



OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

3000 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-3000

ACQUISITION,  
TECHNOLOGY  
AND LOGISTICS

The Honorable Lane Evans  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
335 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

SEP 23 2003

The DVA is aware that the list of places outside of Vietnam where herbicides were used "does not contain any references to routine base maintenance activities such as range management, brush clearing, weed killing, etc., -- records-- were generally kept no longer than two years." (see attached memo)

Dear Congressman Evans:

This is in response to your letter to the Secretary of Defense concerning the use and storage of Vietnam-era herbicides, including the contaminant dioxin on Guam. I am responding, on his behalf.

The Department has found no record of the use, storage, or testing of Herbicides Orange, Blue, or White on Guam. In 1952, roughly 5,000 drums of Herbicide Purple were transported to Guam and stored there in anticipation of use on the Korean Peninsula. The herbicide was never used and was returned to the United States. Although other herbicides may have passed through Guam during the Vietnam Conflict, we have no record of long-term storage or use of these herbicides on Guam.

The presence of dioxin contamination at a site does not necessarily indicate that Herbicide Orange was used or stored at that site. According to Air Force studies, the dioxins at sites references in the Public Health Assessment were associated with burned material. Access to sites on Guam with elevated dioxin levels is highly restricted and public exposure is not expected.

A summary of information obtained from a search of the records at the U.S. Army's Center for Unit Records Research on the use Vietnam-era herbicides in the other locations you requested is attached and has already been supplied to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Sincerely,

Philip W. Grone

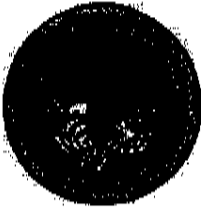
Principal Assistant Under Secretary of Defense  
(Installations and Environment)

The Department of the Army, after reviewing thousands of physical and digital records, were unable to find any evidence of the 5000 barrels of purple herbicide being returned to Fort Detrick from Guam. (see attached letter)

The VA has used this unsubstantiated story over and over to turn down Guam Veteran's herbicide cases.

Attachment:  
As stated





DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  
Veterans Benefits Administration  
Washington, D.C. 20460

205516  
16-27

According to this internal memo the DVA is aware that the list of places outside of Vietnam where herbicides were used "does not contain any references to routine base maintenance activities such as range management, brush clearing, weed killing, etc.,-- records-- were generally kept no longer that two years."

**Memorandum for the Record**

**Subject: Herbicide use in Thailand during the Vietnam Era**

The Compensation and Pension Service has reviewed a listing of herbicide use and test sites outside Vietnam provided to our office by the Department of Defense (DoD). This list contains 71 sites within the U.S. and in foreign countries where tactical herbicides, such as Agent Orange, were used, tested, or stored. Testing and evaluations of these tactical herbicides were conducted by or under the direction of the U.S. Army Chemical Corps, Fort Detrick, Maryland. The list does not contain names of individuals. Additionally, it does not contain any references to routine base maintenance activities such as range management, brush clearing, weed killing, etc., because these vegetation control activities were conducted by the Base Civil Engineer and involved the use of commercial herbicides approved by the Armed Forces Pest Control Board. The application of commercial herbicides on military installations was conducted by certified applicators. DoD has advised us that commercial herbicides were routinely purchased by the Base Civil Engineer under federal guidelines and that records of these procurements were generally kept no longer than two years. We have also reviewed a series of official DoD monographs describing in detail the use, testing, and storage of herbicides at various foreign and domestic locations. In addition, the *Project CHECO Southeast Asia Report: Base Defense in Thailand*, produced during the Vietnam era, has been reviewed.

Regarding your veteran claimant with Thailand service, the DoD list indicates only that limited testing of tactical herbicides was conducted in Thailand from 2 April through 8 September 1964. Specifically, the location identified was the Pranburi Military Reservation associated with the Replacement Training Center of the Royal Thai Army, near Pranburi, Thailand. The Report of these tests noted that 5 civilian and 5 military personnel from Fort Detrick, Maryland conducted the spray operations and subsequent research. This location was not near any U.S. military installation or Royal Thai Air Force Base.

