



Getting Accountability is the First Step to Resolve the Agent Orange Issue

by Ed Mattson



Protesters voicing their opinion of DOW Chemical and its original position of dodging the bullet on Agent Orange

The letters keep coming and I am just one small platform taking on the issue of Agent Orange. I would hate to even venture a guess as to how many people have been affected world-wide with the AO problem. My last article covered how toxins in general disrupt the immune system allowing cancers and other diseases to proliferate. Let's go a bit further...

There are many ways for toxins to enter the human body, and Agent Orange is historically, probably the greatest villain of all for the veteran, civilian volunteers, the citizens in the country where the chemicals were used, the unknowing workers who manufactured, transported, and stored the product, and those left to clean up the mess. First is the past direct exposure to the population during the years of spraying (in Southeast Asia the period was over ten years in duration). Second are those who may have been exposed to dioxin in the years during and immediately following the spraying through the contaminated soil and sediment and/or through contaminated fish, animals, and crops. Third are those who are currently being exposed to the TCDD that remains in the soil and sediment and is entering the food chain at the dioxin hotspots where the herbicides were stored, loaded onto airplane or spilled. And fourth, the generations that will follow, where genetic abnormalities may continue indefinitely and where exposure is perpetuated from food products, breast milk, and maybe even continued contact.

AO however, is not alone in the blame department for the havoc toxins in general have bestowed upon are military and civilians who were either doing their duty or volunteering for humanitarian aid duty in the areas where defoliants and other chemicals were used. Americans tend to think of Agent Orange as a problem exclusively to veterans of the Vietnam War. Today's generation of "me first", overly pampered, and spoiled population of the X-generation, often relay a message that is uncaring at best, but callous and abusive. Many of us have heard words similar to the words I overheard recently, "hell, the Vietnam War was a half century ago, why can't those guys get over it"? Such ignorance can only be blamed on a disingenuous government and a dumbed-down school system.

Yes, it has been nearly a half century ago, so don't you think it is time to lay all the cards on the table and come up with a plan to put this era behind us? That my friends, is not a brilliant idea on my part...it's the right thing to do.

So let's get to some facts: It has been estimated that 20 million gallons of defoliant toxins were produced over a ten year period with about 12 million gallons of AO, by as many as 10 manufacturers (One must ask why we are always given "estimates" and not exact quantities so we can really identify the scope of the problem). In the 1960's and early 70's, the population of Vietnam was about 52 million with 52% living in the north and 48% in the south. Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand should also be taken into account. Can anyone say for certain what the precise percentage of the population was or wasn't exposed to these dastardly toxins? Additionally, about 2.7 million US Soldiers and an undetermined number of civilian volunteers (aid workers, USO troops, and foreign workers). Should all be considered part of the exposure mix?

Herbicides by Manufacturer

	orange	purple	white	blue	pink	green
Dow	X	X	X		X	X
Monsanto	X	X			X	
Diamond Alkali/ Shamrock	X	X		X	X	
Hercules	X	X				
Thomson-Hayward	X				X	
US Rubber (Uniroyal)	X					
Thomson	X				X	
Agrisect	X					
Hoffman-Tuff	X					
Ansul Chemical				X		

This list of manufacturers is a good place to start looking for the exact quantity of toxins produced...somebody had to pay for the delivery. There should be no guesswork.

Unfortunately, there are not any firm figures for the number of adults who suffer from or have already died from illnesses associated with exposure to Agent Orange and these other toxins. We also do not know for sure how many children and youth have disabilities that may be attributed to their parents' or grandparents' exposure to the herbicides. In the late 1990's the Vietnam Red Cross estimated that 3 million Vietnamese have been affected by Agent Orange, including 150,000 children born with birth defects. It's time for a new study about those figures as a new generation has evolved, and TIME is the greatest factor in disease development.

A 2003 report in the British publication Nature showed that the dioxin contaminants to be as much as four times higher than previous estimates, and mapped villages in which 2.1 million to 4.8 million people were directly sprayed with the herbicides over approximately 10% of South Vietnam, including 50% of the mangrove forests. So, what does the VA come up with for the veterans?

- Total Vietnam Era Veterans receiving Disabled Veterans compensation (2008) 1,015,400 (Not all of these Vietnam War Veterans are receiving compensation from the effects of Agent Orange)
- Vietnam Era Veterans receiving compensation from Agent Orange 75,202 (7.6% of the total)
- Percentage of Vietnam War Veterans receiving 10% disability (\$123.00 per month) 27.0%
- Percentage of Vietnam War Veterans receiving 100% disability (\$2,673.00 per month) 8.0%

The VA has reported that based on DOD records at the end of the war there were 3,404,100 veterans that were deployed to Southeast Asia with 2,594,000 total "in-country" boots on the ground and 514,3008 deployed by the Blue Water Navy. Additionally there were 294,800 deployed in Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia. There are approximately 850,000 veterans estimated to still be alive. The Agent Orange Equity Bill of 2009 (HR2254 / S1939) was never enacted, as politicians stonewalled the issue. Let us fight for and pray HR 812, The Agent Orange Act of 2011, makes it through this time or there won't be enough of us to continue waging the war for our due justice.

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As I have been saying for a long time and written about over the last month, we must use the threat of our VOTE, to protect our rights to earned benefits, and nothing is more important than the passage of HR 812. Our development of the new website www.yourmilitaryvote.us will be vital in this next election to get a legislature that is pro-veteran, and willing to stand up for our rights. Please send us your e-mail addresses so we can enlist everyone's help to make this informative website a reality and really get to know the candidates BEFORE the 2012 elections.

<http://www.veteranstoday.com/2011/07/15/getting-accountability-is-the-first-step-to-resolve-the-agent-orange-issue/>