



## **Veterans-*For*-Change Special Release**

*A Voice of the Veterans*



### **VETERANS ADVOCATES: PASS 'BLUE WATER ACT'**

Advocates for Vietnam veterans who were indirectly exposed to Agent Orange while aboard ships in coastal waters are again asking Congress to pass the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act (HR 969), which will restore benefits to these servicemen and women.

"During the entire Vietnam War potable water contaminated with Agent Orange was provided to ships anchored in Da Nang and Qui Nhon harbors," said Cdr. John Wells (USN, Ret.), executive director of Military Veterans Advocacy, a Louisiana-based non-profit. "Reports from Commander, Naval Forces Vietnam confirmed that over one million gallons of potable water per month were delivered to Seventh Fleet ships in Da Nang Harbor. The crew used this water for drinking, cooking, laundry, cleaning and hygiene. Despite this common knowledge, the Secretary still continues to refuse to grant the presumption of exposure to those veterans aboard ships in the harbors."

Under current regulations, the VA has determined that ships in "inland waters" are eligible for the presumption. Over 340 ships have been identified as covered under the existing regulation, representing approximately 84,000 veterans. In April of 20 15 the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims in *Gray v. McDonald*, found the exclusion of bays and harbors from the VA definition of "inland waters" to be irrational and ordered them to rewrite the regulation concentrating on probabilities of exposure. Instead of including the harbors in their revised definition of "inland waters," the VA arbitrarily and captiously chose to "double down" on their earlier policy. They continued to exclude the bays and harbors from the presumption of exposure. Several law suits questioning this action have been brought by MVA and are pending in the Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, the Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit and the Court of Appeal for Veterans Clams.

In a letter to Congressman Jeff Miller, chair of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, Wells asked the chairman to hold a hearing on HR 969 and advance it to the House floor, where it has 319 co-sponsors.

"Military Veterans Advocacy is prepared to be your resource on this issue," Wells wrote.

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Military-Veterans Advocacy is a tax exempt non-profit corporation based in Slidell, Louisiana. For more information please go to [www.militaryveteransadvocacy.org](http://www.militaryveteransadvocacy.org)

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***The American Legion Post 127***  
May 2016 Newsletter

Fellow Legionnaire,

Five years ago this month, after nearly a ten year search, members of U.S. Special Operations Forces SEAL Team Six killed Osama bin Laden during a raid on his compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan. Bin Laden had been the chief architect of the September 11th attacks in which four American passenger jets were hijacked and deliberately crashed, killing nearly 3,000 people at the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and in Shankstown PA.

We pause now to remember all our special warfare forces, special operation groups, and all who have served throughout our nation's history in every capacity to preserve our freedom. Post 127 lost one such hero just last week as founding member Ken Osborne transferred to Post Everlasting. Ken served our nation honorably in the U.S. Navy, was a legionnaire for over sixty years, a long-time member of the Forty and Eight, and wrote the Post 127 constitution and bylaws. Over the years Ken held all Post 127 offices, and various senior positions in the District, Division, and Department of Texas. Ken, we salute you for your continued legacy of service in the cause of liberty. Fair Winds and Following Seas!

Because of Ken and other dedicated members, our local Tomball Post 127 has a rich heritage. We were the first post in recent 8 District's history to sponsor American Legion Baseball. Next month we will once again send seven high school boys to Boy's State. Our post members have coordinated donations valued in the thousands of dollars to the DeBakey VA Hospital in Houston. We have a strong friendship with and receive the mutual support of our comrades at the Tomball VFW Post 2427. We are most fortunate to celebrate several dual American Legion and VFW Post members.

It has been a busy year and much more is planned. In August, we participated in Tomball Night to celebrate our community's rich heritage. We also participated in Tomball's 50th annual Christmas parade. We offered the opening prayer at the Tomball city council during Veteran's week. Our annual Post Christmas party was a time of good cheer for all. The end of February, we held a community outreach during the Cy-Fair Home and Garden show and raised over \$1000 for veteran's programs. This past weekend we participated in the annual Old Town Spring Crawfish Festival. We introduced several local veterans to the important ongoing work being done by our post and signed up eight new members. Donations to date have already exceeded the donations of earlier events. The festival continues next weekend and Post 127 will once again have a vital presence promoting Legion memberships and raising funds.

Ticket sales for our annual drawing are going well. First prize is a Diamondback DB-15, 223 AR donated by Tomball Pawn and Jewelry, second prize a Springfield XO Mod 2 Compact 45 ACP Pistol, third prize a Stoeger M3000 12 gauge Camo shotgun, and fourth prize a Grizzly 40-Quart Coolers Cooler donated by The Poolman Inc.

Our most important activities are our service to community, state, and nation. We have an active relationship with area high schools and J.R.O.T.C. students. In addition to our association with the DeBakey VA hospital and clinics, we coordinate with the Houston Bar Association and support the Veteran's Legal Initiative. Additional information about our post can be found at [http://www.txlegion127.org/post\\_minutes.html](http://www.txlegion127.org/post_minutes.html).

