pages, 6 x 9 inch, \$79.95, is also available.

The National Academy Press was created by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) to publish reports issued by the Academy and by the National Academy of Engineering, the Institute of Medicine, and the National Research Council, all operating under the charter granted to the NAS by Congress.

Benefit Information

The following guide to benefits was prepared for the "Agent Orange Review" by officials in the Compensation and Pension Service, Veterans Benefits Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Central Office, Washington, DC. The next issue of the "Review" will include information about appealing a VA claim decision.

As a Vietnam Veteran, What Kind of Benefits Can I Get?

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) pays disability compensation to Vietnam veterans with injuries or diseases that began in, or were aggravated by, their military service. These are called "service-connected" disabilities. VA has several pamphlets describing VA benefits. They are available on the Internet at: www.va.gov/publ/direc/eds/edspamph.htm. If you do not have Internet access at home, you can get free access at

most public libraries. Publications are also available at your VA Regional Office or by calling these offices at **1-800-827-1000**.

The monthly payment rates shown in the table below (for the year 2000) are based on the veteran's combined rating for his or her service-connected disabilities. Additional amounts are paid to certain veterans with severe disabilities ("special monthly compensation") and certain veterans with dependents. A veteran with a 10% rating receives \$98 monthly; a veteran with a 50% rating gets \$589; and a veteran with a 90% rating is paid \$1224 each month.

How Much Compensation Will I Get?

10%	20%	30%	40%	50%
\$ 98	\$188	\$288	\$413	\$589

60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
\$743	\$937	\$1087	\$1224	\$2036

What Evidence Do I Need to Support a Claim?

In an Agent Orange-based claim by a Vietnam veteran for service-connected benefits, VA requires:

- (1) a medical diagnosis of a disease which VA recognizes as being associated with Agent Orange (listed below),
- (2) competent evidence of service in Vietnam or offshore in the adjacent waters, and
- (3) competent medical evidence that the disease began within the deadline (if any).

Who Can Get Benefits?

Under the law, veterans who served in Vietnam between 1962 and 1975 (including those who visited Vietnam even briefly or served in the waters just offshore), and who have a disease that VA recognizes as being associated with Agent Orange, are presumed to have been exposed to Agent Orange.

These veterans are eligible for service-connected compensation based on their service, if they have one of the diseases on VA's list of "Diseases associated with exposure to certain herbicide agents." This list is found in VA's regulation, Section 3.309(e), in title 38 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

VA updates this list regularly based to a large extent on reports from the National Academy of Sciences, an independent research and education institution.

Many Vietnam veterans with illnesses not associated with Agent Orange also qualify and receive disability compensation from VA.

Diseases Associated With Exposure to Agent Orange

These are the diseases that VA currently presumes resulted from exposure to herbicides like Agent Orange. The law requires that some of these diseases be at least 10% disabling under VA's rating regulations within a deadline that began to run the day you left Vietnam. If there is a deadline, it is listed in parentheses after the name of the disease.

- Chloracne or other acneform disease consistent with chloracne. (Must occur within one year of exposure to Agent Orange).
- Hodgkin's disease.
- Multiple myeloma.
- Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.
- Acute and subacute peripheral neuropathy. (For purposes of this section, the term acute and subacute peripheral neuropathy means temporary peripheral neuropathy that appears within one year of exposure to an herbicide agent and resolves within two years of the date of onset.)
- Porphyria cutanea tarda. (Must occur within one year of exposure to Agent Orange).
- Prostate cancer.
- Respiratory cancers (cancer of the lung, bronchus, larynx, or trachea). (Must occur within 30 years of exposure to Agent Orange).
- Soft-tissue sarcoma (other than osteosarcoma, chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's sarcoma, or mesothelioma).

What Benefits Can My Family Get?

Spina Bifida Birth Defect

In 1996, President Clinton and VA Secretary Jesse Brown asked Congress to pass legislation providing health care, monthly disability compensation, and vocational rehabilitation to the children of Vietnam veterans suffering from the serious birth defect spina bifida, which has been linked to the veterans' exposure to Agent Orange. Congress passed the legislation, marking the first time our nation had ever compensated the children of veterans for a birth defect associated with their parent's exposure to toxic chemicals during their military service. VA is now providing benefits to about 850 children, including minors and adults.

Survivor Benefits

Survivors of veterans (including spouses, children and dependent parents) who died as the result of a service-connected disease may be eligible for monthly Dependency and Indemnity Compensation benefits. These survivors may also be eligible for education, home loan and medical care benefits.

How Can I Apply for VA Benefits?

