

Department of Veteran Affairs  
Regional Office  
John F. Kennedy Federal Building  
Government Center  
Boston, MA 02203-0393

February 15, 2011  
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RE: Witness Statement and Research of Herbicide/Agent Orange Use at U-Tapao  
RTNAB, Thailand during Vietnam War  
File Number: 26 611 325 (for Phillip C. Cacioppo)

To Whom It May Concern:

I, Phillip C. Cacioppo, make oath and do solemnly swear the following as true, so help me God, under penalty of law. I served in the USAF from July 26, 1967 to March 19, 1971 trained as a Ground Radio Repairman (Military Occupational Specialty or AFCS 30454). From November 1969 to November 1970 I served at the U-Tapao RTNAB, Thailand as part of the 1985 Communication Squadron as a Ground Radio Repairman. I am writing this witness statement for all Thailand veterans but in particular for Mr. George M .Collins III. I just learned on February 10, 2011 that Mr. Collin's previously treated Follicular Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma has returned and he will again be traveling away from home to receive some additional advanced treatment. Accordingly, I would hope this witness letter on behalf of Mr. Collins would be considered urgent.

I too have Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma (NHL) – a rare form called Waldenstrom's Macroglobulinemia which is not curable but is treatable. Mr. Collins and I were exposed to these herbicides/Agent Orange (AO) at U-Tapao at almost the same time in 1969 and were discovered to have NHL in the same month – April 2007. I believe this is testament to the fact of the long dormant condition of this NHL disease and could show some causative association in that the same environment we were exposed produced NHL as an active disease in our lives almost exactly 38 years later for each of us.

In this witness statement I would like to disclose 5 issues which associate me with proximity to the perimeter of the U-Tapao RTNAB in Thailand. Please note that in the May 2010 of the Compensation and Pension Service Bulletin published by the VA it was conceded that AO was used along the perimeters of all the bases in Thailand for base defense. Also it was noted that those who served near these perimeters could be considered presumptively exposed to AO.

Please do not be intimidated by the large number of exhibits in this document. I have included these for your convenience and hi-lighted the word or statement in that document which is also restated in this memo. The documentation is only to prove my statements here.

**1) Aerial Maps of U-Tapao denoting defoliation and my proximity to the perimeter.**

I have attached three aerial maps:

- A) Exhibit 1A which is a Corona Satellite photo of the U-Tapao region in 1963 before the base was built and there was no AO use and no defoliation along the coast - only a brief shoreline of sand.
- B) Exhibit 1B which shows the U-Tapao circa 1970 when there was extensive defoliation around the south side of the runway with defoliation extending all the way to the south side of the runway. Note also my truck route denoted in a red which shows my proximity on and near the perimeter as I proceeded to my work stations. I was often stationed at Ground Radio Station 1 which was actually on or very near the perimeter of the base.
- C) Exhibit 1C which shows a present day Google Map of U-Tapao and one will notice that after approximately 40 years there has been foliage regrowth along the south part of the runway by the coast as compared to Exhibit 1B.

I believe these before and after pictures of the defoliation along the perimeter of the U-Tapao base (which depicts my route and work locations) is significant proof of defoliation along the perimeter of the base. I have a witness statement of a colleague (Antonio A. LeonGuerro, MSgt, USAF Ret.) who worked with me at these workstations who can verify my route and locations.

I would note also that I often saw low or no foliage on the perimeter of the U-Tapao base, but I never saw a single lawn mower on the perimeter of any type mowing or keeping the foliage down.

**2) Work and Attendance at the Bob Hope USO Show along perimeter in Dec. 1969.**

As Mr. Collins has described in his witness statement, he attended the same Bob Hope Christmas show I attended in December 1969 in which “the stage was set up between two barracks. The viewing area to see the show was on the defoliated perimeter.” As disclosed in my performance report dated Feb 5, 1970 (Exhibit 2A page 2). I worked on “the audio system for the Bob Hope show”. My assignment was to install the speakers for the show. In addition you will note that from two documents labeled Exhibit 2B and 2C that Bob Hope brought Neil Armstrong (the first man on the moon) in addition to entertainers for the Christmas show. As final proof please note Exhibit 2D Page 2 where you will see that Neil Armstrong was gracious enough to give this unknown airman his autograph.

