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MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

**Research of Military Records in Support of Studies
of the Health of Vietnam Veterans
(Public Laws 96-151 and 97-72)**

**U.S. Army and Joint Services Environmental Support Group
and
Agent Orange Projects, Centers for Disease Control**

01 APR 1985

INTRODUCTION

Responsibility for the design, conduct, and analysis of the congressionally mandated Studies of the Health of Vietnam Veterans was transferred from the Veterans Administration to the Centers for Disease Control by an interagency agreement signed on January 14, 1983 and subsequently modified on June 15, 1984. The approved protocol, published in November 1983, outlines the methods of each of the component studies: the Vietnam Experience Study, the Agent Orange Study, and the Selected Cancers Study. As an important component of these epidemiological studies, certain information must be obtained from military records. Consequent to correspondence between the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the U. S. Army and Joint Services Environmental Support Group (ESG) was tasked with the responsibility for performing the research of military records and participating in the identification and qualification of study subjects for the Agent Orange and Vietnam Experience Studies.

This agreement sets forth the respective responsibilities of ESG and the Agent Orange Projects (AOP), Centers for Disease Control, in accomplishing this mission.

I. VIETNAM EXPERIENCE STUDY

A. ESG Responsibilities:

1. Military Record Abstraction:

- a. During the period 4/84-6/85 review military records (201 files) for veterans and abstract the information necessary to complete the VE Data Abstraction Form (Attachment #1). This workload is divided into 14 groups of approximately 3,500 veterans each.
- b. Review each data abstraction form prior to mailing to AOP/CDC to ensure completeness, accuracy, and consistency.
- c. Forward completed study group data abstraction forms to AOP/CDC according to the schedule detailed in Table i.

NOTE: The following reflects the system procedures developed by ESG, AOP and NPRC (National Personnel Records Center) for processing non-retrievable 201 files.

- NPRC is to conduct an initial search for the individual 201 files based on the group listings sent to St. Louis by AOP.
- For those files which cannot be located, NPRC staff should document the reason (checked out, missing, etc.) and retain the listing.
- A second search for the missing records should be conducted by NPRC one month following the initial search. If the file is then located, NPRC should process it in the usual manner. If this second search is negative, documentation should be retained by NPRC with a copy of the final list being sent to ESG and AOP.
- All unlocatable files will be combined into a single final study group (#15) by AOP and the group list, together with appropriate labels, will be forwarded to NPRC for a third and final search. Inasmuch as this effort is essential to the completion of the final phase of the study, this activity must receive the highest priority and be completed by June 30, 1985.
- ESG will have an accounting of all accession numbers with particular attention to documenting the possible reason for the non-availability of any records.

- For those files for which the final search proves negative, NPRC should document the reason and forward the negative history and documentation to both AOP and ESG for review by June 30, 1985. AOP will determine if any further action is necessary.

2. Additional Vietnam Experience Study Groups: should AOP require additions or changes to the tasks outlined, such requests will be initiated by the Agent Orange Projects Director directly to the Director, ESG.
3. Quality Assurance: refer to ESG Quality Assurance Plan. (Appendix).

B. AOP Responsibilities:

1. Provide computer printouts to ESG:
 - a. Complete list, for each subgroup, of all the raw data on the qualified individuals formatted to enhance its utility.
 - b. List of accession numbers and personal identifiers for a five percent random sample of each qualified group.
 - c. A complete list of disqualified accession numbers and the reason for disqualification.
 - d. A list of all accession numbers, name and Social Security numbers for those 201 files which were never received at AOP.
 - e. A breakdown by subgroup for the following variables:
 - Rank (the number E1, E2, E3, E4, E5)
 - Date of entry (number of individuals by year)
 - Date of separation (number of individuals by year)
 - Difference between date of separation and date of entry (number of individuals by months)
 - Type of discharge (number of individuals falling into each category)
 - Marital Status (number of individuals falling into each category)
 - Race (number of individuals falling into each category)
 - PULHES (number of individuals falling into each category) x codes
 - Time loss (grouped by 0, 1-10 days, 11-50, 51-100+) x reason
 - AFQT (grouped by 0-15, 16-50, 51-75, 76-100) x cat
 - Decreased (number of individuals) x cause of death
 - Duty MOS (number of individuals falling into each category)
 - Primary MOS (number of individuals falling into each category)
 - MOS at discharge (number of individuals falling into each category)

- f. Invalid values will be identified with accession numbers being listed by the appropriate variable and the correction identifier. ESG will provide written corrections within two months of receipt of this information.
2. Provide computer tapes to ESG: complete tape listing of data as keypunched using record layout (non-labeled 6250 BPI EBCDIC tapes).
3. AOP will provide ESG with the printouts and computer tapes (described above) of completed VE groups on a monthly basis. A thirty day processing time can be expected between receipt of input documents at AOP, and delivery of printouts and/or computer tapes to ESG.
4. Quality Assurance: refer to AOP Quality Assurance Plan. (Appendix).

