
Item ID Number 01555

Author Chesney, Murphy A.

Corporate Author

Report/Article Title Memorandum: for SAF/MIQ (Dr. Carlos Stern), from Maj. Gen. Murphy A. Chesney, with subject Ranch Hand II Media Considerations, 9 August 1980.

Journal/Book Title

Year 0000

Month/Day

Color

Number of Images 22

Description Notes This item includes the one page memo and 2 attachments. The first attachment is a draft of a statement by Mr. Zengerle in response to the White House announcement. The second attachment is a list of questions and answers on the Ranch Hand study in anticipation of media questions. Included in the questions list is a comparison chart of the "Differences Between Annual Flying Physical Examination and the Herbicide Orange Examination."

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
BOLLING AFB, D.C. 20332



29 AUG 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR SAF/MIQ (Dr. Carlos Stern)

SUBJECT: Ranch Hand II Media Considerations

The attached information is forwarded in response to your memorandum of 20 August 1980.

Attachment 1 is draft of a statement by Mr. Zengerle in response to the White House announcement.

Attachment 2 is an extensive list of questions and answers on the Ranch Hand study which generally reflect the status of the study and provide responses to anticipated media questions.

The draft letters you requested will be forwarded on 3 September 1980.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Murphy A. Chesney", is written over the typed name and title.

MURPHY A. CHESNEY
Maj Gen, USAF, MC
Deputy Surgeon General

2 Attachments
As Stated.

INTERNAL WORKING PAPER

PROPOSED RESPONSE TO WHITE HOUSE RELEASE

The White House announced today that the Air Force will proceed with its planned study of the health effects of Herbicide Orange on the "Ranch Hand" personnel. "Ranch Hand" was a code name attached to the Air Force aircrews involved in the herbicide spraying operations between 1962 and 1971 in Vietnam.

The purpose of the study is to determine if a causal relationship can be established between exposure to Herbicide Orange and any changes in the long term health status of the individuals involved.

Specific recommendations were made by the White House to extend the period of the study, and to contract out the questionnaire and the physical examinations. These recommendations are being reviewed so that appropriate modifications can be made to the study. This review will be completed within two weeks and a detailed announcement will be made by the Air Force at that time on the implementation of the study.

..(This is based on assumptions of the White House action.)

Q. What is Herbicide Orange?

A. Herbicide Orange is a combination of two common agricultural herbicides--a 50:50 mixture of the N-butyl esters of 2,4-Dichlorophenoxyacetic and 2,4,5-Trichlorophenoxyacetic acid.

Q. How much was used in Vietnam?

11 million
A. Approximately ~~10,600,000~~ gallons.

Q. What is 2,4,5-T?

A. 2,4,5-T is the common name for the selective herbicide 2,4,5-Trichlorophenoxyacetic acid.

Q. What is TCDD?

A. 2,3,7,8-Tetrachlorodibenzo-p-dioxin (TCDD or dioxin) is one of a family of 75 chlorinated dioxins. There are 22 isomers of TCDD. 2,3,7,8-TCDD is generally considered the most toxic of the chlorinated dioxins.

Q. What is the basis for the claims of liver damage, psychological problems, cancer, etc?

A. While the basic ingredients of Herbicide Orange--2,4,-D and 2,4,5-T--have a very low level of toxicity, the component 2,4,5-T sometimes breaks down during the manufacturing process to form minute quantities of a highly toxic substance, dioxin (TCDD). Animal studies have linked dioxin to liver damage, spontaneous abortions and other organ damage when animals were fed the substance over a prolonged period. Humans exposed to heavy concentrations of dioxin as a result of industrial accidents also have shown some acute short term medical effects.

Q. Was dioxin contained in the Herbicide Orange sprayed in Vietnam?

A. Yes, there were minute quantities with a weighted mean concentration of 1.98 parts per million.

Q. What are the uses of 2,4,5-T?

A. 2,4,5-T is used to control unwanted vegetation in rice, forests, pasture and rangeland and along highways, railroads, power lines and pipelines. It is generally sprayed onto vegetation either from the ground or the air.

Q. How long has 2,4,5-T been used?

A. It has been commercially used for approximately 30 years.

Q. What has caused the concern regarding Herbicide Orange?

A. During the past years, theories and public concerns have developed over the possibility that widespread uses of 2,4,5-T, particularly any containing dioxin contaminants, may cause latent health effects on exposed persons. Since these materials were in Herbicide Orange used in Vietnam between 1962 and 1971, news media reports caused some veterans to feel that health problems they are now experiencing could be related to Herbicide Orange. Others who have no symptoms fear that they may be harboring some chemical in their bodies that could cause health problems later.

