

Agent Orange

Know Your Rights!

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Đà Nẵng AB, 366th SPS, 1966-1967

I seem to remember that Guardmount may have carried an article on Agent Orange a couple of years back. However, since then I have applied for and got 20% disability from the VA for my Adult Onset Diabetes, or Type II Diabetes. It might be good to remind our guys what they are entitled to.

From what I read on the Internet, between 1962 and 1971, the United States sprayed 19 million gallons of herbicides over southern Vietnam to destroy jungle cover and food for communist troops. About 55 percent of that, or nearly 10.5 million gallons, was Agent Orange. Spraying was halted in 1971 after it was found Agent Orange was highly contaminated with the most dangerous form of dioxin, TCDD, and caused cancer in rats.

I distinctly remember humping the C-123s (see attached file I borrowed from the Internet) at Đà Nẵng. They were parked on the north side of the B-57 area. I can even recall the smell of it and the sticky squish it made under my boots. I also remember walking under the wings of the 123s and looking up at the little silver riveted patches, used to cover the holes made by the ground fire the planes often took flying low over the jungles. So, I'm positive I was exposed!

About a year and a half ago, I was diagnosed with Type II Diabetes. I had been borderline diabetic for several years. My life style finally pushed me over the edge and my family doctor prescribed Avandia. It seems to be in check now.

On the encouragement of my uncle, who retired from the Air Force, and others I knew with Vietnam military service, I called the Veterans Administration and made an appointment. The VA administrator filled out a complicated form for me and sent it to the VA in Nashville, TN. Soon I received a letter requesting my medical files, a letter from my doctor concerning my diagnosis and treatment, and original documents proving my Vietnam and military service. You can fill the form out on line, but it is a bit confusing.

If you don't have original copies, the VA will even research and find original copies of your DD214 and other assignment records for you. Some smarter guys filed original copies, as official records, with their local courthouses, but I didn't. No problem, they found them for me!

The rule is - if you have served a day "in country" and have been diagnosed with Type II Diabetes, or any other herbicide related condition, you ARE eligible for compensation. Within 6 months, I received a letter stating that my claim had been approved at 20% disability. This amounts to \$205/month for life! That's probably about what I made in Vietnam with combat pay! Plus, I got about 16 months back pay included in the first check. They paid retroactively back to the earliest diagnosis found in my doctor's records.

If you, or any of our guys, have developed any of the conditions listed on the VA website (<http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/benefits/herbicide/>), then you too are eligible.

Since I am within 1 or 2 years of retiring to a fixed income, you can bet this \$205 a month will come in handy. Some may think this is sort of like welfare. I don't! Besides, we gave them at least a year in harm's way, AND don't forget they exposed us – we earned it.

Other sources of research on the subject can be found at:

<http://www.landscaper.net/agent2.htm>

<http://www1.va.gov/agentorange/>

<http://www.myeloma.or/myeloma/newsletter.jsp?type=detailandid=1141>

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Đà Nẵng AB, 1966-1967

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