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Detrick searching records for local Agent Orange use

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By **Megan Eckstein**
News-Post Staff

Fort Detrick officials are searching government documents to determine the extent of its past use of Agent Orange in [Frederick](#) fields.

Army officials know Fort Detrick scientists tested Agent Orange and other similar defoliants used in large quantities in Vietnam, which have since been shown to cause cancers and other diseases. Fort Detrick spokesman Rob Sperling said researchers mostly tested small quantities of the herbicides on batches of plants in greenhouses.

But some testing was done outdoors at Area B, a 399-acre parcel between Shookstown Road and Kemp Lane -- and that has current and former residents concerned.

Randy White, founder of the Kristen Renee Foundation, which is seeking to prove a connection between Area B contamination and local cancer cases, said dioxins from the chemicals may be the cause of more than 400 cases of cancer within four miles of Area B. White's daughter, Kristen Renee Hernandez-White, died two years ago from a brain tumor at age 30, and his ex-wife is battling stage-four renal cell carcinoma. They lived on Lake Coventry Drive between 1995 and 2005.

Sperling said Fort Detrick officials were looking into how much herbicide and pesticide was tested in [Frederick](#), and where, and when. They want to know how the chemicals were dispersed -- whether sprayed low to the ground by hand or on a truck, or whether sprayed aerially by a plane -- and where they ended up.

Sperling said the Army launched an archival search that spans many government agencies since many of the projects changed hands and offices reorganized over the past six or so decades.

Fort Detrick's records do not paint a full picture of its former defoliant testing, so it has enlisted the help of the Army's Environmental Command and Public Health Command in the investigation, which may also include interviewing former project managers to learn more details than are included in paper records.

"It wasn't something that we had looked into, but it's something that, because the public has concerns and questions on, we are looking into, as good stewards of the community," Sperling said. "We're trying to do a full scope review of all the records we can find," he said, but added that "nothing's concrete thus far."