FBI said to be investiga'

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Minnesota official says the FBI is investigating whether Agriculture Secretary John Block could benefit from a $400,000 federal loan to a business partner and whether Block disclosed all his assets on financial disclosure forms.

Block said Thursday he had nothing to hide and that part of the recent criticism of his finances is politically motivated.

The FBI would neither confirm nor deny that an investigation was under way. But Minneso' Agriculture Commissioner Jim Nichols said Wednesday that the FBI is probing whether made a full disclosure of his assets on

disclosure form officials.

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Defoliant not linked to defects

ATLANTA (AP) — Government scientists said Thursday that Vietnam veterans exposed to Agent Orange apparently run no overall increased danger of fathering children with birth defects, although the risk may be higher for a few specific defects, including spina bifida.

In the cases of those rare defects, the researchers said, the study was unable to conclude whether Agent Orange was a factor.

The study, reported by the national Centers for Disease Control, covered children born in the Atlanta area between 1968 and 1980.

Data were available on the fathers of 4,815 children with birth defects and 2,967 healthy children, and in both cases, 9 percent of their fathers were Vietnam veterans.

"For most (birth defects) ... Vietnam veterans' risks were neither higher or lower than those of other fathers," the CDC said.

Similarly, the Atlanta-based agency said there was no statistical difference for children of fathers exposed to Agent Orange, a controversial herbicide used to destroy millions of acres of jungle growth in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War.

The CDC researchers said that while the overall risks for 95 different birth defects was the same for veterans and non-veterans, veterans exposed to Agent Orange ran a higher risk of having children with a few rare, specific defects.