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## Getting back to the problem of Agent Orange and other toxins



It would be impossible to fight war wearing a haz-mat suit to protect against Agent Orange or other toxins

**Let us get back to the Agent Orange problem and the plight of many veterans. Since my first article on Agent Orange appeared in Veterans Today, and other Internet news sites, I**

**have been receiving direct correspondence from those who have had to deal with getting the VA to recognize their plight.**

Dioxin, a component of Agent Orange, has been shown to have severe adverse effects on all living matter whether we are discussing plant life, insects, animals, or human beings. Agent Orange was originally developed as a defoliant agent and used in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and probably a few other places not disclosed to this day, in Southeast Asia, to clear jungle growth and food supplies of our enemy combatants. It all played well on paper, but has become a toxic nightmare for those with even the slightest exposure. It appears to be a “gift that keeps on giving” as the old cliché goes.

In the next series of articles I will go into why Agent Orange exposure is so toxic, but first let me begin by sharing some of the stories of veterans I have been communicating with, which shows how far reaching the problem goes. I do not want to use real names because it may affect their situation with the VA and their applications for coverage, so we’ll use the names Joe (suffering from Parkinson’s Disease), Bill (suffering from liver cancer), and John (suffering from prostate cancer). For these three men and their families, the battle to get the medical care they need starts with having to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that, A-they were actually exposed to Agent Orange, and B-that if they were exposed, Agent Orange is the cause of their illness.

To my knowledge, none of those to whom I have spoken are research scientists or doctors, or have direct access to the secret records of everywhere Agent Orange was used. I am confident most will never know how much or how many times they might have been exposed and whether the exposure might have come from the water they drank, the food they ingested, or the jungles and base camps where they served. If you combine the Agent Orange exposure to other toxins with which they possibly came into contact while serving in the military, like jet fuel, Agent Blue, Agent Purple, Agent Green, incineration of bio medical waste, or in simply transportation of toxin material, most anyone with an ounce of common sense would believe they deserve to receive coverage by the government regardless where they served.

In dealing with the Veterans Administration it is kind of like being on trial with the burden of proof being on the defendant (in this case the defendants are always the veterans). As a veteran myself, I cannot imagine the callous attitude about covering any veteran for any medical problem given the promises that were made prior to enlistment, by any so called public servant or elected official. The problem would not be so critical were it not for the “stonewalling” and failure to “come clean” about the whole Agent Orange debacle and every other possible exposure to toxins as I wrote about in previous articles.

We have watched long enough as friends waste away from the ills of Agent Orange and/or other toxin exposures causing their disabilities and demise. We, as Warriors, took on the enemies of freedom, injustice and strife to preserve this nation. We, now as Veterans, take the continuation of these battles to the politicians and the public servants of the Veterans Administration.



Waging a battle with Washington and the VA to qualify for Agent Orange and other toxin exposures.

Why must we have discussions, battles and disagreements? We were promised benefits, which were legislated by an elected congress, and we now see the bus is pulling out, driven by politicians and VA personnel, and the Veterans finding out they have been thrown under the wheels. As a collective group we need to ask, “Where were you when we were sent to defend the country or hunt down the enemy?” “Where were you when the ammo ran out and we were reduced to fighting hand-to-hand?” “Where were you when the bamboo was lashed to our arms or driven under our fingernails?” “Where were you when the grenade was dropped into the vehicle or the IED exploded underneath the troop carrier?” “And where were you when we drink the ship’s fresh water or the ‘freshly prepared food’ which may have been exposed to dioxin or other toxins in the air?”

And lastly, “Where were you went we came back from war and were stationed at military facilities like Camp LeJeune, El Toro, Kelly Air Force Base, the U.S. Naval Air facility at Atsugi, Japan, or any one of hundreds of bases which have been identified as being home to more than 1400 toxic waste contaminated sites (as identified by and Air Force-Pentagon study in 2003)?”

Where are all these *supposedly* great American servants who “promised us the moon” when we enlisted, and are now finding every way in the book to back away from those promises? They have so squandered our national financial resources on social-issue programs, and hair-brained give-away programs hoping to bolster their re-election campaigns to the point they have now mortgaged the future of our grand-children and cannot make good on our military medical benefits.

Monday we will continue the campaign to educate all Americans on battle we must wage now on the home front to care for those who sacrificed their health to defend and protect this great country.