

AGENT ORANGE

Admiral Zumwalt

Speaking at the Coalition Leadership Breakfast on November 12, 1994, Adm. E.R. Zumwalt addressed the state of the Agent Orange issue. He noted that spraying in Vietnam was outlawed in 1970. Nevertheless, the die was cast. He learned about this first-hand when his son, a Vietnam veteran, was diagnosed with, and later died from, non-Hodgkins lymphoma. The doctors suspected a correlation to Agent Orange exposure at the time.

In 1989, Zumwalt prepared a report at the request of then Secretary of Veterans Affairs Edwin Derwinski, recommending 28 diseases for benefit status as presumptively caused by Agent Orange exposure. However, Derwinski was overruled, and only three diseases, NHL, soft-tissue sarcoma and chloracne were afforded benefit status.

Next, after \$68 million was spent pursuing what Zumwalt termed fraudulent studies, the National Academy of Sciences was statutorily designated to conduct a review of the existing studies. The fraud, according to Zumwalt, has been premised on two bases: a determination that it would be too costly to the budget to correlate dioxin exposure to adverse health effects and a desire by big corporations to avoid substantial tort liability.

Meanwhile, the National Cancer Institute has been conducting studies of farmers spraying dioxin-contaminated pesticides. The research shows that farmers not wearing protective clothing are eight times more likely to experience cancer, and even with protective clothing, the disease experience is sixfold.

The NAS panel was supposed to consist entirely of neutrals on the dioxin issue, but it was quickly discovered that the Vice Chairman was on record as

strongly denying any linkage between dioxin exposure and adverse health effects and that he had played a major role in assisting in the weakening of dioxin standards in Georgia. After he was forced off the panel, NAS recommended six diseases for inclusion as VA-compensable.

EPA has just completed a reassessment of dioxin which strongly recognizes its hazards, which has been put out for comment. Zumwalt is urging veterans organizations to appeal to Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jesse Brown to come out in support of EPA. However, the VA bureaucrats, Zumwalt stated, are "constitutionally opposed to veterans."

The next agenda item is to sponsor a joint study in Vietnam as the best laboratory for research: we know the spray levels there, we can measure mothers' milk, and South Vietnamese can be compared with ethnically identical North Vietnamese.

(Ed. Note: Vietnamese officials have agreed to allow American researchers to conduct a study on Agent Orange in areas where U.S. planes sprayed the defoliant during the Vietnam War ...)

But (Zumwalt) said that the study and related research in the United States would cost about \$50 million a year, which would have to be approved by Congress. (*Washington Post*, Sept. 24, 1994, p. A28).

Following the speech, Coalition chairman Tom Burch presented Zumwalt with the Vietnam Veterans Medal of Honor - the third one so awarded - and announced the Coalition board of directors had expressly endorsed Zumwalt's study concept and pledged to fight for authorizing legislation.

AOCAP Distress Signal

Dozens of programs benefiting Vietnam veterans and their families will

close in less than two years when the foundation that has funded them since 1989 runs out of cash.

Begun with money from a class action lawsuit against the manufacturers of the herbicide Agent Orange, the Agent Orange Class Assistance Program (AOCAP) has built a network of community agencies providing veterans with family services the VA doesn't offer.

But with AOCAP funding for such assistance court-mandated to end in 1996, these grassroots organizations are starting to look to the future--and it doesn't look bright...

"They should be worried," (AOCAP assistant director Mike Leaveck) said. "There has been quite a scrambling for funds and with the results of the elections, we cannot count on federal funding either. People tend to think the VA takes care of the veterans. But the VA doesn't take care of the families."

Some programs already have been promised state funding...

Several local agencies have banded together to form the National Alliance of Veterans Families Service Organizations... (*Stars and Stripes*, 12-18 Dec. 1994, p. 2).

Repeat Story

Vietnamese specialists are seeking support from retired U.S. Adm. Elmo Zumwalt, who commanded naval forces during the Vietnam War. ...

(Dr. Nguyen Thi Ngoc) Phuong said surveys show that dioxin from Agent Orange lingering in body tissue affects young mothers as well as men exposed decades ago. She predicts a closer look would show dramatic proportions.

"We must carry out long-term studies, but we can't, she said. "After we concentrate on schools, housing family

planning, it costs too much for us.”

Dr. Arnold Schecter, a dioxin specialist at the State University of New York at Binghamton who is coming to Vietnam with Zumwalt, declined to draw conclusions from studies done so far.

