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Agent Orange Review

Information for Veterans Who Served in Vietnam

Vol. 21, No. 1

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Institute of Medicine: No Limit on Length of Presumptive Period for Respiratory Cancer

The Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Science (NAS) newest report called *Veterans and Agent Orange: Length of Presumptive Period for Association Between Exposure and Respiratory Cancer* (available online at www.nap.edu) analyzes the relationship between exposure to herbicide agents, such as Agent Orange, and respiratory cancers, which includes cancers of the lungs, larynx, trachea, and bronchus.

NAS concluded that it is not possible to scientifically identify any maximum time limit after herbicide exposure for developing respiratory cancers. That is, there is no scientific basis for a time limit on service connection.

In accordance with Public Law 102-4, the Agent Orange Act of 1991, NAS conducted an extensive review regarding the health effects of exposure to Agent Orange and other herbicides used in Vietnam for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Since the initial report, released in 1993, the NAS has issued updates every two years.

In the 1993 report, NAS concluded that there was “limited/suggestive” evidence of an association between exposure to an herbicide agent and the subsequent development of respiratory cancers. In June 1994, in response to that finding, VA issued regulations establishing a presumption of service connection for respiratory cancers. The regulations specified that the respiratory cancer must show up and cause a degree of disability of 10 percent or more within 30 years after the last date of service in Vietnam.

The 30-year presumption period was based on VA’s analysis of scientific studies, which suggested a time limit for the increased risk of respiratory cancers due to certain other chemical exposures. In 1994, Congress codified (enacted into law) the presumption of service connection for respiratory cancers, including the 30-year presumption period. This action was taken in Public Law 103-446, the Veterans’ Benefits Improvement Act of 1994.

In 2001, Public Law 107-103, the Veterans Education and Benefits Expansion Act of 2001, removed the requirement that respiratory cancers become manifest within 30

years after herbicide exposure to qualify for the presumption of service-connection. In the same legislation, VA was directed to enter into a contract with the NAS to determine whether there is scientific evidence to support establishment of a presumption period within which respiratory cancer must be presumed to have been caused by herbicide exposure.

The recently released 61-page NAS publication concludes that it is not possible, based on current scientific evidence, to identify any maximum time limit for the increased risk of respiratory cancer associated with herbicide exposure. The report concludes that the risk of exposure “could last for many decades.”

Irva Hertz-Picciotto chaired the 10-member NAS committee. Dr. Hertz-Picciotto is a Professor, Department of

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Institute of Medicine: No Limit on Length of Presumptive Period for Respiratory Cancer

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Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine, University of California, Davis, CA.

Copies of this 2004 report are available from the National Academies Press, 500 Fifth Street, N.W. Lockbox 285, Washington, DC 20055; **800-624-6242** or **202-334-3313** (in the Washington metropolitan area); Internet, <http://www.nap.edu>

The above article was drafted by Connie Torres who spent 10 weeks in the Environmental Agent Service as a Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) summer intern.

VA Facilities Recognized for Outstanding Service to Veterans

In March 2004, the Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards in VA Central Office sent the first Environmental Hazard Center of Excellence Awards to 13 field facilities. The award, based on a non-scientific survey mailed in August 2003, gave selected veterans the opportunity to evaluate the Environmental Health Registry staff at VA medical centers and Outpatient Clinics. The veterans receiving the survey were those who had been involved in the Agent Orange, Gulf War, and Ionizing Radiation Registry programs.

According to Environmental Agents Service (EAS) Director, Dr. Mark Brown, the award was intended to “recognize outstanding service to veterans.” He also emphasized that the facilities that did not receive an award were not criticized. In fact, overall the responses were positive and those not chosen in this round of awards received many excellent reports from the veterans they serve.

The survey asked veterans to name a VA Registry clinician or coordinator that has provided them with “outstanding customer service.” However, respondents generally choose to acknowledge the facility rather than a particular individual.