II. Agent Orange Study

A. ESG Responsibilities:

1. Battalion Tracking - First and Second Cohorts
 - a. Review Battalion Daily Journals and Brigade Daily Journals for each company in the 65 battalions (if required) that served in Vietnam for the entire 2 year period (1967-1968) and spent 1 18 months in III Corps and identify battalion/company locations (all grid coordinates and location codes available) for every day during that two year period. Beginning April 15, 1985, ESG will document on each battalion which records were available and which were utilized for each day of the two year period (1967-1968) on which no coordinates are available.

-By May 1, 1985, ESG will complete a work measurement study to determine the effect on work productivity of recording which records were available and utilized for each day of the two year period (1967-1968) on one battalion. Based on the results of the study, as it relates to current and revised activities, a decision will be made by ESG and AOP on whether to record this information on all future battalions.

-Effective immediately, all infantry and artillery units meeting the above criteria should be completed first (i.e. before any additional cavalry; armor; engineer units).

-Order of the units researched depends on the availability of records, however, the basic rank order should be maintained.

- b. Provide AOP by April 15, 1985 with written documentation of the process and decision rules used in determining the order in which military records are reviewed to identify unit locations.
- c. Abstract the location information outlined above, onto the battalion tracking form (Attachment #2).
- d. Complete the locating/tracking activities at the rate of 3 battalions per month and forward the completed battalion abstraction forms to AOP/CDC according to the schedule in Table #2.
- e. Review battalion, brigade, and division level records in an effort to fill initial gaps on each company within 60 days of receipt of the composite tracking information (computer printout) from AOP. A monthly printout will be provided to ESG by AOP which identified gaps for battalion locations.

-A gap constitutes a single day or period of greater length that has no grid coordinates or location codes.

-Any lack of records which prevent the tracking of a unit must be documented and be reviewed by ESG and AOP staff.

-For all location codes (abstracted from battalion, brigade, and/or division level records), ESG will assign grid coordinates based on other available documents and code the source of this information on the abstracting form.

2. Base Camp Locations

- a. Provide AOP between April 15, 1985 and June 1, 1985 with microfilm copies of the morning reports for 1967 and 1968 of all companies, batteries, and/or other organizational units in the 65 battalions (refer to Section II, A, 1, a).
- b. AOP, with collaboration from ESG, will create a computerized file of base camp locations for these units and will provide to ESG a computer tape and listing of this information.

3. Battalion Tracking - Third Cohort

- a. Provide AOP by May 1, 1985 with written documentation of the processes used to identify men in the unexposed cohort.

- b. Identify areas in Vietnam (Vung Tau and Cam Ranh Bay area) where there was minimal (low level) or no spraying of Agent Orange.

-If the units chosen do not produce an adequate yield, units will be identified in other areas of Vietnam.

- c. Survey all units operating in these areas for possible inclusion in the third cohort. Mobile units will not be considered for inclusion in the third cohort.
- d. Utilize unit history cards, the "Order of Battle", organizational records, and other available records for these units to identify individual units which appear to have been stationary during 1967-1968.
- e. For those units identified in d. above, ESG will document the units' locations during the two year period, 1967-1968.
- f. The completed battalion abstraction forms (use same abstraction procedures as outlined for the First and Second Cohorts) will be forwarded to AOP/CDC according to the schedule in Table 2.
- g. Starting March 31, 1985, third cohort units will be added to the Morning Report name abstraction process so that by June 30, 1985 one third of the names (from the Morning Reports) provided to AOP come from third cohort units.