“We just don’t know yet,” Schecter said. “We hope to convince the U.S. government to fund its own scientists to do dioxin research, in cooperation with the Vietnamese, for the profit of everyone.” ...

After the war, impoverished and isolated Vietnamese officials conducted only sketchy research into contamination. They found many presumed victims had died undiagnosed in remote mountain areas. ...

Statistics show a sharp increase of these disorders - choriocarcinoma and molar pregnancies - among women in their early 20s, although Schecter cautions this has not been conclusively linked to dioxin. ... (*Chicago Tribune*, Sept. 8, 1994)

History Lesson

The Select Senate Committee on PW-MIA Documents Received After Feb. 1, 1993 (Box 17, Memorandum for the Record: Subject: Meeting of the NSC Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam, 22 Dec. 1970) reveal that Agent Orange spraying was not discontinued in 1970, despite orders to that effect. To wit:

Herbicides: Reading of the latest traffic from MACV and Embassy Saigon has left the State Department in doubt as to field interpretation of national policy on the use of herbicides in RVN. Ambassador Sullivan has requested a careful review of traffic to assess what activities on herbicides will be carried out in the field. He hope this could be done without further messages to Saigon and MACV. The OJCS is undertaking to sort this out.

Miscellaneous

1. **New information** surfaces on the 1981 Nhommarath raid, conducted by the CIA into Laos to reconnoiter for possible American POWs, in *Time*, 10/17/94

2. **Postmaster General Marvin T. Runyon** could lose his job over something as innocent as a cancelled stamp. Last May, 82 senators urged Runyon to print a POW-MIA stamp, but an advisory board - taking its cue from the Postmaster - recently gave the idea a thumbs down. Now, irate senators ... are demanding that he be fired. (*Business Week*, Oct. 10, 1994, p. 57).

3. **Activist Joe Jordan** comments further, in an undated fax, on the Hanoi photo archive he purchased and displayed at the National Alliance of Families convention in July: “In the February 1994 Issue of ‘American Spectator’, John Corry ... (quoted) from a declassified report that said that investigators had seen USAF Col. (Wallace G.) Hynds ID card #16792 in (a) North Vietnamese war museum (Sen. John) Kerry, in his rebuttal letter ... went on to assert ‘The ID card belongs to someone else.’ (10% of the Hanoi photos now in Jordan’s possession) have photo numbers over 400 and are in ... Volume II (of two volumes).... Both Hynds and his co-pilot are shown only in Volume II.... During the ... Convention, only one photo (Out of thousands) from the Hanoi albums was stolen (t)hat of Col. Hynds’s card. Don’t you find that strange? (We have extras....)

4. **The World Bank** plans to lend at least \$400 million in fresh funds to help Vietnam upgrade its energy, irrigation and banking systems (*Wall Street Journal*, Sep. 19, 1994, p. A7A).

5. **Family member John Fellows** suggests that the log prepared by the 559th Air Defense Group, DRV, and turned over to the U.S., may be a recent fabrication. He bases this contention on anachronistic data pertaining to his relative, which possibly originates with errors in U.S. intelligence analysis potentially turned over to the Vietnamese. (See “*The Vacant Chair*,” by John Fellows, (Phone) (612) 854-3244).

6. **Resurrection** The mother of a Marine reported killed when his helicopter was shot down in Vietnam 25 years ago awaited an explanation after the Navy informed

her of a change in her son’s status.

Joan Dunham said she received a two-page letter last week advising her that the status of Cpl. Bruce Edward Kane had been changed from “killed in action” to “last known alive.”

The change was not the first regarding Kane, his mother said. Dunham said the Navy notified her in 1992 that her son was killed in Laos, not South Vietnam as it initially said. (*AP*, Nov. 15, 1994, 01:32 FST).

Agent Orange Survey

Created by Vietnam Veterans of Florida, State Coalition.

Getting the true health picture of Vietnam vets and their children is what this Agent Orange Survey is all about.

Help us get the straight facts. We need your confidential input now. The preliminary results of the first 11,092 vets indicate that something is wrong. In order to obtain conclusive results we need more veteran input. Please help your fellow vets by obtaining a free copy of the survey. This is the only way we can obtain unbiased information for presentation to the VA and the U.S. Congress.

Please send a self-addressed and stamped envelope to:

Agent Orange Survey
1919 NE 45th Street
Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33308
or call toll-free
1-800-366-1319