The facilities received the new award certificate, entitled “Environmental Health Center of Excellence Award,” in recognition of the expertise, patience and dedication displayed by the VA staff. The exceptional centers were: VAMC, Boise, ID; VAMC Cheyenne, WY; VAMC, Durham, NC; VAMC Fargo, ND; VAMC, Fresno, CA; VAMC, Grand Junction, CO; VAMC Manchester, NH; VAOPC, Oakland Park, FL; W.G. (Bill) Hefner VAMC, Salisbury, NC; VAMC, San Francisco, CA; VAMC White River Junction, VT; VA Community Based OPC, Williamsport, PA; and VAOPC, Winston-Salem, NC.

The significance of the award and the uniqueness in which the recipients were chosen makes the award much more valuable. This was the first time veterans were given a survey that allowed them to evaluate the Registry services and staff of their medical center. Honorees were unaware of the survey and were overwhelmed to know that the award was based on the evaluation by veterans. “It makes the award much more meaningful,” said Daniel Duffy, VAMC’s clinical coordinator for Special Programs, in White River Junction, VT. For Cindy Force, Network Program Support Unit Manager/Environmental Health Coordinator of the VAMC in Durham, NC, the veteran’s input was a positive boost. “It makes you feel as though you’ve done your job well,” said Force.

Despite the surprise of the award, facilities are aware of their capabilities, which they attribute to the staff’s friendliness and knowledge. Jim Nelson, administrative officer of the VAOPC in Winston-Salem, NC, described the staff as “very personal and friendly with patients,” two essential qualities other facilities also associated with their success. The VAMC in Manchester, NH, takes great pride in positive feedback it has received. “We seldom have complaints,” said Timothy Dorgan, Eligibility Coordinator.

Recipients of the award also mentioned that because of their great staff, they feel confident that they will receive the award again. Program Assistant Marj Doescher, of the VAMC in Boise, ID, acknowledged the employees’ impressive work, and offered advice for other facilities. Doescher stressed the importance of being aware of programs; “knowing the program and being able to clarify is vital,” said Doescher.



Dr. Kurt Schlegemilch, Director, VA Medical Center, Grand Junction, CO, poses with award-winning registry team at Grand Junction. The individuals from left to right are Dr. Schlegemilch, Pat Crooks, Dennis McMahonill, Raedelle Mundy, and Matt Dillon. Missing from the photo is Dr. Josh Holmes.

A framed certificate marked with a gold seal was given to recognized facilities. The award was mailed to the director of each station with the request that it be displayed in an area where it could be easily recognized, preferably with the

Agent Orange, Gulf War, and Ionizing Radiation posters and newsletters.

Due to the positive responses, the Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards looks forward to conducting this survey and offering this special recognition again in the near future. "I felt it was a success, it was well received by coordinators," said EAS Program Analyst Michelle Foster.

Foster was responsible for arranging the survey and for announcing the results at the national EAS quarterly conference call. A survey is planned for next year and should continue in the upcoming years.

The above article was drafted by Connie Torres, Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities national summer intern in EAS.

How to Get Disability Compensation

Like all veterans, Vietnam veterans are eligible for monthly payments, called disability compensation, from VA if they are suffering with any service-connected illnesses or injuries. The disability must have been incurred or aggravated during active military service. Vietnam veterans also have special access to disability compensation for illnesses or injuries related to exposure to Agent Orange and other herbicides used in Vietnam. Furthermore, the service of the veteran must have been terminated from military service through separation or discharge under conditions that were other than dishonorable.

Disability compensation varies according to the degree of disability and the number of dependents. Benefits are not subject to Federal or state income tax. The receipt of military retirement pay, disability severance pay, and separation incentive payments known as SSB and VSI (Special Separation Benefits and Voluntary Separation Incentives) also affects the amount of VA compensation paid.

The disability ratings range from 0 to 100 percent (in increments of 10 percent). For example, in 2004, a veteran with a disability rating of 10 percent receives \$106; a veteran with disability rating of 50 percent gets \$646; and a veteran who is totally disabled and evaluated at 100 percent receives \$2,239 monthly.

Veterans with disability ratings between 30 and 100 percent are also eligible for monthly allowances for a spouse ranging from \$38 to \$127, and for each child, \$19 to \$65. (The amount depends on the disability rating.)