Tactical herbicides, such as Agent Orange, were used and stored in Vietnam, not Thailand. We received a letter from the Department of the Air Force stating that, other than the 1964 tests on the Pranburi Military Reservation, there are no records of tactical herbicide storage or use in Thailand. There are records indicating that commercial herbicides were frequently used for vegetation control within the perimeters of air bases during the Vietnam era, but all such use required approval of both the Armed Forces Pest Control Board and the Base Civil Engineer. In Vietnam, tactical herbicides were aerielly

applied by UC-123 aircraft in Operation RANCH HAND or by helicopters under the control of the U.S. Army Chemical Corps. Base Civil Engineers were not permitted to purchase or apply tactical herbicides. There are no records of tactical herbicide spraying by RANCH HAND or Army Chemical Corps aircraft in Thailand after 1964, and RANCH HAND aircraft that sprayed herbicides in Vietnam were stationed in Vietnam, not in Thailand. However, there are records indicating that modified RANCH HAND aircraft flew 17 insecticide missions in Thailand from 30 August through 16 September 1963 and from 14–17 October 1966. The 1966 missions involved the spraying of malathion insecticide for the “control of malaria carrying mosquitoes.” These facts are not sufficient to establish tactical herbicide exposure for any veteran based solely on service in Thailand.

While the Thailand CHECO Report does not report the use of tactical herbicides on allied bases in Thailand, it does indicate sporadic use of non-tactical (commercial) herbicides within fenced perimeters. Therefore, if a veteran’s MOS (military occupational specialty) or unit is one that regularly had contact with the base perimeter, there was a greater likelihood of exposure to commercial pesticides, including herbicides. Security police units were known to have walked the perimeters, especially dog handlers. However, as noted above, there are no records to show that the same tactical herbicides used in Vietnam were used in Thailand. Please consider this information when you evaluate the veteran’s claim.

If the veteran’s claim is based on servicing or working on aircraft that flew bombing missions over Vietnam, please be advised that there is no presumption of “secondary exposure” based on being near or working on aircraft that flew over Vietnam or handling equipment once used in Vietnam. Aerial spraying of tactical herbicides in Vietnam did not occur everywhere, and it is inaccurate to think that herbicides covered every aircraft and piece of equipment associated with Vietnam. Additionally, the high altitude jet aircraft stationed in Thailand generally flew far above the low and slow flying UC-123 aircraft that sprayed tactical herbicides over Vietnam during Operation RANCH HAND. Also, there are no studies that we are aware of showing harmful health effects for any such secondary or remote herbicide contact that may have occurred.

In 1969-70 the rainbow herbicides were on this list.

If the veteran’s claim is based on general herbicide use within the base, such as small-scale brush or weed clearing activity along the flight line or around living quarters, there are no records of such activity involving tactical herbicides, only the commercial herbicides that would have been approved by the Armed Forces Pest Control Board and sprayed under the control of the Base Civil Engineer. Since 1957, the Armed Forces Pest Control Board (now the Armed Forces Pest Management Board) has routinely provided listings of all approved herbicides and other pesticides used on U.S. Military Installations worldwide. The Compensation and Pension Service cannot provide any additional evidence beyond that described above to support the veteran’s claim. Therefore, unless the claim is inherently incredible, clearly lacks merit, or there is no reasonable possibility that further VA assistance would substantiate the claim [see 38 CFR 3.159(d)], regional offices should send a request to JSRRC for any information that this organization can provide to corroborate the veteran’s claimed exposure.

## References

- Buckingham WA (1982): *The Air Force and Herbicides in Southeast Asia, 1961-1971*.  
Office of Air Force History, United States Air Force, Washington DC
- Barnette BH, Jr., Barrow JR (1973): *Base Defense in Thailand - 1968-1972*. Project  
CHECO Report. Air Force Historical Research Center, Maxwell AFB, AL
- Cecil PF (1986): *Herbicide Warfare – The RANCH HAND Project in Vietnam*. Praeger  
Special Studies, Praeger Scientific, New York NY
- Cecil PF, Young AL (2008): *Operation FLYSWATTER: A War Within A War*. *Env Sci  
Pollut Res* 15(1): 3-7



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
HEADQUARTERS, US ARMY GARRISON  
810 SCHREIDER STREET  
FORT DETRICK, MD 21702-5000

REPLY TO  
ATTENTION OF:

August 9, 2011

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)/  
Privacy Act (PA) Office  
**FOIA Case F06-11**

Mr. Vancil Sanderson  
6330 Leon Dr.  
Sun Valley, NV 89433

Dear Mr. Sanderson:

This letter is a final response to your FOIA request, F06-11, received on February 24, 2011. In your FOIA, you requested:

"All documents pertaining to the shipping, storage and destruction of Agent Purple and all rainbow herbicides from Guam." Also, a more complete description of the records you requested is:

"I've sent 2 attachments of documents. The first is from Phillip Grone of the DoD about the 5000 barrels of Agent Purple that was stored on Guam. Next is from the Alvin Young collection (contracted by the government) about the 5000 barrels. If you go to pages 8, 11, and 15, it's said by Mr. Young that the barrels of Agent Purple stored on Guam for use in Korea weren't used and were sent to Camp Detrick after the Korean War, which was from 1950 thru 1953. The agent purple would have been sent back after that, when, I don't exactly know, but probably between probably 1953 and 1975. At some point, it may have been sent to Eglin from Camp or Fort Detrick. Agent Purple is one of the rainbow herbicides."

