



E. R. ZUMWALT, JR.  
ADMIRAL, U. S. NAVY (RET.)

4 April 1991

Charles M. Williams  
Executive Director  
AMERICAN EX-PRISONERS OF WAR  
Room 9109 VARO  
941 North Capitol, NE  
Washington, DC 20421

Dear Mr. Williams:


On February 6, 1991, President Bush signed the Agent Orange Act of 1991. This is the first statutory recognition by the Government of the disabling effects of Agent Orange exposure. Under the legislation the National Academy of Science has the primary responsibility for evaluating and reporting findings of health effects of dioxin exposure to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. Under this measure, veterans suffering from two forms of cancer, non-Hodgkins lymphoma and soft tissue sarcoma, will be eligible for compensation. Much needs to be done to review the scientific literature and the possibility to conduct pilot studies to determine other diseases which may be caused by exposure to Agent Orange. In my report to the Secretary, I reported my finding that 28 diseases are probably caused by exposure to Agent Orange.

Unfortunately, the National Academy of Science will not render its first report to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs until August 1992. In the meantime, Vietnam veterans continue to suffer and die of exotic cancers as a result of exposure to Agent Orange. Wives of Vietnam veterans who have two and three children with birth defects are penniless.

In order to fill the gap, it is my view, and also shared by other Vietnam veterans, that there is a need to establish an Agent Orange Coordinating Council, made up of veterans service organizations. The Council is necessary in the interim until the National Academy of Science is geared up and effectively reviewing the scientific literature and making recommendations to the Secretary for compensation.

I would appreciate it if you could indicate to me your willingness to provide a representative on the Agent Orange Coordinating Council. The fight for compensation and a fair settlement of the issue is not over. Veterans service organizations need to closely monitor the actions of the National Academy of Science and I look forward to working with you as we set up and effectively utilize an Agent Orange Coordinating Council.

Sincerely,

  
E. R. Zumwalt, Jr.