

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

NEXT MEETING  
OF THE  
AGENT ORANGE COORDINATING COUNCIL

Thursday

**April 23, 1998, at 2 PM**

Admiral Zumwalt's office

**Agent Orange Coordinating Council  
Meeting**

January 15, 1998

Office of Admiral Zumwalt

**Members Present:**

Admiral E. R. Zumwalt, Jr. (Chair)  
Richard S. Christian (Vice Chair)  
American Legion (Tracy Underwood and Matt Puglisi)  
National Vietnam Veterans Coalition (Bill Bennett)  
Vietnam Veterans of America (Bill Russo and Paul Sutton)  
Vietnam Veterans of America/NJ State AO Council (Mike Eckstein and George Fallon)  
Oklahoma Agent Orange Foundation (David Carter and Bob Wilson)  
Virginia Veterans Agent Orange Task Force (Mike Redden)  
Veterans of Foreign Wars (Robert Gardner)  
Women's Army Corps Veterans Association (Lois Beck)  
VietNow National (Sandra Davis)  
The Retired Enlisted Assoc (Mark Olanoff)  
Disabled American Vets (Steven Hamer)

**Members Absent:**

Agent Orange Victims & Widows Support Network  
Military Order of the Purple Heart  
Agent Orange Data Base  
Air Force Sergeants Association  
American Ex-Prisoners of War  
Catholic War Veterans  
Fleet Reserve Association  
Jewish War Veterans  
Polish Legion of American Veterans, USA  
National Association of Military Widows  
Retired Officers Association

**Staff and Guests Present:**

Mary Schoelen, Minority Council, Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs  
Colonel Michael E. Spiro, USMC (Ret.) (International Consortium for Research on the Health  
Effects of Radiation)  
Gary Allord  
Daniel V. Flanagan, Flanagan Consulting Group  
Bart Stichman, National Veterans Legal Services Program  
Roy Jobber, Canada Vets  
Priscilla Barry

and that the following major problems existed:

1. They had a scientist who is a "corporate doc," i.e., had done studies in support of the chemical companies.
2. Insufficient study subjects.
3. Using Persian Gulf veterans along with Vietnam veterans.
4. The method for determining exposure was so weak that it was useless.

Dr Feussner, Director of VA Research and Development (who is authority for funding of these medical centers), made a trip to Louisville along with two associates. The Louisville researchers had corrected the deficiencies pointed out in the meeting with Secretary Gober: the scientist in question is no longer connected with the study, Persian Gulf veterans have been eliminated, number of study subjects increased, improved the process of making the Agent Orange assessment practical, and added disabilities into the study. Because of all the efforts, the VA has settled all of issues raised.

In addition to the study at Louisville, it was brought to Admiral Zumwalt's attention that a lung cancer study is being conducted by the VA. Admiral Zumwalt asked experts at Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center to review the study. Three separate opinions from the scientists indicate that the study is very badly done. At the same time that the study was sent to FHCRC for review, a letter was sent to the VA protesting the study. VA has recently sent a reply defending the study, and now Admiral Zumwalt is preparing a rebuttal including the scientific reports. Please see attached correspondence and consider bringing additional pressure to bear on VA on that badly done study. Hopefully, an outpour of correspondence will let them know that we are watching, and we are not going to put up with fraudulently done work.

### **Status of NAS Exposure Modeling Project**

In 1991, Congress mandated a study commissioned by the VA and conducted by NAS to review the existing efforts at the assessment of herbicide exposure among Vietnam veterans. The National Academy of Sciences (Institute of Medicine) issued an RFP (Request for Proposal) in 1997 entitled *Characterizing Exposure of Veterans to Agent Orange and Other Herbicides Used in Vietnam* to 30 organizations. The RFP is specifically to develop an exposure model so that a major epidemiological study can be done. Columbia University (Drs. Jeanne and Steven Stellman) have applied to the NAS along with two other organizations. On December 4 they were informed that their proposal was in the competitive range and that follow-up questions needed to be answered by January 6 which has been done. The NAS committee should make their final decision during the last week of January.

Background material on studies done by ChemRisk was distributed with the agenda. It is an example of what we are up against with the moneys being spent by industry to hide the truth.

David Carter mentioned that he read in last Saturday's Dallas Morning News that the University of Texas at Houston was given a \$900,000 grant to study birth defects and Agent Orange. He will investigate and provide more information.

Bill Russo of VVA reminded us that vigilance needs to continue even after we are successful in winning compensation for a particular disease. In particular, he brought us up to date on the spina bifida issue. In late 1996, Congress passed a law providing compensation, rehabilitation and health care benefits for the children of Vietnam Vets suffering from the birth defect spina bifida. (This was based on the NAS conclusion in its April 96 report that spina bifida was linked to Agent Orange.) VVA along with other service organizations offered its services to the Dept of VA for writing the regulation to implement the law that would provide fair compensation and benefits to the children. Essentially, the VA discounted all of the recommendations that were submitted during the process. The final VA regulation that came out in October 1, 1997, was unfair and did not provide full compensation for the deserving children. Since then a meeting was held with VA. The VA Central Office (Adjudication and Compensation Division) has agreed to review every VA spina bifida claim that has been submitted. They are discovering that the regional offices are improperly adjudicating these claims. (Children are being rated in lower disability levels.) In the last few weeks Christine Moffet, VA Director of Compensation and Pension Services, has resign. Beginning in February, the new Director will be Robert Eppley (currently St Louis VA Regional Office Director). Another meeting is set at the end of January at VA.

Dan Flanagan mentioned that the 25th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War will fall in the year 2000. He suggested we package our priorities into a goal for the millenium and distribute it. Dan Flanagan, Dick Christian, and Admiral Zumwalt will work on a letter highlighting Year 2000 goals.

David Carter brought the group up to date on a small study being done on testosterone level problem with Vietnam veterans. The study found that Vietnam veterans, that were tested, suffered from low testosterone levels. A German study found that German civilians exposed occupationally suffered similar low levels. It was discovered that testosterone testing is not part of the VA Agent Orange screening. Local hospitals will perform the test upon request. It was also learned that FDA research discovered that male hormones protect one from auto immune diseases, specifically anti-DNA. This may show why lupus is found in Vietnam veterans, i.e., males exposed to a hormone inhibitor (dioxin), suffer low testosterone, manifest female disease. Veterans that have been put on hormone replacement therapy have discovered less fatigue. Please disseminate this information to your organizations. Perhaps NJAOC can bring this small study to the attention of Dr. Schecter to expand upon. Admiral Zumwalt asked for copy of the studies.

The meeting was adjourned at 3 PM.