4. Morning Report Abstraction

- a. Review morning reports, rosters, and special orders, when available, for every battalion selected for inclusion, as sequenced by AOP, for the three cohorts and obtain the name, Social Security number and/or military service number for each man rank E-6 and below in these battalions.
- b. Abstract the above listed information onto the Morning Report Abstraction Form, (Attachment #3), including multiple references to the same individual.
- c. Complete the Morning Report abstraction process at a rate of approximately 6,000 unique names per month. The first 6,000 should be delivered by March 1, 1985 with 6,000 names, adjusted as necessary to yield 1433 qualified men per month for interview, being provided each subsequent month through August 31, 1986.

5. Military Record Abstraction

- a. Review military records for an estimated 2,500 veterans (qualified by RCPAC) per month for all three cohorts and abstract the information necessary to complete the A.O. Data Collection Form (Attachment #4).
 - b. The first 6,000 201 files will be pulled by NPRC and delivered to RCPAC by April 15, 1985, and 6,000 each subsequent month for the next 18 months.
 - c. Review each data abstraction form prior to mailing to AOP/CDC to insure completeness, accuracy and consistency.
 - d. Forward completed study group data abstraction forms to AOP/CDC on a monthly basis, beginning 7-01-85 (Table 3).
 - e. Non-retrievable 201 files will be addressed as stated in the Vietnam Experience Study section, Item A2.
6. Additional Agent Orange Study Groups: should AOP require additions or changes to the tasks outlined, such requests will be initiated by the Agent Orange Projects Director directly to the Director, ESG.
7. Quality Assurance: refer to ESG Quality Assurance Plan. (Appendix).

B. AOP Responsibilities:

1. Provide computer printouts to ESG.
 - a. Master list of all entries on the battalion abstraction forms sent to AOP. Sorted by: battalion, company, date, researcher, document type and entry number. Variables to include: report date, document, researcher, abstraction date, entry number, time of day, unit (2 digit), name code and coordinates.
 - b. Five percent random sample of the master list, as stated above, for each researcher in each battalion.
 - c. Summary tables:
 - Data Management Report
 - Frequency tabulation of document by unit, 1967-1968
 - Frequency tabulation of unit by size of unit, 1967-1968
 - Frequency tabulation of coordinates abstracted by day for all units combined and for each unit, by battalion (calendar format)
 - Summary time and space profiles by unit, 1967-1968

- d. Listing of gaps (in number of days) by battalion where no coordinates or location codes are abstracted for any unit in the battalion.
2. Provide Computer Tapes to ESG: complete tape listing of data after reformatting and translating of unit codes (non-labeled 6250 BPI EBCDIC).
3. AOP will provide ESG with printouts and computer tapes of completed AO companies on a monthly basis. A thirty day processing time can be expected between receipt of input documents at AOP and delivery of printouts and/or computer tapes to ESG.
4. Quality Assurance: refer to AOP Quality Assurance Plan. (Appendix).

III. Case-Control Study to Determine the Risks for Selected Cancers Among Vietnam Veterans

Selected Cancers Study (SCS)

CDC will conduct a prospective case-control study involving the identification and interview of all cases of selected cancers diagnosed and residing within a defined geographic area from December 1, 1984 through December 31, 1988.

CDC will need assistance from ESG in obtaining additional information regarding the likelihood of Agent Orange exposure on individual cases and/or controls where interviews reveal that a history of previous military service in Vietnam is involved. It is anticipated that variables such as type of military duty and location of the unit that the veteran (Vietnam) served in would be included. At this stage of development of the Selected Cancers Study, it is not expected that an extensive exposure index (day to day experience of every unit) similar to the Agent Orange Study would be required. CDC and ESG will work together to specify information concerning this issue by March 1986.

IV. General Administration

1. Data Release

- a. Data provided by CDC are intended to enable ESG to meet its archival requirements and to facilitate implementation of quality control procedures as part of the on-going evaluation of project activities. Data released by CDC may not be released to the general public or used for statistical and/or epidemiologic summary reports without the prior written consent of CDC.

On October 17, 1984 ESG requested that they be allowed to utilize data abstracted by ESG for AOP in support of other ESG research efforts for the Veterans Administration, Armed Forces Institute of Pathology and the Department of Defense. This request was approved by the Director of AOP on 11-05-84.

- b. ESG will not discuss with other government or non-government agencies scientific and methodologic issues or concerns related to the conduct of the study without first discussing these issues or concerns with the Director or Project Manager, Agent Orange Projects.
- c. As they are developed, AOP will provide those sections of final reports which describe ESG's methods and operation to ESG for review and comment.