After a comprehensive search, we have been unable to locate any records responsive to your request. The search was conducted by FOIA personnel and staff at the U.S. Army Garrison (USAG), Fort Detrick, as well as at U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command (USAMRMC) and the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases (USAMRIID). The search included the following:

- A hand search of the USAMRIID archives at USAMRMC headquarters. This search was conducted in consultation with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, who have previously conducted a hand search and inventory of all records within this archive.
- A hand search of archived records under the custody of the Director of the USAMRIID Office of Human Use and Integrity for any records relating to tactical herbicide exposure to humans or the environment.
- A hand search by the USAG records custodian of Records of Transmittal and Receipt, which denote the historical transfer of records maintained within the USAG.

The Department of the Army, after reviewing thousands of physical and digital records, were unable to find any evidence of the 5000 barrels of purple herbicide being returned to Fort Detrick from Guam.

- A digital search through the entire USAMRIID accident database as well as a physical search through archived files and records at the USAMRIID Safety Division employing search terms identified by reviewing your FOIA request.
- Consultation with the USAMRIID librarian for a review of library archived records.

These search efforts comprised a search through all locations where responsive records might reasonably be held and contact with all personnel who might reasonably have custody of responsive records. Unfortunately, despite the review of thousands of physical and digital records, we were unable to locate any responsive to your request.

Although we were unable to locate records responsive to your request, our search did reveal that other Federal agencies have collected information on tactical herbicides once stored at Fort Detrick. There is not sufficient information for us to refer your FOIA agencies directly to these agencies, but we can suggest that you contact them to assist in your research.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Plant Disease Laboratory, at one time tested tactical herbicides in a program operated at Fort Detrick. I recommend you contact the USDA and, or, submit a FOIA request to their agency. The point of contact for the USDA FOIA officer is: Ravoyne Payton, Room 408W - Whitten Bldg., Washington DC 20250; Tel. 202-720-8755; Fax 202-690-0068; Email: [Ravoyne.Payton@ocio.usda.gov](mailto:Ravoyne.Payton@ocio.usda.gov) and [USDAFOIA@ocio.usda.gov](mailto:USDAFOIA@ocio.usda.gov). Further USDA FOIA information can be found on their website: <http://www.dm.usda.gov/foia.htm>.

Additionally, tactical herbicide records from Army programs once operated at Fort Detrick were transferred to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) around approximately 1969. The NARA maintains records for the public, and I recommend you contact them as a next phase of your research. The point of contact for NARA is: [foia@nara.gov](mailto:foia@nara.gov). Further NARA FOIA information can be found on their website: <http://www.archives.gov/foia/>.

Furthermore, all information regarding the past disposal of waste at Fort Detrick can be found in the Fort Detrick Installation Restoration Administrative Record located in the Maryland Room of the Frederick County Public Library. Summaries for each of the sites referenced are found in the appropriate final Remedial Investigation Report document.

I sincerely apologize for the delay in providing this response. As mentioned in previous update letters, this search has involved the review of a significant number of records, many of which are not digitized because of their age. Additionally, the Department of the Army has been engaged in a department-wide endeavor to catalogue and determine the proper releasability of records related to Agent Orange and other tactical herbicides. Our effort to respond to your request has been closely linked with those larger efforts; we have been limited in our ability to respond by the demands of coordinated action across multiple Army components. This is all not to serve as an excuse for our delay, but merely to inform you of our diligent efforts to search through a considerable amount and array of material.

Because this constitutes a "no records found" denial of your request, you are advised of your right to appeal this determination to the Secretary of the Army. If you decide to appeal at this time, your appeal must be submitted within 60 days of the date of this

letter. In your appeal, you must state the basis for your disagreement with the denial and the justification for the release of information associated with your request for this command. Your appeal should be addressed to the address below for forwarding, as appropriate, to the Office of the Secretary of the Army:

U.S. Army Medical Command  
Attention: Freedom of Information/Privacy Acts Office (MCPA)  
2040 Stanley Road  
Fort Sam Houston, TX 78234

There were no fees associated with this FOIA request.

You may reach the FOIA Liaison Officer, Ms. Jill Piercy, at 301-619-8095.

Sincerely,

//Signed//  
JILL L. PIERCY  
Freedom of Information Act/  
Privacy Act Liaison Officer