

ISSUE BRIEF: Agent Orange in Thailand during Vietnam Era

The Situation

- A Department of Defense (DOD) 1973 report, Contemporary Historical Examination of Current Operations (CHECO) Southeast Asia Report: Base Defense in Thailand 1968-1972, acknowledges the use of tactical herbicides (Agent Orange) on Thai Royal Air Force Bases and Thai Army Bases. The report notes the significant use of Agent Orange to remove foliage that provided coverage for enemy forces on the fenced-in perimeters of military bases in Thailand.
- There are no current statutes or VA regulations to automatically concede veteran exposure to Agent Orange while serving in Thailand during the Vietnam Era. VA's adjudication manual (M21-1) does recognize Vietnam-era veterans whose service involved duty on or near the perimeters of military bases in Thailand anytime between February 28, 1961 and May 7, 1975 may have been exposed to Agent Orange and may qualify for VA benefits.
- VA's manual acknowledges 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.

The Challenge

- The current restricted VA process for Thailand veterans arbitrarily disqualifies veterans who did not have the correct assigned duties during their time stationed in Thailand.
- Public Law 116-23 allows for any child of a veteran of covered service in Thailand who is suffering from spina bifida the health care, vocational training and rehabilitation, and monetary allowance association with spina bifida. This creates a statutory inequity for Thailand veterans as their service in Thailand is not associated with Agent Orange exposure for their own benefits but their children's.

The Solution

- Congress must enact H.R. 2201 and S.1381, as both would automatically concede Agent Orange exposure for all veterans who served at military installations in Thailand during the Vietnam Era, regardless of the base, duty on the perimeter or military occupational specialty.