2. Access to Military Data

ESG will assist AOP in the conduct of these studies by facilitating timely access to all relevant military data (e.g. visits to Carlisle library, DMDC, review of 201 files and copies of battalion tracking documents in Atlanta, etc.).

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3. Modification of Existing Agreement

It is recognized that the complexity of the Agent Orange epidemiologic studies will in all probability lead to the need by one or both parties involved in this agreement to modify or change the agreement.

In the event that a change in the agreement becomes necessary, the mechanism to be used to affect the desired change would involve a request in writing from the Director of the Agent Orange Projects to the Director of the Environmental Support Group (or the reverse).

CDC and ESG will agree on any consequential changes in the timetable for the conduct of the work that is involved by either party in the successful and timely completion of these Studies.

4. Records

- a. Storage - CDC will store materials released by ESG related to the Epidemiological Studies of the Health of Vietnam Veterans in the Atlanta offices of the CDC Agent Orange Projects.
- b. Security - AOP and ESG will develop jointly, a system for secure record transfer of data between agencies.

5. Meetings

AOP and ESG will hold quarterly senior staff meetings to discuss and review the progress of the studies. These quarterly meetings will be held alternately in Atlanta and Washington.

TABLE 1

Vietnam Experience Study

Delivery Schedule for Complete Military Abstraction Forms from ESG to AOP

<u>Veteran Group #</u>	<u>Date of Delivery to AOP</u>
01 - 10	Previously delivered
11	Mar. 01 1985
12	Apr. 05 1985
13	May 03 1985
14	June 07 1985
15*	June 30 1985

*Subgroup 15 may be segmented to fit ESG work schedules provided that the Vietnam Experience Study Military File Abstraction is completed by the June 30, 1985 delivery date.

TABLE 2

DELIVERY SCHEDULE FOR BATTALION ABSTRACTION FORM
FROM ESG TO AOP
BY BATTALION RANK ORDER

First & Second Cohorts Rank No.	Delivery Date to AOP
1-16,18,20-24,32,34,36	Previously delivered
17,19,27	Mar. 31, 1985**
28,29,31	Apr. 30, 1985
33,37,38	May 31, 1985
39,41,42	June 30, 1985
43,44,45	July 31, 1985
46,47,48	Aug. 31, 1985
49,50,51	Sept. 30, 1985
52,53,54	Oct. 31, 1985
55,56,57	Nov. 30, 1985
58,59,15*	Dec. 31, 1985
20*,25*,30*	Jan. 31, 1986
35*,40*	Feb. 28, 1986
60*,61*	Mar. 31, 1986
62*	Apr. 30, 1986
63*	May 31, 1986
64*	June 30, 1986
65*	July 31, 1986

15*	168 Engineer Battalion (Combat) 79 Engineer Ground
20*	1/4 Air Cavalry
25*	588 Engineer Battalion
30*	1/11 Air Cavalry
35*	1 Engineer Battalion/1 Inf. Division
40*	3/11 Cavalry
60*	15 Engineer Battalion/Division
61*	27 Engineer Battalion
62*	86 Engineer Battalion 79th Group
63*	2/11 Armored Cavalry
64*	3/5 Cavalry Squadron
65*	2/60 Infantry Battalion

** Starting March 31, 1985 a third cohort will be "tracked" and assimilated into the morning report abstraction process until they comprise 1/3 of AO interview groups.

NOTE: Some units (battalions or companies) will have inadequate or no records available for tracking purposes. ESG will inform AOP in writing of those units which cannot be tracked due to inadequate records.

TABLE 3

Agent Orange Study

Delivery Schedule for 201 File Abstraction Forms from ESG to AOP

<u>Group #</u>	<u>Date of Delivery to AOP</u>
01	July 01, 1985
02	Aug. 01, 1985
03	Sep. 01, 1985
04	Oct. 01, 1985
05	Nov. 01, 1985
06	Dec. 01, 1985
07	Jan. 01, 1986
08	Feb. 01, 1986
09	Mar. 01, 1986
10	Apr. 01, 1986
11	May 01, 1986
12	June 01, 1986
13	July 01, 1986
14	Aug. 01, 1986
15	Sep. 01, 1986
16	Oct. 01, 1986
17	Nov. 01, 1986
18	Dec. 31, 1986
19*	Jan. 15, 1987

*Subgroup 19 may be segmented to fit ESG work schedules provided that the Agent Orange Study Military File Abstraction is completed by the January 15, 1987 delivery date.

