

## **Agent Orange Presentation before Institute of Medicine, June 28, 2012**

### **Placido Salazar**

**Good afternoon to all. I welcome the opportunity to speak before this committee. Quite frankly, I have reservations regarding the sincerity of IOM boards, having read that most members, have worked for or have connections, to the chemical industry, so one would have to wonder if you would really finger them out. If you have been preparing your "IOM study" reports, by studying "studies" by Dow, Monsanto and other manufacturers, what chance do Veterans have of getting an impartial, fair shake?**

**Perhaps a statement made by German-born Heinz Henry Kissinger, former Secretary of State and National Security Advisor about military men, might put into perspective, *why* we were drenched with deadly chemicals by our own government, while serving our country in military uniform: "In (Gen.) Haig's presence, Kissinger referred pointedly to military men as 'dumb, stupid animals to be used' as pawns for foreign policy." - Bob Woodward & Carl Bernstein, *The Final Days*, p. 208**

**This is a painful subject to discuss, for every Vietnam War Veteran and our families, which has thus far affected our children, grandchildren and reportedly generations to come. My youngest son, Javier was born spontaneously in 1970 (in a 6 1/2 month pregnancy). He fought hard to live, struck with spinal meningitis twice in his first 3 months and started losing his hair at 18. Being very determined, he became a San Antonio Police Officer, now serving as Public Information Officer, with his head shaved – but with very painful back and joints. My son Rick at age 5, lost a lot of weight for some unknown reason, dying in my arms at Randolph AFB Hospital and then revived. Unable to walk, he had to drag himself across the floor. At age 51, he still has very painful joints. I have grandchildren born with ADD and teeth problems, which my research reveals, are probably related to AO. Since nobody warned us before leaving Vietnam, we brought back clothing souvenirs, such as jackets, pajamas, etc., for our children and spouse, thereby contaminating them as well.**

**Our pain; can never compare to the suffering endured by the families of our buddies who lost their battle against the deadly mixture of chemicals, which our government needlessly and perhaps maliciously exposed us to..... and to the**

official cover-up which continues without apparent remorse to frustrate all of us, including everybody exposed Stateside and in other countries.

Every Congressman, military leader, American scientist, doctor and others who served on the Institute of Medicine Committees, and on the flawed and useless project known as “Ranch Hand”, must share in the shame and the guilt, of prolonging our suffering, delaying treatment and the compensation for service-connection of Agent Orange. We proudly served our country on the battlefield, or wherever we were assigned, never suspecting that our own government, would cause so much pain and suffering to its own Warriors and to our innocent families. WHY would any country decimate its own Warriors?

Numerous people such as Joel Michalek of the ‘Ranch Hand study’, useless by his own account, have made a very lucrative career to “study” the effects of Dioxin, Cacodylic Acid, Sulfuric Acid, Benzene; some of the deadliest chemicals known to mankind. These redundant ‘studies’ were rigged to tell our government, beginning with the VA, what they wanted, or needed to hear, every two years spoon-feeding, as “new” one or two added illnesses as “suggestive/presumptive,” only to delay acknowledgement of culpability, treatment and compensation to our inhumanely disabled U.S. Vets.

The studies had already been done before being used in Vietnam, according to Dr. James Clary, the top Air Force Scientist – and as clearly marked on the Manufacturer Safety Data Sheets (MSDS), provided by every manufacturer, before any government purchase. The government NEVER buys even a ballpoint pen, without specifications being clearly marked on the container. I know, because I used to be a purchaser.

This excerpt from the detailed, credible study headed by Adm. Elmo Zumwalt, but maliciously hidden by President Ronald Reagan:

Dr. Clary is a former government scientist with the Chemical Weapons Division, Air Force Armament Development Laboratory, at Eglin APE, Florida. Dr. Clary was instrumental in designing the specifications for the (AO) spray tank and was also the scientist who prepared the final report on Ranch Hand Herbicide Operations in Southeast Asia, July 1979. According to Dr. Clary:

*“When we (military scientists) initiated the herbicide program in the 1960’s, we were aware of the potential for damage due to dioxin contamination in the herbicide. We were even aware that the ‘military’<sup>6</sup> formulation had a*

***higher dioxin concentration than the 'civilian' version due to the lower cost and speed of manufacture. However, because the material was to be used on the 'enemy', none of us were overly concerned. We never considered a scenario in which our own personnel would become contaminated with the herbicide. And, if we had, we would have expected our own government to give assistance to veterans so contaminated.***

**Here is another pertinent press report revealing how little President Ronald Reagan appreciated our sacrifices:**     *The report by the House Government*

*Operations Committee bolsters arguments of two veterans' groups, the American Legion and the Vietnam Veterans of America, which filed a lawsuit last week seeking to have the CDC resume its study of the health effects of Agent Orange exposure.*

*"The White House compromised the independence of the CDC and undermined the study by controlling crucial decisions and guiding the course of research, at the same time it had secretly taken a legal position to resist demands to compensate victims of Agent Orange exposure, which Reagan described as too expensive," the report said.*

**What else was there to study then – and what is there to study now? There are scores of dead horses, goats, dogs, rats and even humans who died from exposure, before its use in Vietnam. Many humans and animals were accidentally exposed to Dioxin and died in Seveso, Italy in 1979. In 1949, there was a similar explosion in Nitro, West Virginia.**

**Why were those reports not taken into account, to bring justice to our U.S. Veterans sooner? How many have died, without the medical treatment and the service-connected compensation they should have been afforded by VA?**