**3) Proximity and Duration on the Perimeter.** As noted above it is disclosed in the VA's Compensation and Pension Service Bulletin of May 2010 that those who served near the perimeter could be considered presumptively exposed to AO. I would like to clarify "near" and the amount of time of exposure to AO to be considered exposed to the agent as defined by certain technical documents.

- A) Please see Exhibit 3A Page 1 of the Army's Field Manual 3-3 entitled "Tactical Employment of Herbicides" dated December 1971. In this manual in Chapter 5 (Methods of Dissemination) page 5-3, paragraph d. it is stated that when applying agents such as AO "A 500-meter buffer distance should be maintained to avoid damage to desirable vegetation near the target". (Exhibit 3A Page 2) Note that I and many other personnel such as Mr. Collins were well within the 500 meter limit and in fact were on the defoliated areas many times during our duty at the Thailand bases.
- B) Please see in Exhibit 3B Page 1 entitled "Health Risks from Dioxin and Related Compounds - Evaluation of the EPA Reassessment by the National Research Council". This study found that there is a lack of minimum threshold to ensue the disease. Please note page 45 of this study (Exhibit 3B Page 2) in the statement: "A common but scientifically unachievable goal in risk assessment is to identify a threshold dose that protects everyone in the population."
- C) In the VA's own literature - Agent Orange Brief #131 (Exhibit 3C) it is stated: "A population in Kansas found a 6-fold excess risk of Non-Hodgkin's lymphomas among farmers exposed to herbicides more than 20 days per year (regardless of the number of years of herbicide use)". Note that all Thailand veterans had to serve at least a year and thus far exceeded the 20 day threshold.

**4) The Dog Necropsy Studies – An Important Witness Statement.** While at U-Tapao I was required to perform security duty for one week as were all individuals with grade E-4 or below. At this time I saw the military working dogs. I have indicated that this document also includes research to prove my exposure to AO. I have by the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), the necropsy reports for all military working dogs that served at U-Tapao. A necropsy is an autopsy on an animal. I consider these dogs as witnesses for me.

The Air Force left some living witnesses behind when they left U-Tapao. These were the heroic dogs that patrolled the perimeter of the base and they were directly involved in the defoliated areas. It would have seemed fair and merciful to return these dogs to the U.S. after their service to live out their natural lives. Perhaps they would need to be

quarantined because of alleged tropical diseases. Instead, these dogs were put to death in Thailand and subsequently necropsies were performed on each of them. These dogs, in their death, “gave the last full measure of devotion” and what they can tell us in their deaths should at least be a voice that is now heard. It is said that dogs are the “sentinels of human disease” and the “canary in the coal mine” that can warn us of what is to come.

Accordingly, in Exhibit 4A I have attached a page from a study reported in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute, Vol. 82, No. 12, June 20,1990. On this page 1043 it lists the rate of Seminoma cancers for Military Working dogs deployed in the following locations:

Exhibit #	Incidence Rate For Seminoma (%)
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4A-1) Continental United States	4.7 %
4A-2) Military Working Dogs in Vietnam	6.3 %
4A-3) Okinawa	11.2 %

Based in part on this information the higher incidence of Seminoma for Vietnam dogs over those dogs in the Continental United States, it was concluded that Vietnam dogs were exposed to a higher concentration of a cancer causing agent. (Note that the Okinawa dogs also have a very high incidence rate of Seminoma and it has now been discovered that AO was used on this base and several disability claims for exposure to it have been granted). Below I would like to relate the exposure of specifically for U-Tapao military working dogs in 3 separate studies. These studies have only recently been performed and our now disclosed here:

Exhibit #	Incidence Rate For Seminoma (%)
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4B) Preliminary Study Submitted Jun 2, 2009	10.3 %
4C) Dr. Pinson, DVM, PhD Study Submitted Jun 8, 2009	17.2 %
4D) Final Study with complete U-Tapao dog data May 20, 2010	10.8 %

Clearly these studies show the incidence of Seminoma for U-Tapao Military Working dogs is far above that of both unexposed continental U.S. dogs and Military Working Dogs in Vietnam. I believe this is considerable evidence that these U-Tapao dogs were exposed to cancer causing AO agents as conceded in the VA’s Compensation and

Pension Bulletin. What else could these dogs have been exposed to? These dogs did not smoke cigarettes, drink, take illegal drugs or were overweight. They were purely exposed to the same environment veterans were exposed to – there were no behavioral issues related to their illnesses.

Also, in Exhibit 4E Pages 1 and 2, note previous studies which associate canine malignant lymphomas with 2,4-dichlorophenoxyacetic acid – a major component of AO. In Exhibits 4F through 4L attached are the summary dog necropsy reports for all dogs with Seminoma and In Exhibit 4M through 4W are listed the dog reports for those who were exhibiting lymphatic systems malfunctions which presumably could lead to lymphomas. Exhibit 4X is the document from the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology which sent me the necropsy reports. Note May 20, 2010 memo indicates that all of the dog necropsy reports were on U-Tapao dogs and that the release of this data was under a FOIA request. Exhibit 4Y is a newspaper article date Jan 11, 1972 that reads “U-Tapao Raid Fails – Vietnamese killed in daring attack”. I think serves as proof that perimeter and base defense by men, women and dogs was necessary – and successful at U-Tapao. And who knows how many raids were prevented in that the enemy knew the base was heavily guarded and protected.

Finally, it should be noted that NHL is one of the 5 illnesses of the 15 recognized AO related illness that have “Sufficient Evidence of Exposure” with herbicides. (Indeed Blue Water Navy veterans are awarded disability for this one illness (NHL) even if the veteran did not set foot on Vietnam soil.) Other VA covered illnesses such as diabetes 2, respiratory related cancers and now ischemic heart disease have only a “Limited or Suggestive Evidence of Exposure” to herbicides. I know veterans with these illnesses with limited evidence of exposure are deserving – but behavioral issues such as smoking, bad diet and lack of exercise could have contributed to these illnesses. NHL has no association with these behavioral issues. Nor have I ever smoked, used any kind of drugs, or been obese in my life. Furthermore there is no genetic disposition in my family toward NHL as I am the only one afflicted with this illness. Again please note in the proceeding paragraph that the U-Tapao military working dogs had significant lymphatic system malfunctions that could indicate an indication of an upcoming Non-Hodgkin’s Lymphoma (NHL) disease.

**5) Requirement to Perform Security Duty of the Base** While at U-Tapao I was required to perform security duty as I mentioned in item 4 above. In fact, all enlisted men of rank E-4 and below were required to perform security duty of the Base for a period of one week. Senior Security men assigned to us various guarding and sentry duties of the base and I was required to do what a typical military policeman was required to do.

As further evidence of this security duty I note a paragraph from Antonio A. LeonGuerrero's (MSgt, USAF Ret.) witness statement, who I worked for and knew me personally while we were both stationed at U-Tapao. He states in his July 19, 2010 statement:

“The base policy is for all incoming personnel in the grade of E-4 and below to undergo training as a Security Forces Augmentee. After completion of such training, they are required to perform one week of duty with the regular security personnel patrolling the base boundaries.”

MSgt LeonGuerrero can be reached at 7523 10<sup>th</sup> Way SE, Lacey, WA. 98503. Phone # is (360) 455-4038.

With this witness statement and research I have submitted, I believe that illnesses such as NHL and others specified by the VA, were most probably caused by exposure to AO used on the perimeter of all the bases in Thailand during the Vietnam War.

Sincerely,

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Enclosed/Attached are Exhibits 1A thru 4Y  
Signed and notarized this date

