

U.S. Agent Orange in Vietnam Comes Back to Haunt Own Veterans



Washington, November 18 (RHC)-- A new study is putting pressure on the U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs to expand benefits for Vietnam War veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange as it argues those exposed to the toxin have higher rates of hypertension.

Stars and Stripes, a news website covering U.S. army affairs, reports that the department's researchers, who published their study in the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* last week, found that Army Chemical Corps who directly handled Agent Orange had a higher rate of hypertension than those who did not.

Agent Orange contains the chemical dioxin, which veterans have maintained harmed their health, including conditions which have been passed on to their children. But corps members who served in Vietnam, even if they did not handle the chemicals directly, were also affected.

"Although most of the Agent Orange used in Vietnam was sprayed from Air Force planes, the Army Chemical Corps also sprayed the herbicide from hand sprayers and helicopters," Stars and Stripes website said.

A working group has been studying whether other illnesses should be added to the automatic compensation eligibility list for Vietnam veterans. The Veteran's Affairs was expected to announce their judgment about expanding eligibility this year, but that decision will now be left for the administration of Donald Trump.

"For this administration, the deadline for proposing new rules for potential new presumptions (of service connection to herbicide) has passed, and this will become work for the new administration to take to completion," VA officials said in a written statement last week.

During the Vietnam War, which took place between 1955 and 1975, the U.S. military sprayed approximately 11-12 million gallons of Agent Orange over nearly 10 percent of South Vietnam between 1961 and 1971.

One scientific study estimates that between 2.1 million and 4.8 million Vietnamese were directly exposed to Agent Orange, which has been linked to respiratory cancer and birth defects. More than two million Vietnamese civilians were killed, while over 58,000 U.S. soldiers lost their lives in Washington's war of aggression.

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