To apply for benefits, send the VA Regional Office a letter stating that you have a specific health problem and that you claim it is due to your exposure to Agent Orange while serving in Vietnam. This is called an informal claim and will set the effective date for your benefits payments, if your claim is granted. The VA Regional Office will then send you an application form, which you must fill out and return. To get the address of your VA Regional Office, call **1-800-827-1000**.

Can I Get a Representative to Be My Advocate?

You may get a representative to help you present your claim to VA. Most veterans service organizations and state and county veterans service agencies offer free representation.

A listing of veterans service organizations is available on the Internet at: www.va.gov/vso/index.htm. A listing of state veterans agencies is available on the Internet at: www.va.gov/partners/stateoffice/index.htm.

Spina Bifida Program Seeks More Beneficiaries

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is currently providing benefits for about 850 Vietnam veterans' children with the birth defect spina bifida. When the VA spina bifida program was established in 1997, VA officials estimated that there would be about 2000 beneficiaries.

VA officials are trying to identify additional individuals who may be eligible for benefits provided in this program. Veterans service organizations, individual veterans, and others are encouraged to assist VA in locating these children (and young adults) so that they can get the appropriate assistance. Additional information about the program is provided below.

Spina bifida is a neural tube birth defect in which the bones of the spine fail to close over the spinal cord, often causing neurological impairment in their children.

Background

On September 26, 1996, President Clinton signed Public Law 104-204, the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Act, 1997, which among other things, established within VA the legal authority to provide for the special needs of certain children of Vietnam veterans who were born with spina bifida, possibly as the result of exposure of one or both parents to herbicides during active service in the Republic of Vietnam during the Vietnam era.

Enactment of the spina bifida benefits was in response to a VA-funded report, released March 14, 1996, by the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine (IOM) which concluded that there is "limited/suggestive" evidence of an association between Vietnam veterans' exposure to herbicides and spina bifida.

On July 25, 1996, then Veterans Affairs Secretary Jesse Brown sent a letter to Congress transmitting a draft bill to provide for associated medical care, vocational training, and a monthly monetary allowance for Vietnam veterans' children with spina bifida. The transmittal letter declared that Secretary Brown had determined that an association exists between exposure of a parent to herbicides during Vietnam service and spina bifida.

That determination was made based on a recommendation of a special task force established by Secretary Brown to review the IOM report. The task force noted that several studies of Vietnam veterans suggested an apparent increase in the risk for spina bifida in their offspring. Observing that VA lacks the authority to establish presumptions of service connection for diseases in the offspring of veterans, the task force

recommended enactment of legislation to provide for benefits for these children.

Congress took prompt action on the VA proposal, incorporating it, with modification, into the 1997 appropriations bill. The legislation provided for an effective date of the October 1, 1997, for the spina bifida provisions. Under the law, the monthly monetary allowance ranges from \$200 to \$1,200, based on the degree of disability suffered by the child. This allowance is subject to annual cost-of-living increases and will not be counted as income in any federal means-tested programs.

Monetary Allowance

Public Law 104-204 provides that the monthly monetary allowance for any Vietnam veteran's child with spina bifida be based on the degree of disability suffered by the child. The law required VA to establish three levels of disability for this allowance, with payments of \$213 monthly for the lowest level, \$743 for the intermediate level, and \$1,272 for the highest level.

Disability Levels Defined

For Level I, the least severe level of disability, the child is able to walk without braces or other external support, has no sensory or motor impairment of arms, has an intelligence quotient (I.Q.) of 90 or higher, and is continent of urine and feces.

For Level II, the intermediate level, none of the child's disabilities are severe enough to be evaluated at Level III, and the child can walk, but only with braces or other external support, or has sensory or motor impairment of arms, but is able to grasp pen, feed self, and perform self care, or has an I.Q. of at least 70 but less than 90, or requires drugs or intermittent catheterization or other mechanical means to maintain proper bowel function.

For Level III, the most severe level, the child is unable to walk or has sensory or motor impairment severe enough to prevent grasping a pen, feeding self, and performing self care, or has an I.Q. of 69 or less, or has complete urinary or fecal incontinence

The payment level is based on a combination of specified functional impairments. A change in the severity of one type of impairment would not necessarily affect the payment level. A reduction from Level II to Level I for one problem would occur only if all other specified impairments were also at Level I. VA will reevaluate the disability whenever there is an indication of material change in an individual's condition.

Because all children less than one year of age, whether or not they are suffering spina bifida, are essentially helpless, incontinent, unable to walk, and too young for I.Q. measurement, VA pays children (with spina bifida) who are under the age of one at Level I, unless a pediatric neurologist or pediatric neurosurgeon certifies that there is a disability which warrants a higher rating.

