

DATA SET TWO

"Agent Orange"

Operation Ranch Hand and Agent Orange

From 1961 to 1972, the U.S. military conducted a large-scale defoliation program aimed at destroying the forest and jungle cover used by enemy North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops fighting against U.S. and South Vietnamese forces in the Vietnam War. U.S. aircraft were deployed to spray powerful mixtures of herbicides around roads, rivers, canals and military bases, as well as on crops that might be used to supply enemy troops. During this process, crops and water sources used by the non-combatant peasant population of South Vietnam could also be hit. In all, Operation Ranch Hand deployed more than 19 million gallons of herbicides over 4.5 million acres of land.

The most common or

herbicide used was Agent Orange, named for the orange stripe painted on the 55-gallon drums in which the mixture was stored. It was one of several "Rainbow Herbicides" used, along with Agents White, Purple, Pink, Green and Blue. U.S. planes sprayed some 11 million to 13 million gallons of Agent Orange in Vietnam between January 1965 and April 1970. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Agent Orange contained "minute traces" of 2,3,7,8-tetrachlorodibenzo-p-dioxin (TCDD), more commonly known as dioxin. Through studies done on laboratory animals, dioxin has been shown to be highly toxic even in minute doses; human exposure to the chemical could be associated with serious health issues such as muscular dysfunction, inflammation, birth defects, nervous system disorders and even the development of various cancers.

Effects of Agent Orange on Vietnam

In addition to the massive environmental impact of the U.S. defoliation program in Vietnam, that nation has reported that some 400,000 people were killed or maimed as a result of exposure to herbicides like Agent Orange. In addition, Vietnam claims half a million children have been born with serious birth defects, while as many 2 million people are suffering from cancer or other illness caused by Agent Orange.

- In 2004, a group of Vietnamese citizens

acted against more than 30 chemical companies, including the same ones that settled with the U.S. veterans in 1984. The suit, which sought billions of dollars worth of damages, claimed that Agent Orange and its poisonous effects left a legacy of health problems and that its use constituted a violation of international law. In March 2005, a federal judge in Brooklyn, New York, dismissed the suit; another U.S. court rejected a final appeal in 2008.