

MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE AGENT ORANGE PROGRAMS

THE OKLAHOMA AGENT ORANGE FOUNDATION

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ORAL TESTIMONY OF DAVID F. CARTER BEFORE THE SENATE VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE HEARING ON AGENT ORANGE, HELD MAY 12, 1988

The VA must be mandated to provide specific health care for specific diseases. Why? Because a conflict of interest has arisen in the VA structure. If proper medical care is given to Veterans suffering from the effects of chemical warfare weapons, then that admission of a problem supports Veterans' disability claims, which cannot be granted because of budgetary restraints.

At the same time, U.S. defense contractors are pressuring for more so-called "conclusive" evidence of damage to American Veterans by their products, because those unsafe products have been sold for general use since the U.S. Government's wise decision to halt their use in Vietnam.

What this amounts to is that benefit of doubt given to Veterans by the U.S. Code of Military Justice has instead been given to a chemical, rather than a citizen. The truth is that these chemicals are carcinogenic and are cancer promoters. They cause chromosome damage, are teratogenic, mutagenic; they damage the thyroid, kidneys, heart, and blood-forming organs, liver and brain.

They may be the main cause of autoimmune diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis, mixed connective tissue disease, and systemic Lupus erythematosus. They cause changes in mood and promote antisocial behavior.

They are excreted in seminal fluid and, as such, are not only sexually transmitted to our wives, but they also expose the fetus in the uterus. They damage and/or compromise the human immune system, and they are in fact at least a cofactor and more probably the direct cause of the expression of leukemia viruses; and that would include the so-called "AIDS epidemic".

And the children of exposed parents are predisposed to leukemias.

Because of the fact that the VA hospitals are intricate parts of many teaching hospitals, the Veterans Administration disinformation filters down to medical students, who are then faced with the task of treating American civilians suffering from chemically induced illnesses, not only with little training in the field but they must face this task after being diseducated.

For instance, the VA altered literature to remove a cancer warning issued to Vietnam Veterans and their physicians; hence, thousands of exposed Veterans and civilians have been denied the benefit of early detection for certain cancers.

Also, medicines that our physicians use sometimes actually worsen the symptoms of a misunderstood disease, for instance cortisone. And a recent CDC Vietnam Experience Study was released in two versions -- one version in an inaccurate article in the Journal of the American Medical Association that goes to your children's doctor, and a more correct article in the CDC monograph with less than adequate distribution.

There are many parallels between the war technologies of radiation and toxic chemicals. Perhaps most noteworthy is the brain damage suffered by our children. Eighteen years after every above-ground nuclear test in Nevada, the SAT scores of U.S. children fell.

Much information is available on actual physical brain damage occurring because of toxic exposure, yet many hundreds of 55 gallon drums of military surplus Agent Blue was used as a contact herbicide in our public schools, after its use was discontinued in Vietnam; and as of yet, there have been no health warnings issued. War technologies do not make good peacetime businesses.

I recently made a presentation to high school seniors; they immediately saw the folly of Americans slaughtering Americans for profit. We must correct this situation openly and honorably if we are to encourage the next generation to preserve this republic. They are watching.

A couple of quick statements on what I have heard today.

You representatives of we, the people, must pay attention to the synergistic effects of multi-chemical exposure, and not just the narrow issue of Agent Orange.

There is no normal level of a synthetic chemical in a human being. The fact that there is an average is our shame, but there is no normal; and you must remember individual tolerances.

And remember that Veterans were a healthier group of citizens before they were in the service. So, even if our health has deteriorated to the point of being average, that is in fact, a decline.

In conclusion, we will call for the immediate support of S. 1787, and we hope this results in direct health care for Vietnam Veterans.