

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, GOOD AFTERNOON

MY OBJECTIVE TODAY IS TO PROVIDE YOU WITH SOLID FACTS.
MY METHOD WILL BE TO BRIEF YOU ON THE DAILY S O P FOR HERBICIDE
OPERATIONS IN THE RANCH HAND MISSION IN SE ASIA! 1961 TO 1971

JUST WHAT ARE MY QUALIFICATIONS TO SPEAK ON THIS SUBJECT?

MY NAME IS RALPH DRESSER, I RETIRED AS A COLONEL FROM THE USAF
IN 1982. MY FOCUS THIS MORNING IS NOT ON THAT 30 YEAR CAREER, BUT
THE 27 MONTHS I SPENT IN VIET NAM .

MY FIRST TOUR WAS FROM NOV 1965 TO NOV 1966. I WAS A MAJOR AND
THE COMMANDER OF THE RANCH HAND DEFOLIATION UNIT OUT OF TAN
SON NHUT AIR BASE SIAGON. IN THIS CAPACITY I FLEW 350 DEFOLIATION
MISSIONS. AND MADE 187 EMERGENCY LANDINGS FROM BATTLE
DAMAGE ON THESE SPRAY MISSIONS.

MY SECOND TOUR FROM NOV 69 TO NOV 70 WAS AS A FIGHTER BOMBER
PILOT/OPERATIONS OFFICER OUT OF BIEN HOA RVN AND LATER BIEN
THUY RVN AS A FIGHTER PILOT ADVISOR TO A VIETNAMESE AIR FORCE
FIGHTER WING. IN THESE LAST TWO JOBS I FLEW 400 ADDITIONAL
COMBAT MISSIONS FOR A TOTAL OF 750 MISSIONS AND 1000 HOURS OF
COMBAT.

I RETURNED TO RVN IN NOV 1972 AS A COLONEL COMMANDING A 150 MAN
AFLC TEAM TO RE-ASSEMBLE, TEST AND DELIVER, TO THE VNAF, 32 F-5
FIGHTERS WHICH I HAD JUST IMPORTED ON C-5'S FROM THE COUNTRY OF
IRAN. SEC KISSINGER DELAYED SIGNING THE PARIS PEACE ACCORDS
UNTIL I COULD COMPLETE THIS MISSION CALLED ENHANCE PLUS.

WITH ME ON THE PODIUM IS MAJOR JACK SPEY, USAF RETIRED. THIS MAN
WENT TO RVN WITH THE VERY FIRST DEFOLIATION UNIT IN 1961 AND
REMAINED WITH THE UNIT ACTIVELY FLYING SPRAY MISSIONS UNTIL JUN
1966---THAT'S 42 MONTHS---HE WOULD HAVE STAYED LONGER, BUT THEY
ORDERED HIM HOME! HE RETURNED TO THE COMBAT ZONE IN LAOS IN
1970. JACK HAS BEEN THE PRESIDENT OF OUR RANCH HAND VIETNAM
ASSOCIATION SINCE 1966. HE HAS MORE FIRST HAND OPERATIONAL
KNOWLEDGE OF THIS MISSION THAN ANYONE IN THE WORLD!!

THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE RANCH HAND FLIGHT CREWS AND GROUND LOADING CREWS HAD SEVERAL HUNDRED TIMES MORE DIRECT DAILY EXPOSURE TO THE HERBICIDES WE USED THAN ANYONE ELSE IN RVN OR THE WORLD. THIS EXPOSURE WAS WITHOUT ANY SPECIAL CLOTHING OR PRECAUTIONS. SOME OF OUR FOLKS HAVE EVEN TASTED IT.

THESE HERBICIDES—ORANGE, WHITE, BLUE AND PURPLE-- ARRIVED IN RVN ABOARD SHIP IN 55 GALLON DRUMS AS A LIQUID. OUR CREWS LOADED OUR STORAGE TANKS AND AIRCRAFT TANKS BY SMALL PUMPS. NEITHER OUR FLIGHT CREWS OR GROUND CREWS EVER USED ANY PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT OTHER THAN STANDARD ISSUE FLYING OR WORK GLOVES. FLIGHT CREWS DID WEAR STANDARD FLACK VESTS AND HELMETS SUCH AS THIS ONE. OUR CONCERN WAS GETTING SHOT, NOT HERBICIDE EXPOSURE.