A veteran who is in need of regular aid and attendance of another person, or who is permanently housebound may be entitled to additional benefits. VA must make the deter-

mination before the veteran can get these benefits.

Presumptive Service-Connection

Unlike most veterans, any veteran who served in Vietnam between January 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975, and has one or more of the diseases on the list of presumptive conditions that VA maintains must be presumed by VA to have been exposed to herbicides, and therefore that his or her disease is service-connected. The current list is printed and described in the next article. This list and information about the diseases associated with Agent Orange are available online at www.va.gov/AgentOrange.

Must Apply to Be Considered

Compensation is not automatically given to any veteran. VA veterans service representatives (VSR) can provide the necessary application and assist veterans who need help in completing it. VSR's are located at all VA Regional Offices, in VA medical centers, and at most VA clinics. For help in locating a VSR near you, call the following toll-free telephone number: **1-800-827-1000**.

Other Benefits

In addition to the compensation program described above, individual veterans may be eligible for the full range of other benefits offered by VA, including education and training, vocational rehabilitation, home loan guarantees, life insurance, pension, burial benefits, and more.

To learn more about VA's programs, Gulf War veterans and other interested parties can visit the VA home page <http://www.va.gov>, or call **1-800-827-1000**.

Illnesses Presumptively Service Connected to Date

The following health conditions are presumptively recognized for service connection. Vietnam veterans with one or more of these conditions do not have to show that their illness(es) is (are) related to their military service to get disability compensation. VA presumes that their condition is service-connected.

Conditions Recognized in Veterans

1. Chloracne (must occur within 1 year of exposure to Agent Orange)
2. Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma
3. Soft tissue sarcoma (other than osteosarcoma, chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's sarcoma, or mesothelioma)
5. Hodgkin's disease
6. Multiple myeloma
7. Respiratory cancers, including cancers of the lung, larynx, trachea, and bronchus (no time limitation)

8. Prostate cancer
9. Acute and subacute transient peripheral neuropathy (must appear within 1 year of exposure and resolve within 2 years of date of onset)
10. Type 2 diabetes
11. Chronic lymphocytic leukemia

Conditions Recognized in Children of Vietnam Veterans

1. Spina bifida (except spina bifida occulta)
2. Certain other birth defects in the children of women Vietnam veterans

Conditions Briefly Described

In Vietnam Veterans

Chloracne: A skin condition that looks like common forms of acne seen in teenagers. The first sign of chloracne may be excessive oiliness of the skin. This is accompanied or followed by numerous blackheads. In mild cases, the blackheads may be limited to the areas around the eyes extending to the temples. In more severe cases, blackheads may appear in many places, especially over the cheek bone and other facial areas, behind the ears, and along the arms.

Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma: A group of malignant tumors (cancers) that affect the lymph glands and other lymphatic tissue. These tumors are relatively rare compared to other types of cancer, and although survival rates have improved during the past 2 decades, these diseases tend to be fatal. The common factor is the absence of the certain cells (known as giant Reed-Sternberg cells) that distinguish this cancer from Hodgkin's disease.

Soft tissue sarcoma: A group of different types of malignant tumors (cancers) that arise from body tissues such as muscle, fat, blood and lymph vessels, and connective tissues (not in hard tissue such as bone or cartilage). These cancers are in the soft tissue that occurs within and between organs.

Hodgkin's disease: A malignant lymphoma (cancer) characterized by progressive enlargement of the lymph nodes, liver, and spleen, and by progressive anemia.

Porphyria cutanea tarda: A disorder characterized by liver dysfunction and by thinning and blistering of the skin in sun-exposed areas.

Multiple myeloma: A cancer of specific bone marrow cells that is characterized by bone marrow tumors in various bones of the body.

Respiratory cancers: Cancers of the lung, larynx, trachea, and bronchus.

Prostate cancer: Cancer of the prostate; one of the most common cancers among men.

Peripheral neuropathy (transient acute or subacute): A nervous system condition that causes numbness, tingling, and muscle weakness. This condition affects only the peripheral nervous system, that is, only the nervous system outside the brain and spinal cord. Only the transient (short-term) acute and subacute forms of this condition, not the chronic persistent forms, have been associated with herbicide exposure.

