

VIETNAM BINH THUY AIR BASE

© 2013 by [Steven Hall](#), LM 639
Sgt., 632nd APS/SPS - 1968-1969

AGENT ORANGE

Six Basic Flavors:

Agent White, Agent Pink, Agent Purple, Agent Blue, Agent Green, and Agent Orange



Binh Thuy Air Base - Effects of Agent Orange/Blue [Chemical defoliant sprayed from Hueys and by hand sprayers, show devastation as clear as day and night along the base side of the perimeter, and outside the wire, where little or no defoliant was sprayed: Taken from a guard tower on the west side of the perimeter, this photo shows the effects of Agent Orange. Except for tree lines, the Delta was monotonously flat. On the left is OL-26, the facility that monitored the B-52 Arc Light strikes. The elephant grass was very tall on both sides of the south end of the base where the canals flowed in.

Around most of the perimeter the grass was three to four feet high, but in some areas the grass was twelve to fifteen feet tall. The height and thickness of the grass made it easy for

sappers to slither through the fence lines, so the ARVN set up night listening posts in strategic places a few hundred yards out from the road. The defoliant, Agent (or Agent Blue) was used extensively on the interior of the base to control the heavy vegetation. However, due to a lack of proper equipment it was difficult to spray the defoliant on the grass outside the base. Attempts by SP personnel were made, but the grass was very resistant.

The image of the A.O. spray areas was really a fluke, since at the time it was taken, no one (officially) knew about the repercussions of the chemicals on humans. I have submitted copies of this photo to all my healthcare providers, especially including the VA doctors, for inclusion in my medical records. My VA doctor was astonished when she saw the image and told me she had never seen a photo showing the effects of A.O. At that time, she had been treating vets with A.O. related conditions for decades. Those of us who worked on the perimeter in the towers, bunkers, or on SAT Teams were around this stuff everyday. The K-9 handlers must have had the most prolonged exposure to it, since their posts were primarily on the perimeter road. Lew Goldberg told me that S/Sgt Skelton was in charge of the work-detail that sprayed the perimeter and some interior areas of the base. Lew said Skelton has had cancer that was associated with the chemical. Evidentially, there was no real spray equipment available so S/Sgt Skelton and his crew used hand-pumped spray units intended for spraying pesticide to distributed the chemical.

There was an area outside the perimeter road, but within our security fences (I referred to the area in my story), that had elephant grass growing very thick and tall. Skelton was asked to spray that area. There was no way he could distribute enough chemical to do the job by hand, so he had to employ the use of one of the base's HH-43 Air/Sea Rescue helicopters. There was no way to actually spray the chemical from the air, so he loaded a barrel of it into the helicopter and when they flew over the targeted area, he unscrewed the pumping port on the barrel top, tipped the barrel over so the A.O. could pour out and used the helicopter's downward prop-wash to disperse it.

I worked mostly towers during the daylight hours and I recall a couple of different days when a Huey flew over that area equipped with a spray-rig. They did a run down the entire length of the west side of the base. (The total length of the base was a skosh over one mile, so it wasn't really all that much of a run). On both occasions, a light breeze pushed the overspray onto the base and washed over those of us in the perimeter towers. I remember thinking at the time that it was pesticide to kill mosquitos, but now I think it could have been A.O. because the helicopter didn't spray the east side of the base where the elephant grass wasn't as thick.

I almost forgot. I thought about you last weekend when I was in Long Beach for my Father's Day dinner with my youngest daughter, Laura. She lives on First Street, near Loma. We had nice dinner at a restaurant close to the pier. She's lived in L.B. for several years and really loves it there. She used to be on a L.B. roller derby team until she got one too many injuries resulting in having to wear casts, so her work Victoria's Secret told her she was going to have to make a choice. She makes a very good salary with V.S. so she gave up the hot-wheels. Looking at her, you'd never think she fit the image of roller derby queen, but I guess she could mix it up pretty good.



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