

## **USFK Finds Trace Amounts of Dioxin amid Agent Orange Probe**

SEOUL, May 23 (Yonhap) -- The U.S. military in South Korea said Monday that its review of military records found "trace amounts" of dioxin at one of its camps in the South, amid an ongoing probe into **claims that leftover toxic chemical Agent Orange was illegally buried there in the late 1970s.**

Still, findings so far have not "directly" indicated that the toxic herbicide was buried at Camp Carroll in southern South Korea in 1978, but the probe has made "some progress," the U.S. Eighth Army said in a statement.

A 1992 report by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers showed that "a large number of drums containing chemicals, pesticides, herbicides and solvents were buried in the vicinity of the area identified by former soldiers in news reports.

Subsequent testing in 2004 included using ground-penetrating radar and boring 13 test holes on and around the site. "Samples from 12 of the holes had no dioxin present. The 13th hole revealed trace amounts of the chemical," Lt. Gen. John D. Johnson, commander of the Eighth Army, said in the statement.

However, Johnson said the amount of the dioxin "was deemed to be no hazard to human health."

Agent Orange, a powerful toxic herbicide that was widely used in the Vietnam War, is suspected of causing serious health problems, including cancer and genetic damage in some people exposed to it and birth defects in their offspring. The defoliant was contaminated by dioxin, a highly toxic substance.



*U.S. Eighth Army commander Lt. Gen. John D. Johnson meets with Yook Dong-han (R), vice minister for the Prime Minister's Office on May 23 over a joint probe into claims of Agent Orange burial by the USFK in the late 1970s. (Yonhap)*

The Eighth Army has conducted a review of its military records as part of its probe into the claims by three American veterans, who appeared on a U.S. TV program last week and accused the USFK of burying at least 250 drums of the toxic chemical inside the camp. "While we are not sure that what we've found directly correlates to the claims made in the media, we have discovered

information about materials buried at Camp Carroll in 1978," Johnson said.

The 1992 study was a general environment assessment and didn't specifically identify Agent Orange, the statement said. Camp Carroll is a USFK logistics base at Waegwan-ri in Chilgok, 300 kilometers southeast of Seoul. "While we are definitely making some progress, we still have much to do," Johnson said.

South Korea's Environment Ministry and the USFK launched the joint on-site probe into the alleged illegal dumping of the chemical.

Before heading to Camp Carroll late Monday for a site inspection, Johnson met Yook Dong-han, the vice minister of the Prime Minister's Office who heads a government task force to deal with the claims, and promised that the USFK will "actively" cooperate with the joint probe with South Korea. "Because this matter is related to the safety of our people, the most important thing is to quickly proceed with the joint investigation and verify the claims as soon as possible," Yook told reporters during the meeting.

Johnson said the USFK's top priority remains ensuring the health and safety of its soldiers, families, civilian workforce and Korean neighbors.

The U.S. military is widely known to have sprayed Agent Orange south of the Demilitarized Zone in the late 1960s to help better detect North Korean infiltrations into the South.

Some 28,500 American service members are currently stationed in the country, a legacy of the 1950-53 Korean War.

About 3,800 people work at Camp Carroll, and 900 U.S. soldiers live there, according to USFK officials.

Environmental contamination at U.S. bases has been a source of friction between South Korea and the U.S. in the past as the USFK has returned some of its bases to South Korea.

In central Seoul, scores of environmental activists rallied near the U.S. embassy building, calling for the U.S. to show a "responsible attitude" over the claims of Agent Orange burial. "The burial of the defoliant is an environmental crime systematically committed by the USFK," reads a banner of the activists.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2011/05/23/57/0301000000AEN20110523008900315F.HTML>