Diabetes mellitus: Often referred to as Type 2 diabetes; it is characterized by high blood sugar levels resulting from the body's inability to respond properly to the hormone insulin.

Chronic lymphocytic leukemia: A disease that progresses slowly with increasing production of excessive numbers of white blood cells.

In Children of Vietnam Veterans

Spina bifida: A neural tube birth defect that results from the failure of the bony portion of the spine to close properly in the developing fetus during early pregnancy.

Disabilities other than spinal bifida in the children of women Vietnam veterans: Covered birth defects include a wide range of conditions. Eighteen defects are specifically included and others not specifically excluded are covered. For more information, contact a veteran services representative at **1-800-827-1000**, or see page 10, "Agent Orange Review," July 2003. These diseases are not tied to herbicides, including Agent Orange, or dioxin exposure, but rather to service in Vietnam itself.

Q's & A's

The "Review" occasionally includes a questions-and-answers feature in response to questions sent by readers. Vietnam veterans and their families and friends often have questions and concerns regarding the possible long-term health consequences of exposure to Agent Orange and other herbicides used in Vietnam. They want answers and knowledge about what VA and other Federal departments and agencies are doing to help these veterans.

Q. Mr. E.B. wrote: I had fairly heavy exposure to Agent Orange while serving with the 3rd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division stationed at Phu Loi, RVN. I have three children: one boy and two girls. Each of my children and I have "knots" growing under our skin in many places. In the 1990's two of these growths became sensitive to the touch and were removed from under my right arm at the Houston, TX. Also the girls have had, and presently have a mountain of female problems. What's the possibility these problems are caused by my exposure to Agent Orange?

A. We are very sorry that you and your children are experiencing health problems that you wrote about. To date, such problems were not mentioned or described in the extensive reports of the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine (IOM) reports on Agent Orange and other herbicides used in Vietnam. Also, IOM researchers have only found one health problem (spina bifida) in the children of Vietnam veterans. Additional reports will be published by the IOM every two years. (The reports are available online at www.nap.edu.) It is quite possible that the IOM reviewers may find scientific evidence that these problems may be associated with such exposure. However, if you believe that these problems were caused by Agent Orange, you may wish to file a claim for disability compensation.

Q. Mr. V.C., a Veterans Service Officer, wrote: I have a few Navy veterans ask if there is a chance that they were exposed to Agent Orange while serving in the waters off the coast of Vietnam. They say that they were close enough for 8-inch shell to strike the ship they were on. They wonder if that was close enough that the winds could have caused the exposure.

A. We still lack good data regarding exact troop locations in Vietnam. Consequently, we have presumed exposure of anyone who set foot in Vietnam. However, if a veteran served on a ship that never docked in Vietnam, then by law we cannot presumptively service connect the veteran -- even if he or she develops one or more of the presumptively service connected conditions. Nevertheless, a navy veteran in this situation may wish to apply for disability compensation.

Agent Orange Brief Fact Sheets Answer Questions, Are Available Free

Many questions that veterans have regarding the use of Agent Orange in Vietnam and its possible long-term health consequences can be quickly and easily answered by carefully reviewing one or more of the 22 Agent Orange Briefs.

These fact sheets are available on the Internet at www.va.gov/AgentOrange and from the Environmental Agents Service (131), VA Central Office, 810 Vermont Avenue, Washington, DC 20420. Many VA medical centers, Vet Centers, and VA regional office also have these fact sheets. The "Briefs" are divided into four categories: general information (including information about the class action lawsuit that doesn't involve VA), VA programs (except research), research (including non-VA research initiatives), and various medical conditions (including all those that have been presumptively recognized for service-connection).

Environmental Agents Service has prepared (and periodically updates, revises, and expands) the "Briefs" to inform Vietnam veterans and others about what is known about Agent Orange, explain what VA and other Federal departments and agencies have done or are doing on behalf of Vietnam veterans exposed to Agent Orange, report on relevant legal and legislative developments, and advise concerned veterans about what actions they can take.

The individual "Briefs" can be used together as a comprehensive packet of information about Agent Orange or as stand-alone documents to respond to various aspects of the Agent Orange issue.