VA plans to reevaluate individuals with spina bifida at the age of one year and then at intervals of no more than five

years until the individual reaches the age of twenty-one years. The purpose of the reevaluations is to ensure that the beneficiary is being paid at the level commensurate with the severity of the disability.

Although reevaluation will generally be based on private medical evidence, it is the VA adjudicator, not the caregiver, who is responsible for determining how the medical evidence compares to the requirements set forth in VA regulations.

VA may revise its spina bifida rating regulations later this year, in response to input from the Spina Bifida Association of America and veterans service organizations. Any changes will be described in future issues of this newsletter.

Health Care

Under the final rule, published in the *Federal Register* on September 30, 1997, or regulation for health care, VA provides Vietnam veterans' children who are suffering from spina bifida with health care services VA determines are needed for the spina bifida or any disability that is associated with spina bifida. This is not intended to be a comprehensive insurance plan and does not cover health care unrelated to spina bifida.

Under this rule, health care may be provided directly by VA, by contract with an approved health care provider, or by other arrangements with an approved health care provider. VA may inform spina bifida patients, parents, or guardians that health care may be available at not-for-profit charitable corporations (such as Shriners hospitals for children under age 18).

In March 1997, VA and Shriners Hospitals for Children (SHC) reached an agreement for SHC to care for Vietnam veterans' children with spina bifida at no charge for outpatient or inpatient care for children up to the age of 18 with this condition. VA reimburses non-SHC facilities providing care to children older than 18 and those whose parents or guardians chose not to receive their care at SHC. VA also reimburses non-SHC facilities for necessary medical services not offered by SHC and covers transportation costs for patients and their parent or legal guardian to an SHC unit or any outside facility required for treatment of the patient. SHC treats about 5,000 children with spina bifida, the largest number of such patients treated by any hospital system in the world.

Vocational Training and Rehabilitation

Public Law 104-204 provides for the establishment of a program of vocational training for the Vietnam veterans' children who have spina bifida. Under this law, VA provides an evaluation to a Vietnam veteran's children who has determined suffers from spina bifida. If this evaluation establishes that it is feasible for the child to achieve a vocational goal, VA will provide the child with the vocational training, employment assistance, and other related rehabilitation services that VA finds the child needs to enable the child to achieve a vocational goal, including employment.

Vocational training program for a child with spina bifida must consist of such vocationally oriented services and

assistance, including such placement and post-placement services and personal and work adjustment training, as VA determines are necessary to enable the child to prepare for and participate in vocational training and employment.

The law also provides that the training may include a program of education at an institution of higher education if VA determines that the program of education is predominately vocational in content.

Where, How To Get Benefits

Approval of monetary support, health care, and vocational training is based on eligibility determinations made at VA regional benefit offices. Prospective beneficiaries must first complete an application for benefits. They can contact the nearest VA regional office by calling toll-free: **1-800-827-1000**. Information on VA benefits is also available on our website at www.va.gov.

Additional information on spina bifida is available from the Spina Bifida Association of America at 4590 MacArthur Blvd., Suite 250, Washington, DC 20007-4226; toll free telephone: 800-621-3141; e-mail address: spinabifda@aol.com; and web site: www.sbaa.org.

Veterans service organizations may provide some information as well.

VA Releases Agent Orange General Information Brochure and New Posters

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently released a 6-page brochure, entitled *Agent Orange: Information for Veterans Who Served in Vietnam – General Information*.

The 8 1/2 by 11-inch publication, prepared by the Environmental Agents Service in VA Central Office, provides information about what Agent Orange is; why, where, when, and how it was used in Vietnam; and why Vietnam veterans are concerned and what they should do. It also describes the VA Registry health examination program, and the availability of medical care and disability compensation.

The brochure explains the role of the Institute of Medicine and describes what various government departments and agencies are doing on behalf of Vietnam veterans. It also includes information about where additional information can be obtained.

VA also recently released two new posters with the heading: **VA CARES ABOUT VIETNAM VETERANS EXPOSED TO AGENT ORANGE**. The posters highlight the key elements of the VA Agent Orange programs: Registry Health Examinations, Special Eligibility Medical Care, Disability Compensation, Outreach and Education, and Research. Both posters, printed in two sizes (11" x 17" and 18" x 24"), encourage Vietnam veterans to contact the nearest VA medical center or regional office for information and assistance.

The brochures and posters are currently being distributed to all VA medical centers to assist in local outreach and education initiatives.