OUR METHOD OF DELIVERY WAS FROM A 1000 GALLON AIRCRAFT TANK, THRU A SMALL GASOLINE POWERED PUMP TO BOOM NOZZLES LOCATED UNDER THE TAIL AND EACH WING. THE PILOT CONTROLLED THE RELEASE OF THE HERBICIDE FROM A TOGGLE SWITCH ON HIS CONTROL COLUMN. WHEN THIS RELEASE OCCURRED IT WAS IN A FINE MIST. THE RATE OF OUR DELIVERY WAS AT THREE GALLONS FOR EACH ACRE. THIS WAS DELIVERED FROM AN ALTITUDE OF ONE HUNDRED FIFTY FEET (150) ABOVE THE FOLIAGE AT 130 TO 150 KNOTS. EACH AIRCRAFT LEFT A SWATH ABOUT 300FEET WIDE AND 14 KILOMETERS LONG. WE FLEW IN A FORMATION OF 2 OR MORE AIRCRAFT. WE USED A USAF FORWARD AIR CONTROLLER IN THE TARGET AREA AND 2 OR MORE FIGHTER ESCORTS. WE USUALLY HAD ARMY "DUSTOFF" CHOPPERS ACCOMPANY US.

OUR TARGETS WERE IN "FREE FIRE ZONES" THUS THERE WERE NEVER FRIENDLY TROOPS IN OUR TARGET AREA. THESE TARGET AREAS WERE REQUESTED BY THE VERY ARMY, MARINE, NAVY GROUND COMMANDERS RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR TROOPS. THESE REQUESTS STARTED AT THE LOCAL PROVINCE CHIEFS HEADQUARTERS AND MOVED ALL THE WAY UP TO MACV HEADQUARTERS FOR FINAL COORDINATION AND APPROVAL. OUR CROP DESTRUCTION MISSIONS ADDITIONALLY HAD TO HAVE THE U.S. AMBASSORORS APPROVAL.

BECAUSE OF THE HEAT IN RVN AND OUR NOT HAVING ANY AIRCRAFT AIR CONDITIONING, WE FLEW WITH ALL WINDOWS AND DOORS FULLY OPEN. THIS ALLOWED THIS MIST TO COMPLETELY SATURATE THE PLANES INTERIOR AND OUR FLIGHT CLOTHING CONSISTING OF STANDARD ISSUE GI PANTS / BOOTS, TEE SHIRTS WITH PURPLE SCARF, FLACK VEST, GROIN PROTECTOR, HELMET & ALL THE GUNS/AMMO WE COULD CARRY.

OUR MOST FAMOUS AIRCRAFT CALLED "PATCHES" BECAUSE OF ITS MANY BULLET HOLES, WAS PLACED IN THE USAF MUSEUM ABOUT 1980 BUT WAS NOT ALLOWED INSIDE A HANGAR UNTIL 2 YEARS AGO DUE TO THE SMELL OF THE RESIDUAL HERBICIDE.

THE DEFOLIATION PROJECT HAS BEEN OVER FOR ABOUT 35 YEARS, YET CONTROVERSY CONTINUES ABOUT THE SPECULATED EFFECT "AGENT ORANGE" (A MEDIA DEVELOPED TERM) HAD ON ANY HUMANS, ANIMALS OR FOLIAGE. THIS MYTH HAS GROWN FROM SUBJECTS ON THE GROUND IN DEFOLIATED AREAS DURING/AFTER SPRAYING TO ALL OF VIET NAM.

THERE ARE THOSE WHO INSIST MANY VIET NAM VETERAN'S MEDICAL PROBLEMS THAT PERSIST TODAY OR CAUSED THEIR DEATHS WERE CAUSED BY THIS SPRAYING OR AS COLLATERAL DAMAGE RESULTING FROM SPRAYING. I DON'T DOUBT MANY HAVE SERIOUS PROBLEMS, BUT THE BEST MEDICAL SCIENCE DOES NOT SUPPORT ANY PROVEN CAUSE AND EFFECT FROM HERBICIDES. JACK SPEY AND I ARE VETERANS. THERE WERE ABOUT 1250 OTHER RANCH HAND VETERANS. ALL WITH DIRECT DAILY EXPOSURE TO HERBICIDES FOR PERIODS OF 1 YEAR TO 42 MONTHS. I CAN ASSURE YOU WE ARE INTERESTED IN ANY AND ALL EFFECTS ON OUR HEALTH, THE WELFARE OF OUR FAMILIES AND THESE VETERANS.