The following "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**
- 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 Sarcomas**
- 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**
- D13. Agent Orange and Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia**

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. It is also available on-line at www.va.gov/AgentOrange. Back issues are also available at that site. The first issue was released in November 1982. The most recent issues are dated July 2003 and February 2004. This issue is the 42nd. It was written in mid-October 2004 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), AO Review, VA Central Office, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20420. Please do **not** send comments and questions to the Austin Automation Center. Officials there routinely send the comments and questions they receive to the Environmental Agents Service in Washington, DC. Writing to Austin will unnecessarily delay a response.

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 some issues is available.

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 environmental health physician, previously known as the Registry Physician, or environmental health coordinator, formerly called the 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 or information on enrolling for VA health care may be obtained by calling toll-free: **1-877-222-8387**. VA facilities are listed at www.va.gov.

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.

In addition, readers can find answers to many questions by accessing the VA Web site mentioned the first paragraph. A great deal of information is provided there aside from all the Agent Orange Review newsletters.

The national toll-free telephone number for information regarding VA benefits is **1-800-827-1000**. The toll-free helpline for Agent Orange concerns is **1-800-749-8387**.

Two New VA Newsletters: “Operations Iraqi Freedom/Enduring Freedom,” and “Ionizing Radiation Review”

The Environmental Agents Service (EAS), the office that produces this newsletter, has recently initiated the production of two additional newsletters called “Operations Iraqi Freedom/Enduring Freedom Review” and the “Ionizing Radiation Review.” Issues of these newsletters will be released on an irregular basis, as new information of interest to these veterans and families becomes available. The newsletter regarding service in Iraq and Afghanistan focuses on the possible health consequences of veterans who served in either Operation Iraqi Freedom, that began in 2003, or Operation Enduring Freedom that started in late 2001. The editor anticipates publication of each approximately twice annually.

The ionizing radiation newsletter describes the health problems experienced by veterans who were exposed to radiation during the atmospheric nuclear weapons testing program, during or shortly after the detonation of the atomic bombs in Nagasaki or Hiroshima, Japan, or in a variety of situations over the past few decades.

Internet users may wish to view these newsletters on-line. For the “Operations Iraqi Freedom/Enduring Freedom Review” see www.va.gov/GulfWar, and for the “Ionizing Radiation Review” see www.VA.gov/Irad. Hard copies can also be obtained from the Environmental Agents Service (131), VA Central Office, 810 Vermont Avenue, Washington, DC 20420, and from many field stations.

EAS also produces the “Agent Orange Review” newsletters, which provides information primarily for veterans who served in Vietnam, and numerous other publications.

Women Veterans Are Eligible for the Same Benefits as Men

MYTH: *Women aren't veterans because they didn't serve in combat.*

FACT: Women who served in the military are veterans and are eligible for the same benefits and services as their male counterparts. Unfortunately, many women who served their country in military service do not consider themselves veterans because they did not serve in combat. Consequently, they have not applied for benefits and services to for which they are entitled.

In recent years, VA has established a wide range of special services to provide appropriate, timely, and compassionate health care services to women veterans. These include the full range of services available to men as well as sexual trauma counseling, homeless women veterans programs, victims of domestic violence programs, and reproductive health care, including maternity care, and infertility evaluations.

Each VA medical center has a Women Veterans Program Manager to ensure that women veterans receive the proper attention. For additional information about these and other programs for women veterans, contact the Women Veterans Program Manager at the nearest VA medical center or outpatient clinic or see the VA Web site: www.va.gov/wvhp.

Benefits and Services for U.S. Military Veterans Living Outside the U.S.

VA provides benefits and services to veterans overseas; however, these benefits and services are provided in a different manner than for veterans who live in the United States.

VA will pay for medical services for treatment of service-connected disabilities for veterans who are living or traveling in foreign countries. Authorization and payment for medical treatment of service-connected disabilities for these veterans are completed by VA's Foreign Medical Program (FMP) located in Denver, Colorado. The FMP address is: P.O. Box 65021, Denver, CO 80206-9021.