Q's and A's

The Q's and A's (Questions and Answers) feature of the "Review" responds to questions and concerns that have been received from various sources. Questions for future issues should be sent to Mr. Donald J. Rosenblum, Deputy Director, Environmental Agent Service (131), VA Central Office, 810 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20420. We cannot guarantee that all questions will be used in this column, but they will be considered.

Were U.S. troops exposed to Agent Orange in Korea? (This question has been raised by a number of individuals).

We understand that herbicides were used in Korea in the latter part of the 1960's, specifically during the period 1967-69. Apparently, the spraying occurred on a strip of land just south of the demilitarized zone and north of the Civilian Control Line. The strip, approximately four kilometers wide, extends along the line for many kilometers. However, we have been advised by Department of Defense officials that the herbicide spraying activities were conducted by Republic of Korea troops and **not** American troops. United States military personnel acted as advisors and supervisors only. For additional information on this subject, readers may wish to contact the Department of Defense.

Who were the producers of Agent Orange and similar herbicides used in Vietnam and how were these chemicals shipped to the battle front and by what routes? (This question came from JDP, Jr. of Marrero, LA).

Donald C. Hakenson, Director, Center for Unit Records Research, U.S. Army, provided the following list of contractors that manufactured Agent Orange and other herbicides: The Dow Chemical Company, Diamond Shamrock Corporation, Hercules Incorporated, Monsanto Company, Thompson-Hayward Chemical Company, Hooker Chemical Company, Uniroyal, Incorporated, Thompson Chemicals Corporation, and Hoffman-Taff, Incorporated.

Mr. Hakenson added that herbicides were transported to South Vietnam from Gulfport, MS, aboard merchant ships. He indicated that herbicides were moved by various means once they arrived in country.

The final item is not a question but a request (from DWF of Erie, PA) that we clearly state that the benefits for Vietnam veterans' children who are born with spina bifida apply to all forms and manifestations of spina bifida except *spina bifida occulta*. This exception is specified in Section 1802, Chapter 18, Title 38 United States Code, with was codified by Section 421, Public Law 104-204, enacted September 26, 1996.

Admiral Zumwalt Dies

On January 2, 2000, Elmo R. "Bud" Zumwalt, Jr., former Chief of Naval Operations and Agent Orange activist, died of cancer at the age of 79. A graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy,

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If you are receiving more than one copy of the newsletter, please let us know. Write to the Agent Orange Review, Agent Orange Review, Austin Automation Center (200/397A), 1615 Woodward Street, Austin, TX 78772-0001. Thank you.

Zumwalt was commander of in-country naval forces in Vietnam in the late 1960's when Agent Orange was sprayed in the Mekong Delta. In 1970, he was appointed Chief of Naval Operations, the youngest person to serve in that position.

In October 1989, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Edward J. Derwinski announced Zumwalt's appointment as senior advisor to provide counsel on a variety of issues affecting veterans. Zumwalt, who retired from the Navy in 1974, indicated that the Agent Orange issue would be the first on his agenda.

In announcing the appointment Derwinski praised Zumwalt for his distinguished military career. Derwinski said, "Admiral Zumwalt's experience as a seasoned and respected military leader and his well-known empathy for those who, like him, saw service in Vietnam, will add immeasurably to the advice and counsel I will rely on in this most sensitive area."

On May 5, 1990, Zumwalt filed a report with Derwinski regarding the available medical/scientific materials on human exposures to dioxin contaminants found in Agent Orange. Zumwalt concluded in the report that the body of literature indicates that a significant number of adverse health effects suffered by Vietnam veterans are more likely than not service-connected. He reported that 27 health problems are sufficiently associated with the contaminant found in Agent Orange to justify service-connected compensation. Several of these conditions have been presumptively recognized for service-connection in Vietnam veterans, but most have not been.

Admiral Zumwalt's son, Elmo R. Zumwalt, III, served in Vietnam and later developed cancers that subsequently were associated with Agent Orange exposure. Together they authored a best-selling account of their experiences.

Admiral Zumwalt testified before Congress regarding Agent Orange, he served on the VA's Veterans' Advisory Committee on Environmental Hazards, and provided information to the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine Committee to Review the Health Effects in Vietnam Veterans of Exposure to Herbicides, that prepared all three reports on Agent Orange, in accordance with Public Law 102-4. He also chaired the Agent Orange Coordinating Council, which has, as its members, a wide range of veterans organizations.

Admiral Zumwalt was also concerned about the possible long-term health consequences of military service in the Gulf War.

He served on the Presidential Special Oversight Board for Department of Defense Investigations of Gulf War Chemical and Biological Incidents. The Board held its initial meeting in November 1998.