Appendix

AOP QUALITY ASSURANCE PLAN

Quality assurance procedures have been developed to limit the collection of biased and other invalid data and to provide a basis from which study data duplication can be achieved. Each study is a separate quality assurance issue with basic design similarities which provide for a bilateral approach. That is, procedures are applied to each study which utilize both internal and external monitoring. Critical process points are identified which allow for the editing and blind reconstruction of the data collection on a periodic statistical (sampling) or one hundred percent (100%) basis. In certain instances "acceptable quality levels" (AQL) are established and applied as guides to reject, accept, or resample collected data.

I. Vietnam Experience Study

A. ESG Quality Assurance Responsibilities:

1. All abstraction forms completed by ESG will be reviewed by ESG at the time of the abstraction for completeness and validity to identify obvious recording errors, omissions, and illegible entries.
2. On an ongoing basis ESG will, based on a 5% random sample, compare the data appearing on the completed abstraction forms against the information contained in a the veteran's 201 file. This activity will be completed for each sampled file prior to its return to NPRC.
3. ESG will, based on a 2% random sample from the veterans disqualified by RCPAC, check individual results against the abstracting protocol and disqualification criteria.

B. AOP Quality Assurance Responsibilities:

1. A machine edit of each group of abstracted data, entered into the CDC mainframe, will be performed to identify possible keypunch and/or abstraction errors.
2. On an ongoing basis a true blind quality review and reabstraction will be performed on VES data submitted by ESG including both qualified and disqualified (by ESG) veterans. An approximate 8% randomized sample of abstracted 201 files will be selected by AOP staff. These 201 files will then be reabstracted and the resulting data keypunched into a quality control computer file (this process is entirely independent of the regular data processing system). The results of the quality abstraction will then be compared electronically to the data submitted by ESG to identify discrepancies.
3. A data acceptance, rejection, and resampling criteria will be established and applied to the system.

II. Agent Orange Study

A. ESG Quality Assurance Responsibility:

1. Battalion Tracking: Review on a daily basis, 2-5% of the data abstraction sheets completed by each researcher comparing these forms against the source documents.
2. Military 201 File Abstraction: Quality assurance will be achieved utilizing the same basic procedures as outlined for the Vietnam Experience Study (refer to VES Quality Assurance Section).

B. AOP Quality Assurance Responsibilities:

1. Battalion Tracking: Results will be checked regularly against a 3 to 5% sample (by battalion, company, and time block) obtained from the documents containing tracking data. AOP staff will perform a blind reabstraction of the coordinates using original documents. The results of the quality check will then be compared electronically against the data submitted by ESG for an acceptable correlation.
2. Morning Reports: A 2% random sample of the completed morning report abstraction data will be reabstracted by AOP utilizing pertinent military records (microfilm).
3. Military 201 File Abstraction: Quality assurance will be achieved utilizing the same basic procedures as outlined for the Vietnam Experience Study (refer to VES Quality Assurance Section).

QUALITY ASSURANCE ERROR RESOLUTION PROCEDURES:

- Common errors such as data omission, transposition of numbers, mis-spellings, illegible entries, etc. should be immediately corrected either at ESG or at AOP/CDC wherever an error is discovered. As appropriate, both ESG and AOP will be apprised of the corrections in order that proper computer and/or written documentation can be made.
- Acceptable error rates will be established for specific documents and data items based on data priorities established by AOP to assist in the discovery of systematic errors which may require resampling for further Quality Assurance evaluation or actual complete reabstraction of data.
- At those times when there are disagreements between ESG and AOP in regard to what are specific errors or other discrepancies which may need extensive interpretation, ESG and AOP will "meet" to determine the reasons for the discrepancies or to make interpretations and objective judgments regarding the data.

DOCUMENTATION:

ESG and AOP will design quality control reports reflecting all pertinent aspects of the studies for the purposes of communication between ESG and AOP and to document review findings quality assurance procedures.

Both parties agree that revision or modification of the terms of this Memorandum may be made only with the consent of the undersigned.

RICHARD S. CHRISTIAN, C.R.M.
Director
U.S. Army and Joint Services
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