

# Agent Orange

## ĐÀ NẴNG AIR BASE

### Contamination at all time high!

submitted by **Richard Beggs**  
Đà Nẵng AB, 1971

In regard to VSPA's section on Agent Orange, I'm attaching a newspaper article that appeared in my local paper.

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## Tests reveal Agent Orange's legacy

Decades after Vietnam War, dioxin levels dangerously high at old U.S. air base

By **BEN STOCKING**  
The Associated Press

DANANG, Vietnam — More than 30 years after the Vietnam War ended, the poisonous legacy of Agent Orange has emerged anew with a scientific study that has found extraordinarily high levels of health-threatening contamination at the former U.S. air base at Danang.

"They're the highest levels I've ever seen in my life," said Thomas Boivin, the scientist who conducted the tests this spring. "If this site were in the U.S. or Canada, it would require significant studies and immediate cleanup."

Soil tests by his firm, Hatfield Consultants of Canada, found levels of dioxin, the highly toxic chemical compound in Agent Orange, that were 300 to 400 times higher than internationally accepted limits.

The report has not yet been released, but Boivin and Vietnamese officials summarized its central findings for The Associated Press.

Earlier tests by Hatfield, which has been working in Vietnam since 1994, showed that dioxin levels were safe across most of Vietnam. But until the study of the old air base at Danang, the consulting firm had never had access to some half-dozen "hotspots" where Agent Orange, a defoliant designed to deny Vietnamese jungle cover, was stored and mixed before being loaded onto planes.

The study is the product of a new spirit of cooperation between Washington and Hanoi — after years of disagreement — toward resolving this contentious leftover of the war that ended in 1975.



Nguyen Xuan Minh, 6, rests in his bed at the "Peace Village" of Tu Du hospital in Ho Chi Minh City Friday. According to hospital staff, the boy is suffering from physical deformities suspected to have been caused by his parents' exposure to dioxin in the chemical defoliant Agent Orange.

On a visit to Vietnam last fall, President Bush and Vietnamese President Nguyen Minh Triet agreed to work together to address dioxin contamination at old Agent Orange storage sites. They are expected to discuss the issue further when Triet visits Washington next week.

The worst contamination in Danang is confined to a small section of the 2,100-acre base, the former Agent Orange mixing area.

The dioxin poses no immediate threat to the vast majority of the city's nearly 1 million people or the Danang International Airport terminal, which sits on the sprawling site and is widely used by tourists headed for Danang's beaches.

But blood tests found elevated dioxin levels in several dozen people who regularly fished or harvested lotus flowers from a contaminated lake on the site.

Tests also confirmed that rainwater has carried dioxin into city drains and into parts of a neighboring community that is home to more than 100,000 people, Boivin said. The levels there are only slightly elevated, but could rise if the dioxin isn't properly contained.

The levels fall off dramatically outside the base, said Charles Bailey, Vietnam representative of the Ford Foundation, which financed Hatfield's study. "Nevertheless, it's a public health threat, and it's a risk."

The United States is paying \$400,000 for an engineering study of how to clean up the site. Ford, a New York-based charitable organization, is also paying for temporary containment measures, which will begin this summer, before monsoon season.

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