In January 1998, in presenting the Medal of Freedom to Zumwalt, President Clinton called the retired Admiral "one of the greatest models of integrity and leadership and genuine humanity our Nation has ever produced."

August 1999 VA Agent Orange Fact Sheet Series Still Available

In August 1999, the Environmental Agents Service (EAS) in VA headquarters in Washington, DC, released its updated Agent Orange fact sheet series, known as "Agent Orange Briefs." The updated fact sheets were recently sent to all VA medical centers and to many other interested parties.

The revised "Briefs," describe a wide range of Agent Orange-related matters. The following twenty-one "Briefs" are currently available:

- A1. Agent Orange - General Information**
- A2. Agent Orange Class Action Lawsuit**
- B1. Agent Orange Registry**
- B2. Agent Orange - Health Care Eligibility**
- B3. Agent Orange and VA Disability Compensation**
- B4. VA Information Resources on Agent Orange and Related Matters**
- B4. VA Information Resources on Agent Orange and Related Matters**
- C1. Agent Orange - The Problem Encountered in Research**
- C2. Agent Orange and Vietnam Related Research - VA Efforts**
- C3. Agent Orange and Vietnam Related Research - Non-VA Efforts**

- D1. Agent Orange and Birth Defects**
- D2. Agent Orange and Chloracne**
- D3. Agent Orange and Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma**
- D4. Agent Orange and Soft Tissue Sarcoma**
- D5. Agent Orange and Peripheral Neuropathy**
- D6. Agent Orange and Hodgkin's Disease**
- D7. Agent Orange and Porphyria Cutanea Tarda**
- D8. Agent Orange and Multiple Myeloma**
- D9. Agent Orange and Respiratory Cancers**
- D10. Agent Orange and Prostate Cancer**
- D11. Agent Orange and Spina Bifida**
- D12. Agent Orange and Diabetes**

For additional information or a copy of some or all of the fact sheets, contact the Agent Orange Registry Coordinator at the nearest VA medical center or write to Agent Orange Briefs, Environmental Agents Service (131), VA Central Office, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20420.

Women Veteran Coordinators Assist Women Veterans

There are Women Veterans Coordinators (WVC) at every Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care facility to help women veterans to get needed services and answers to questions or concerns they may have. The position of WVC, established by law in 1982, includes the following:

- Identifying services available to women veterans and ensuring equal access to care;
- Addressing privacy and safety issues;
- Assisting women veterans with eligibility issues;
- Providing education and sensitivity training to VA staff regarding the unique needs of women;
- Working with administration to identify areas for improvement;
- Publicizing the Women Veteran Health Programs and benefits through speaking engagements, written publications and interviews;
- Providing clinical services to women veterans in women's health clinics/gynecology clinics.

Women Veterans Coordinators are advocates for women veterans and can assist with a variety of issues and concerns, including those that relate to health problems experienced by women who may have been exposed to Agent Orange during their military service in Vietnam. Any woman veteran wanting information about VA services or programs, or who has concerns about care received at a VA facility, should contact the nearest VA facility and ask to speak to the Women Veterans Coordinator.

Where To Get Help

Vietnam veterans who are concerned about possible long-term health effects of Agent Orange exposure – contact the nearest VA medical center and request an Agent Orange Registry health examination. Nearly 300,000 Vietnam veterans have already participated in this program.

Vietnam veterans who need medical treatment for conditions that may be related to their exposure to Agent Orange or other herbicides used in Vietnam – contact the nearest VA medical center for eligibility information and possible medical treatment.

Vietnam veterans with illnesses that were incurred in or aggravated by exposure to Agent Orange or other aspects of military service – contact a VA veterans benefits counselor at the nearest VA regional office or health care facility and apply for disability compensation. The counselors have information about the wide range of benefit programs administered by VA. The national toll-free number is **1-800-827-1000**.


Vietnam veterans who encounter difficulties at a VA medical center – contact the “patient advocate” at that facility for assistance in resolving the problem.

Vietnam veterans with children who have spina bifida – contact the nearest VA regional office by calling toll-free: 1-800-827-1000. Additional information on spina bifida is available from the Spina Bifida Association of America at 4590 MacArthur Blvd., Suite 250, Washington, DC 20007-4226; toll free telephone: 800-621-3141; e-mail address: spinabifida@aol.com; and web site: www.sbaa.org

Representatives of veterans service organizations, including The American Legion (1-800-433-3318), Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (1-800-VFW-1899), Disabled American Veterans (1-877-426-2838), Vietnam Veterans of America (1-800-882-1316, ext. 149), etc., have also been very helpful to Vietnam veterans seeking disability compensation.

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Served in Vietnam
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