

Special Cases: Thailand and Agent Orange

The following Veterans may have been exposed to herbicides:

- **U.S. Air Force Veterans** who served on Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF) bases at U-Tapao, Ubon, Nakhon Phanom, Udorn, Takhli, Korat, and Don Muang, near the air base perimeter anytime between February 28, 1961 and May 7, 1975.
- **U.S. Army Veterans** who provided perimeter security on RTAF bases in Thailand anytime between February 28, 1961 and May 7, 1975.
- **U.S. Army Veterans** who were stationed on some small Army installations in Thailand anytime between February 28, 1961 and May 7, 1975. However, the Army Veteran must have been a member of a military police (MP) unit or was assigned an MP military occupational specialty whose duty placed him/her at or near the base perimeter.



U-Tapao Air Base, Thailand, 1972

The National Archives

Report on defense tactics in Thailand

A recently declassified Department of Defense report (8.3 MB, PDF) written in 1973, Project CHECO Southeast Asia Report: Base Defense in Thailand 1968-1972, contains evidence that there was a significant use of herbicides on the fenced-in perimeters of military bases in Thailand to remove foliage that provided cover for enemy forces. VA determined that herbicides used on the Thailand base perimeters may have been tactical and procured from Vietnam, or a strong, commercial type resembling tactical herbicides.

C-123 Airplanes and Agent Orange Residue

Some Air Force Reservists who were crew members on C-123 Provider aircraft, formerly used to spray Agent Orange during the Vietnam War, have raised health concerns about exposure to residual amounts of herbicides on plane surfaces.

Responding to these concerns, VA asked the Health and Medicine Division (HMD) (formally known as the Institute of Medicine) of the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to study possible exposure and increase in adverse health effects in C-123 crew members.



Fairchild C-123K Provider

HMD's scientific report on C-123 contaminated aircraft

HMD released its report, [Post-Vietnam Dioxin Exposure in Agent Orange-Contaminated C-123 Aircraft](#), Jan. 9, 2015. According to the report, from 1972 to 1982, approximately 1,500 to 2,100 Air Force Reserve personnel trained and worked on C-123 aircraft that previously had been used to spray herbicides, including Agent Orange, in Vietnam. Those aircraft were used for military airlift, medical transport, and cargo transport operations in the United States and internationally.

HMD found that Reservists who served as flight crew (pilot, navigator, flight engineer, and loadmaster), ground maintenance crew, and aero-medical personnel had regular contact with the aircraft, and would have experienced some exposure to chemicals from herbicide residue. The report determined that it is possible that this exposure contributed to some adverse health effects.

How Reservists may have been exposed

TCDD, the toxic substance in Agent Orange, may be inhaled as an aerosol or ingested by contaminated food or water or from hand-to-mouth transfer.

During the Vietnam War, the U.S. Air Force used C-123 aircraft to spray Agent Orange to clear jungles that provided enemy cover in Vietnam. At the end of the spraying campaign in 1971, the remaining C-123 planes were reassigned to reserve units in the U.S. for routine cargo and medical evacuation missions spanning the next 10 years.

Compensation benefits for health problems

Based on the HMD report, VA has decided to acknowledge exposure to Agent Orange for personnel whose military service involved regular contact with the contaminated C-123 aircraft. This includes individuals who performed service in the Air Force or Air Force Reserve who regularly operated, maintained, or served onboard C-123 aircraft known to have been used to spray herbicides during the Vietnam era.

The following individuals may qualify for benefits related to Agent Orange exposure:

- Active duty personnel who served in a regular USAF unit location where a contaminated C-123 was assigned who had regular contact with the aircraft through flight, ground, or medical duties between 1969 and 1986, and who developed an Agent Orange related disability.
- Reservists who were assigned to flight, ground, or medical crew duties at the following locations between 1969 and 1986, and who developed an Agent Orange related disability.
- Lockbourne/Rickenbacker Air Force Base in Ohio (906th and 907th Tactical Air Groups or 355th and 356th Tactical Airlift Squadron)
- Westover Air Force Base in Massachusetts (731st Tactical Air Squadron and 74th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron)
- Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, International Airport (758th Airlift Squadron)

Veterans may file a claim for disability compensation for health problems they believe are related to exposure to Agent Orange residue on post-Vietnam C-123 airplanes.

Eligibility - Service in Vietnam or Korea

VA presumes that Veterans were exposed to Agent Orange or other herbicides if they served:

- In Vietnam anytime between January 9, 1962 and May 7, 1975, including brief **visits ashore** or service aboard a ship that operated on the **inland waterways** of Vietnam
- In or near the Korean demilitarized zone anytime between April 1, 1968 and August 31, 1971

If the veteran falls into either category listed above, they do not have to show that they were exposed to Agent Orange to be eligible for disability compensation for diseases VA presumes are associated with it. Check the list of U.S. Navy and Coast Guard ships that operated in Vietnam to confirm whether your service aboard a ship allows VA to concede you were exposed to Agent Orange. (Note current ship list is a MS Word document Updated spring 2016.)