

Air Force Policy Letter for Commanders

From the Office of the Secretary of the Air Force



Washington, D.C. 15 December 1981

Lt. Gen. Paul W. Myers, Air Force Surgeon General, recently presented an update on the Air Force epidemiological investigation of Ranch Hand personnel exposed to herbicide orange. He said interim technical reports from the first round of questionnaires and physical examinations will be available in April/June 1983. The Ranch Hand study should prove to be productive in determining the possible long-term health effects of phenoxy herbicide exposure. General Myers says the Air Force will continue to work closely with all interested agencies in seeking the answers to questions concerning the health effects, if any, of exposure to herbicide orange in Vietnam.

General's report.

Physical examinations of aircrews involved in Ranch Hand herbicide-spraying operations in Vietnam and a matching control group will be conducted by a Houston clinic awarded an Air Force contract. The examinations will be part of an ongoing Ranch Hand study of the possible long-term health effects of exposure of military members in Vietnam between 1962 and 1970 to a defoliant known as Herbicide Orange. The study consists of three parts: a mortality study; a morbidity -- disease, including birth defects in offspring -- study; and a follow-up. Up to 2,400 physical examinations of the 1,264 Ranch Hand members and a control group -- matched to the Ranch Hand group on a one-to-one ratio by age, occupational category and race -- will be conducted. All physicals will be complete by 30 Sept., according to officials.

Recent legislation now authorizes the Veterans Administration to provide certain health care services to any Vietnam-era veteran who, while on duty in Vietnam, may have been exposed to dioxin, or to a toxic substance in an herbicide or defoliant used for military purposes.



Col. Thomas A. Duff, chief of staff, Electronic Systems Division, AF Systems Command, Hanscom AFB, Mass.

Col. Donald J. Maxwell, commander, AF Commissary Service European Region, Ramstein AB, Germany.



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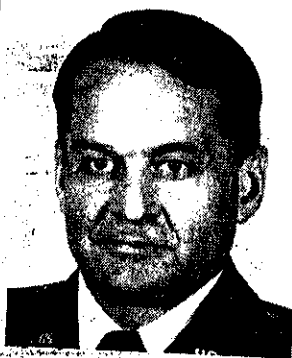
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General Myers reports:

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