90% OF THESE RANCHHANDS VOLUNTEERED FOR 5 IN DEPTH 3 DAY PHYSICAL EXAMS OVER A 20 YEAR PERIOD AT THE BEST CIVILIAN MEDICAL FACILITIES IN THIS COUNTRY. THESE "USAF HEALTH STUDY" EXAMS WERE IN A DOUBLE BLIND FORMAT WITH ABOUT 2000 OTHER VETERANS WITH NO KNOWN EXPOSURE TO HERBICIDES. THE FINDINGS OF THESE EXAMS WAS THAT THE RANCH HANDS IN THE STUDY WERE IN AS GOOD OR BETTER HEALTH THAN THOSE COHORTS STUDIED.

THE BEST "SHOW AND TELL" I CAN GIVE YOU IS JACK SPEY STANDING HERE IN EXCELLENT HEALTH. AT 67 YEARS OLD HE STILL FLYS HIS OWN AEROBATIC CERTIFIED AIRPLANE WITH THE REQUIRED PHYSICALS ETC.

AS FOR MYSELF, I AM 74, AND WORK 2 FULL TIME JOBS AS A COUNTY FIRE MARSHAL AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COORDINATOR.

WITH OUR UNPROTECTED DAILY EXPOSURE, HOW CAN ONE EXPLAIN OUR OBVIOUS GOOD HEALTH WHEN COMPARED TO THOSE WHO INSIST THAT A MULTITUDE OF PHYSICAL MALADIES "MAY" HAVE BEEN CAUSED BY ANY EXPOSURE DAYS, WEEKS, MONTHS OR EVEN YEARS AFTER SPRAYING ?

IN CLOSING, I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE THE FOLLOWING 10 POINTS:

- RANCH HAND FLIGHT/GROUND CREWS WERE HEAVILY EXPOSED DAILY, WITH NO HERBICIDE PROTECTIVE CLOTHING AND NO AIR CONDITIONING ON OUR AIRCRAFT.
- OUR CREWS HERBICIDE EXPOSURE FAR EXCEEDED ALL GROUND TROOPS EXPOSURE IN ALL LIQUID, GASEOUS AND RESIDUAL FORMS.
- WE DID NOT KNOWINGLY OVERFLY, SPRAY OR DUMP OUR LOAD OVER FRIENDLY TROOPS.
- WE DID SPRAY MALETHION INSECTICIDE OVER CITIES, BASES, AND CAMPS FOR MALARIA CONTROL. MUCH OF THIS WAS SPRAYING WAS CONFUSED WITH HERBICIDE ORANGE.
- OUR TARGETS WERE FREE FIRE ZONES CLEARED OF ALL FRIENDLYS
- OUR FIGHTER ESCORT WAS UNDER LOCAL FAC CONTROL.
- OUR TARGETS WERE REQUESTED BY LOCAL GROUND COMMANDERS AND APPROVED AT THE HIGHEST MAC V AND EMBASSY LEVELS.
- WE DISPENSED OUR SPRAY AT 3 GALS/ACRE FROM 150 FEET ALTITUDE
- THE 20YEAR USAF HEALTH STUDY HAS NOT FOUND CLEAR EVIDENCE OF ANY MEDICAL MALADY AMONG THE RANCH HAND PARTICIPANTS
- MANY POLITICAL DECISIONS HAVE BEEN MADE ABOUT "POSSIBLE ASSOCIATED MEDICAL PROBLEMS" THESE POLITICAL DECISIONS BY THE VA HAVE BEEN IMPLIMENTED WITH NO SCIENTIFIC PROOF PROVIDED.

TO THE RANCH!!

RALPH C. DRESSER, COL USAF (RET)