We look forward to seeing you at our next post meeting on Thursday May 19th. The annual officer elections will be held at this time. Post 127 regular monthly meetings are held the third Thursday of each month in the "Bunker" at VFW Post 2427 located at 14408 Alice Rd, Tomball, TX 77377. A free dinner is served at 6:30 pm and the meeting commences at 7:00 pm.

For God and Country,

Jim Poe  
Post Adjutant

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***Give the Vietnam Blue Water Navy Veterans their Presumptive Rights***

In 1977, the first claims of Agent Orange exposure came flooding into the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). But it took 14 years for Congress to actually listen, take action and give our Vietnam veterans the benefits they deserved.

The Agent Orange Act of 1991 was implemented to provide much-needed care to veterans who were exposed to the harmful chemical cocktail Agent Orange. Many of us thought the fight to get the medical attention we deserved was over, but that wasn't the case. In 2002, the VA amended its initial plan and excluded thousands of "Blue Water" Navy vets -- who served right off the coast -- from receiving our rightful benefits. Because we hadn't served on land, the VA tried to say we were unlikely to suffer the effects of Agent Orange poisoning. Even though we didn't serve on Vietnamese soil, we were still exposed to Agent Orange. In fact, a 2011 study by the National Institute of Medicine found that Blue Water veterans could have been exposed in multiple ways, including via the ships' water distillation system and through the air. The 2009 IOM update stated "Given the available evidence, the committee recommends that members of the Blue Water Navy should not be excluded from the set of Vietnam-era veterans with presumed herbicide exposure."

We are asking for your help in urging Congress to pass legislation (House Bill H 969 and Senate Bill S 681) that will reinstate our right as Vietnam Navy veterans to receive the benefits we deserve for being exposed to this terrible chemical.

Nearly 90,000 Blue Water vets are depending on you. We are dealing with serious health issues that range from cancer to diabetes, and from Parkinson's to heart disease. Many of these diseases have made it nearly impossible for some of us to get steady work.

Last year, the VA finally extended benefits to Air Force crew members who flew in C-123s after they had been used in Vietnam to spray the toxic cocktail. The VA came to the realization that even the slightest exposure to this chemical had serious effects on a soldier's health. So why are the Navy vets' pleas being ignored? We breathed the Agent Orange-polluted air that drifted from the coast and drank water sprinkled with the herbicide, and now our bodies are paying the cost.

We ask you to stand with us, (and with Representative Chris Gibson, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, and others to demand that the VA assume responsibility for the effects of Agent Orange on Blue Water vets. Please sign our petition asking Congress to pass House Bill H 969 and Senate Bill S 681 and give us our benefits.

[https://www.change.org/p/u-s-house-of-representatives-give-the-vietnam-blue-water-navy-veterans-their-presumptive-rights?recruiter=174924799&utm\\_source=share\\_petition&utm\\_medium=copylink](https://www.change.org/p/u-s-house-of-representatives-give-the-vietnam-blue-water-navy-veterans-their-presumptive-rights?recruiter=174924799&utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=copylink)

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### ***Senate Reps not supporting S-681***

Check to see if your Senator is supporting the BWN bill, and if not, there are buttons for you to send them a message loud and clear!

<http://www.bluewaternavyawareness.com/senators-not-supporting-s-681.html>



### ***Military-Veterans Advocacy***

From Military-Veterans Advocacy (please "Like" our Facebook Page: Military-Veterans Advocacy has completed a report on the use of water barges providing Agent Orange contaminated water from the Vietnamese mainland to ships anchored

in harbors throughout the Vietnam War. This report has been forwarded to the Honorable Jeff Miller, Chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee. Please share your thoughts and send us your stories.

If your Member of Congress or Senator is not co-sponsoring the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act (HR 969/S681) print out a copy of this report and send it to them and ask for their support.

## [WATER BARGES](#)

From:  
Commander John Wells USN (Ret.)

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***Please support Military-Veterans Advocacy through the Combined Federal Campaign.  
Our CFC number is 59905***

Amazon Shoppers: you can support Military-Veterans Advocacy by going to "Amazon Smile" for your shopping. The prices are the same but Amazon donates 0.5% of the purchase price to Military-Veterans Adovacy Inc. Bookmark the link <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/38-3890520> and support us every time you shop.

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<b><i>To Contact your Members of Congress</i></b>	
To Call your Representative:	202-225-2305
To call your Senator:	202-224-3841 or 202-224-3553
To call different members of Congress:	202-224-3121
Toll <b>FREE</b> Number:	866-272-6622

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***Veterans-For-Change, Inc.***

Riverside County, CA

**Visit our website today**

[www.veterans-for-change.org](http://www.veterans-for-change.org)

*Serving those who served!*

***Please pass to all your Veteran friends and family!***