***As strong as America's military Warriors are, if Dioxin kills horses, why would anybody think that it would not hurt or kill us?***

**Dow, Monsanto and other manufacturers should still be held accountable. When our government ordered these chemicals, it did not order DIOXIN; therefore, any company which delivered defective herbicides containing Dioxin to our government, should have lost their government contractor protection and should be held responsible for compensating our Warriors and our affected dependents, including our new generations.**

**This ugly chapter of deception upon our Armed Forces should come to an end, with the report which this Committee prepares. You need to share your decision (hopefully) to at last acknowledge and allow our Veterans the doubt,**

that every unexplained illness which our Veterans who have been contaminated with Agent Orange, whether that was in Vietnam, Thailand, Korea, Laos, Cambodia, Panama, Guam or in any of our Stateside bases, whether Ft McClellan, Eglin, Kelly AFB TX, Ft. Drum NY, etc., should be service-connected.

Our opinion that you have helped the VA to prolong our pain can be dispelled by putting an end to these redundant studies, on a positive note – repeating what your 2000 (2001) report said, that:

*“Given the large uncertainties that remain about the magnitude of potential risk from exposure to herbicides in the epidemiologic studies reviewed (chapters 7-10), the inadequate control for other important risk factors in many studies, and uncertainty about the nature and magnitude of exposure to herbicides in Vietnam (Ch 5), the necessary information to undertake a quantitative risk assessment is lacking. Thus, the committee cannot quantify the degree of risk likely to be experienced by those exposed to herbicides during service in The Republic of Vietnam. For those outcomes in the “sufficient” and “limited/suggestive” categories, what can be said is that too little is known about the herbicide exposure of veterans to make a meaningful (determination) if any.”*

Life or death decisions have been by these committees against each one of my Fellow-Vietnam Veterans, without solid scientific evidence.

NOW – the moment of truth is here – and you must make the only recommendation which can be made, without any supporting evidence – and rule in favor of the millions of my brothers and sisters, who are dying a slow and painful death – as our reward for faithfully serving our country. We desperately want to believe that our country has not betrayed us. You owe this, especially to the loved ones of those who lost this last battle, before we did.

Depending on how we are treated by our government, based on your report – we will advise future potential recruits. We want to be able to tell the future defenders of our country, that our country will not lie to them – and that they will not be used as experimental lab rats. We demand that America’s fighting men and women, be treated with respect and with dignity.

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**NOTE: We requested by mail, a meeting with President Barack Obama in anticipation of our Washington DC trip by car, at our own expense last week. No response. I wanted to remind him of the lead-in comment he made on his visit to The Rio Grande Valley and in San Antonio, that “as soon as I become President, my first job will be to deliver a full-service VA Hospital to our Veterans in The Valley, so that our Warriors who served bravely our country, will no longer have to travel more than ten hours to Audie Murphy VA Hospital in San Antonio, to receive the medical care which their combat wounds require. Now our country owes them.....”. I hope one of the above-named politicians, or some reporter, will have the guts to ask him about that promise..... which our combat-wounded Veterans cannot afford to forget. In addition to badly-needed medical care, this would also bring thousands of badly-needed jobs for our unemployed Veterans, in the most-economically disadvantaged area in the country.**

**If I can get within ear-shot in San Antonio, he will definitely hear it from me. Our Brave Warriors do not deserve empty promises – and the same words go to any politician trying to get the Veteran vote with empty promises. We are nobody’s fool. We EARNED our VA medical care.**

***NEVER UNDERESTIMATE* what a few ole Warriors can accomplish. We were heard, at the invitation of the Academy of Sciences – Institute of Medicine (IOM) in Washington DC, regarding the never-ending, redundant Agent Orange “studies”, which we consider our government’s on-going effort to cover-up the deadly damage, delay treatment and compensation to our U.S. Veterans by Agent Orange in Vietnam, in other countries and stateside. We also delivered a stern complaint on the cover-up of the also-deadly chemical contamination of our Warriors in Iraq, Afghanistan and other combat zones..... with sarin, depleted uranium, etc., just so that they know, that *WE* know what is causing the “mystery illnesses”.**

The top Air Force scientist Dr. James Clary disclosed long ago, that our government knew before 1960 what the effects of Agent Orange would be; yet continued to use it over us, presuming that our government would take care us.

The Institute of Medicine never actually performed any Agent Orange studies of its own, but allegedly studied other “studies,” with the *mission* of reporting to the

VA Secretary of Veteran Affairs every two years, with an up-date of which new “presumptive” service-connected illnesses Vietnam Veterans should be compensated for. I pointed out that all these illnesses which IOM was spoon-feeding every two years to the VA Secretary were nothing new; they were known since the beginning of time and clearly listed on the Manufacturer Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) which is provided to the “consumer” (in this case our government) at the time of purchase of Agent Orange, which included dioxin, cacodylic acid, sulfuric acid, benzene and several other deadly chemicals.

We also visited the office of VA Secretary Eric Shinseki, to deliver a renewed request/reminder of the growing need for a full-service 24/7 VA hospital in The South Texas Rio Grande Valley, which continues to get worse with the return of more disabled Warriors from Iraq and Afghanistan. It is totally absurd and cruel, to expect that these added thousands of seriously wounded or ill returning Warriors will be able to travel more than 500 miles, ten-hour-plus round-trip to Audie Murphy VA Hospital in San Antonio. The specialized care which their medical or psychological wounds require on a continuing basis, is simply not available to the mostly Mexican-American U.S. Veterans in The Valley..... in contrast to the readily-available VA care to Veterans, in most other areas of our country.

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