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**Item # Number** 02106

**Author**

**Corporate Author**

**Report/Article Title** Two articles related to testimony by Ranch Hand navigator, Jon Dudenhoeffer

**Journal/Book Title**

**Year** 0000

**Month/Day**

**Color**

**Number of Images** 3

**Description Notes** Articles accompanied by handwritten note signed by Colonel Charles Hubbs, Ranch Hand pilot, whose testimony was also mentioned in one of the articles

AL -

For your info - we

expect next day's clippings

in mail soon from Sydney.

We left before I was

widely quoted. (Diane Hill)

# US air navigator felt 'nauseous' on every herbicide spraying run

A LEAD navigator in the US Ranch Hand defoliation program in Vietnam said yesterday he had been nauseous on every mission.

Lieutenant-Colonel Jon Dudenhoeffer, retired, told the Evatt Royal Commission into the effects of chemicals on Australian personnel in Vietnam that his aircraft had twice sprayed friendly troops.

It is believed the Evatt commission may go to the US, as well as Vietnam, as part of its inquiries.

Colonel Dudenhoeffer told the commission the Ranch Hand aircrew were known as "gung ho" because they flew low and slow over known enemy positions.

He said the 1000-gallon loads of herbicide would be rapidly dumped if an aircraft lost power in one engine.

Herbicide would be sprayed on the correct area because the navigators were highly skilled.

Radio navigation aids were used to determine the aircraft's distance and bearing from several points, and each four-minute spraying run was timed with a stopwatch.

Ranch Hand was considered a dangerous mission and the aircrew considered themselves to be "somewhat elite".

The navigators were outstanding and excelled in reading contours and finding features in jungle terrain.

The herbicide load was dropped from 150ft and was always "on the money".

Spraying began at early light when the wind was calmest and would not continue if the wind was above 10 knots.

Spraying defoliant on grassland or delta produced a demarcation "as though it had been drawn with a pencil and ruler".

Enemy ground fire was common on spraying missions, and the herbicide would be dumped in 30 seconds if the aircraft was crippled.

Colonel Dudenhoeffer said

his aircraft had dumped its herbicide twice.

The C123 aircraft used for spraying could not fly on one engine with a full tank.

The tank and pressure hoses were regularly hit by enemy ground fire, spraying herbicide inside the aircraft and over the crew.

Insecticide spraying over camps was done by a silver aircraft nicknamed "Patches" because of its numerous repairs after enemy hits. It was also known as "Bug Bird".

Aircrew flying insecticide flights spraying malathion were given weekly blood tests, but this was not done for herbicide mission crews.

Colonel Dudenhoeffer told Mr Adrian McInnes QC, representing the Australian Vietnam Veterans Association, there were mistakes in reports completed by the lead navigator of each mission.

He said the Ranch Hand group did not spray herbicides around camp perimeters.

A Ranch Hand pilot, Colonel Charles Hubbs, retired, said he was frequently covered in herbicide when the aircraft's spray tank was holed by enemy fire.

Colonel Hubbs said he had flown 411 combat missions in Vietnam and his aircraft was hit 104 times on one mission.

If the spray tank was holed, the flight engineer was drenched as he attempted to shut the pump, the entire crew was enveloped in a heavy mist of herbicide, and the aircraft floor became slick with herbicide.

He was not wringing wet but could feel the oily herbicide on his skin.

He said all the Ranch Hand aircraft were silver when he went to Vietnam in June 1966 but they were later painted in camouflage design except the one used for insecticide.

Meanwhile, the administrative manager of the Commonwealth Institute of Health's Australian Veterans Health Studies, Mr Robert Pople, said he believed Mr Justice Evatt was planning to go to the United States as part of the commission.

Mr Pople, addressing the United Services Institute of NSW, a subsidiary of the Royal United Services Institute of Australia, said the second part of the Veterans Health Studies — a review of mortality of Vietnam veterans in comparison with men who did not go to Vietnam — had been completed.

The report was being written and would be sent to the Federal Department of Health.

The Institute of Health was also preparing for a study of about 5500 veterans on the incidences of illness, requiring medical examinations to be conducted on all participants.

Mr Pople said it was now up to the Government to decide whether it wanted the study, or a smaller neuropsychiatric study of 2000 veterans.

# Friendly troops sprayed in error, commission told

By ELIZABETH FORTESCUE

Accidental sprayings of friendly forces with chemicals, and emergency aerial dumpings of hundreds of gallons of herbicides, were yesterday described before the Royal Commission into the effects of chemical agents on Australian personnel in Vietnam.

A former Lieutenant Colonel in the US Air Force, Mr Jon Dudenhoefter, told the Commission that while he was a navigator on aerial herbicide missions in South Vietnam he twice observed chemicals being accidentally dropped on friendly troops.

Mr Dudenhoefter, now a Pennsylvania businessman, said he could see troops and tanks on the road beneath the plane.

He told Mr Barry O'Keefe, QC, counsel for the chemical company Monsanto Australia Limited, that the contents of the 1,000-gallon tanks used on spraying missions could be "dumped" in 30 seconds to enable the plane to gain height quickly if it came under fire.

"They couldn't fly on one engine with a full (herbicide) tank," Mr Dudenhoefter said.

He had dumped herbicide once and knew of one other similar incident. Agent Orange constituted about 70 per cent of all chemicals used on spraying missions and Agent Blue was especially popular for crop destruction.

Mr Dudenhoefter said he flew on aircraft in Operation Ranch Hand — the systematic aerial defoliation of jungle by the US Air Force — as a lead navigator, deputy lead navigator or instructor. During loading of the herbicide tanks there was chemical spillage.

"You were conscious of the

smell even in your own quarters, because it was embedded in your clothes," he said.

He told Mr O'Keefe that crews on aircraft used to spray insecticides — nick-named "bug birds" — underwent weekly blood tests to check the level of the insecticide Malathion, but no tests were carried out on herbicide mission crews.

He flew an average of two missions daily, weather permitting, and they were "all on the money — I mean, exact."

"We kept at a minimum of 150 knots so we could get above the deadly zone of 400 feet quickly," he said.

Most missions took ground fire and the number of planes on any one mission ranged from three to 12.

"If one aircraft had an engine shot out we would abort the mission right there because we always took care of one another."

"I have flown missions where you can see people running out of their huts with their weapons aiming right at you."

Mr Dudenhoefter said that the same flight path was never followed on two consecutive days because the enemy "would be waiting for us the next day."

He had been on board an aircraft in which the right wing's spray boom was shot off and the herbicide "ran out all over the plane."

Mr Dudenhoefter told Mr Adrian McLInnes, QC, counsel for the Vietnam Veterans' Association, that he had never sprayed Nui Dat — the Australian base in South Vietnam — and that he had never heard of the base.

The hearing continues today.

A former US Air Force pilot on the Ranch Hand Defoliant Program in Vietnam, Colonel Charles Hudds (retired) was giving evidence at the Evatt Royal Commission in cannon fire staccato. A QC cautioned the one-time fighter pilot that if his speed of delivery approached Mach 1 (the speed of sound), even the competent shorthand writers would have trouble getting his evidence down.