

Agent Orange on Guam confirmed

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A U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans' ruling in 2005, which concluded that a veteran contracted a disease as a result of his exposure to Agent Orange while stationed on Guam in the late 1960s, is a confirmation that toxic herbicide agents had been used on Guam, Sen. Benjamin Cruz, D-Piti, said on Wednesday.

Cruz said his discovery of the court's decision would strengthen Guam's call for a congressional investigation into the U.S. military's use of toxic chemicals on island. "This is the first acknowledgement by an agency of the federal government that Agent Orange was used on Guam. The diseases attributed to Agent Orange exposure are also prevalent on Guam, which would seem to indicate a real connection that must be investigated," Cruz said.

During the Vietnam war era, Guam was used as storage facility for agent orange, a kind of chemical herbicide used in Vietnam in 1968 and 1969. A CBS News report on June 12, 2005, said Agent Orange was sprayed on Guam from 1955 to 1960s, and in the Panama Canal Zone from 1960s to 1970s.

Cruz obtained an electronic copy of Veteran Law Judge Robert Sullivan's ruling in favor of an unidentified Air Force veteran who developed diabetes mellitus as a result of his exposure to Agent Orange while stationed on duty at the Andersen Air Force Base from Dec. 1966 to Oct. 1968.

After the reviewing the appeal from the Department of Veterans Regional Office in Boston, the appeals court established that "diabetes mellitus is related to the veteran's active service." The court thus ordered the VA office to extend assistance and grant the veteran's claim.

"His military occupation duties as an aircraft maintenance specialist allegedly required him to work in an airfield, the perimeter of which was continuously brown due to herbicide spraying every three months," the court document reads.

"The veteran also alleges that he recalls seeing storage barrels at the edge of the base, which he now knows housed herbicide."

An environmental study and subsequent cleanup was later done at Andersen Air Force Base.