There are some exceptions. Veterans living in Canada should contact the VA Center in White River Junction, VT 05009-0001, and veterans living in the Philippines should contact the U. S. VA Office, 2201 Roxas Blvd., Pasay City 1300, Philippines. Veterans living in Mexico, South and Central America, and the Caribbean should file a claim with the Houston Regional Office at 6900 Almeda Road, Houston, TX 77030. Veterans living overseas in countries not listed above should contact the Pittsburgh Regional Office, 1000 Liberty Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15222.

Veterans and their dependents living overseas can also

contact the Foreign Benefits Unit (FBU) in the United States Embassy in the country they are living for assistance. FBU staff can assist veterans and their dependents in filing VA benefit claims and in answering VA benefit questions.

VA regional offices are responsible for processing and establishing service-connected conditions, pension ratings and other benefit programs. Veterans and their dependents can also find information about VA benefits and services provided overseas on the World Wide Web at: www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/foreign/index.htm. This Web site provides valuable information about VA's Foreign Service Program, and it also enables the inquirer to ask questions, receive answers, and to apply online for a number of VA benefits.

Revised Posters Highlight Programs and Contact Information

A new poster recently produced by VA Central Office personnel to supplement outreach efforts to acquaint Vietnam veterans and others who may have been exposed to Agent Orange and other herbicides to the various benefits and services offered by VA has recently been distributed throughout the VA system.

The dramatic 18" x 24" orange and brown poster declares: VA Cares About Vietnam Veterans and other veterans exposed to Agent Orange. It then lists the various programs that have been established to help these veterans. It encourages veterans to contact the nearest VA medical center, Vet Center, or regional office for additional information and assistance.

The poster depicts the three original statues from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial with a plane overhead.

The poster includes a box for local contact information, and the VA's national toll-free helpline telephone number on Agent Orange: **1-800-749-8387**, and Web site: www.va.gov/AgentOrange.

Identical 11" x 14" posters were also produced and distributed.

Agent Orange Registry Statistics (Through September 30, 2004)

Examinations (including followups) since the start of the program in 1978 – **406,891**

Total initial examinations (number of registry participants) – **361,991**

Number of examinations in September 2004 – **2,590**

For comparison purposes:

January-September 2004 – Gulf War Registry total exams – **2,665**

January-September 2004 – Ionizing Radiation Registry exams – **415**

Where to Go For Help

Vietnam veterans with questions or concerns about Agent Orange – contact VA’s Gulf War/Agent Orange Helpline. The national toll-free telephone number is **800-749-8387**. A great deal of information is also available on our new Web page. It is located at <http://www.va.gov/agentorange>

Vietnam veterans (plus veterans who served in Korea in 1968 or 1969), and other veterans who may have been exposed while on military service to Agent Orange or other herbicides elsewhere during the testing, transporting or spraying of herbicides for military purposes and 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. More than 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 or call the following toll-free telephone number for information about eligibility and enrollment: **1-877-222-8387**.

Vietnam veterans with illnesses that they believe were incurred or aggravated by exposure to Agent Orange or other aspects of military service – contact a VA veterans services representative 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” or “patient representative” at that facility for assistance in resolving the problem. Ask the medical center telephone operator for the patient advocate or representative.

Vietnam veterans with children who have **spina bifida** – contact the VA national toll-free hotline at **1-888-820-1756**, or 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., N.W., Suite 250, Washington, DC 20007-4226; toll free telephone: **800-621-3141**; e-mail address: sbaa@sbaa.org; and web site: www.sbaa.org/.

Representatives of **veterans service organizations**, including The American Legion (**1-800-433-3318**), Paralyzed Veterans of America (**1-800-424-8200**), Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (**1-800-VFW-1899**), Disabled American Veterans (**1-877-426-2838**), AMVETS (**1-877-726-8387**), Vietnam Veterans of America (**1-800-882-1316**), and others, have also been very helpful to Vietnam veterans seeking disability compensation. (These organizations are cited as examples. There are many other excellent veterans service organizations. VA does not endorse or recommend any specific group over another.)

County Veteran Service Officers also have been of great help to many military veterans, including Vietnam veterans, seeking benefits they earned through their service to the Nation.

