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AGENT ORANGE

WASHINGTON (AP) -- THE NATIONAL VETERANS LAW CENTER FILED SUIT TODAY TO REQUIRE THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION TO CHANGE ITS PROCEDURES AND RECONSIDER DISABILITY CLAIMS MADE BY VIETNAM WAR VETERANS EXPOSED TO THE CONTROVERSIAL HERBICIDE AGENT ORANGE.

THE SUIT, FILED IN U.S. DISTRICT COURT, ASSERTS THE VA HAS DENIED MORE THAN 330 AGENT ORANGE DISABILITY CLAIMS.

IT ALSO SAID VA RULES REGARDING AGENT ORANGE CLAIMS DECLARE THAT THERE IS NO KNOWN DATA "TO INCRIMINATE THE HERBICIDES AS CAUSATIVE AGENTS OF ANY ... KNOWN CATEGORY OF DISEASE OR CHRONIC SYMPTOMS" EXCEPT FOR CHLORACNE, A SKIN DISORDER.

THE SUIT ALLEGES THERE IS SIGNIFICANT SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT CLAIMS THAT EXPOSURE TO THE HERBICIDE CAUSES TUMORS, CANCER, REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEMS INJURIES, NUMBNESS OF LIMBS, HEADACHES, MUSCLE SPASMS AND NERVOUSNESS.

VA SPOKESMAN START APPLEMAN SAID THE AGENCY HAD NO COMMENT ON THE SUIT, ADDING THAT THE AGENCY HAS "DEVOTED MORE TIME AND MORE STUDY TO AGENT ORANGE THAN ANY OTHER PROBLEM I'VE HEARD OF IN THE 12 YEARS I'VE BEEN WITH THE VA."

HE ADDED THAT A VA ADVISORY GROUP COMPOSED OF MEDICAL AND SCIENTIFIC PERSONNEL HAS FOUND NO RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EXPOSURE TO AGENT ORANGE AND THE DISABILITY CLAIMS MADE BY VIETNAM VETERANS.

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Mullison

cc McKenney
5/31 Frayer
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