Q. What kinds of health problems have been alleged?

A. Health problems mentioned in news stories include hand tremors, weight loss, diminished sexual drive, cancer, birth defects in offspring, a skin condition called chloracne, liver damage and psychological problems. Veterans who heard of these reports have since reported an even wider range of problems which they attribute to their having been in Vietnam when herbicides were used.

Q. Is there any medical basis for believing that such a wide range of symptoms could have a common cause?

A. There is no conclusive scientific evidence at this time that any of the symptoms, other than chloracne are related to any of the chemical components of Herbicide Orange, or other herbicides used in Vietnam. Chloracne is a skin condition akin to juvenile acne.

Q. How long will it take to determine if there were health hazards as a result of exposure to Herbicide Orange?

A. We hope to have some preliminary data within two years as to the health of the Ranch Hand group. It may not provide any meaningful data at that time which would reflect a causal relationship to exposure to Herbicide Orange.

Q. Where will the physical exams be conducted?

A. The physical examinations will be performed by a qualified institution under contract. That contract has not yet been negotiated.

~~(Answer depends on decision which is pending)~~

Q. If the questionnaire is to be contracted out, when will the contract be awarded?

A. A statement of work is now being drafted. Solicitation for contract should begin within _____.

(Answer depends on decision which is pending.)

2 part - 1 ^{refine} ~~document~~ - done by ~~COB~~ 30 Jan

2 - ~~document~~ - ~~document~~ - Jan 81

5

Q. Since the Air Force announced long ago its commitment to do this study, why has there been such an extreme delay?

A. A series of delays in the peer review process, totally outside our control, and additional delays due to the Federal Interagency Working Group review, have together contributed to an almost one year delay. In a study of this magnitude, it is vital that we assure the proper study begin prior to the initial contact with the participating population. Thus we view the delay as having beneficial results in terms of further understanding of the total project.

Q. When will the physical exams begin?

beginning

A. Within two months following administration of the questionnaire.

Q. How many of the Ranch Hand group are on active duty?

245 (134

111

A. ~~256~~ (144 officers, ~~112~~ enlisted)

Q. Was Herbicide Orange sprayed in Korea?

A. Yes

Q. When and how will the questionnaire be administered?

A. A contract will be let to ^{refine} ~~develop~~ a questionnaire which is directly related to the physical examination and encompasses a broader range of health history, including offspring birth defects, etc.

The questionnaire should be completed within six months, and ~~will~~ be administered ^{will begin in March 1981.} in personal interviews with the study participants.

~~(This decision is still pending.)~~

Q. The Scientific Panel recommended that a study be initiated to determine if an increased risk of cancer is associated with service in Vietnam. Will the Air Force consider studying this?

A. This will be pursued in the questionnaire and the physical examination as it relates to the Ranch Hand group.

Q. What will you be looking for in the examinations?

A. The general state of health and any abnormality that has been suggested by animal or human studies in the literature associated with components of Herbicide Orange as well as other conditions expressed by many of the veterans.

Q. Why was the School of Aerospace Medicine selected to conduct the study?

A. This school is the center of expertise within the Air Force for epidemiological investigations and concerns.

Q. Who will pay for transportation costs of the participants?

A. All transportation and cost of accommodations will be paid by the Government.

Q. Are those costs included in the \$40 million?

A. Yes

Q. Will the participants be compensated for time away from their jobs?

A. This is under study and a final decision has not been made.

~~(This answer depends on a decision which is pending.)~~

Q. How will the Air Force publicize this study to encourage Ranch Handers to participate?

A. By personal letters and telephone calls to each individual and direct contact with the Ranch Hand organization. In addition, we will be providing information to the media on the importance of this study and of the Ranch Hand participation.

Q. Who will fund the study?

A. (decision pending)

Q. How often will the participants be given physical examinations?

A. The participants will be given a comprehensive physical examination the first year and at periodic intervals within the first 10 years. Subsequent examinations would be scheduled based on the results of examinations up to that point.

Q. Are there any women in the Ranch Hand group?

A. No

Q. If a health problem is discovered during the study, will the person receive care in a military hospital?

A. Active duty and retired are eligible for care in a military medical facility. Veterans are eligible for care in VA hospitals under specified conditions. Other individuals will be referred to their private physicians for follow-up.

Q. When do you plan to contact the Ranch Hand group?

A. The first letters will be dispatched within the next ^{few} weeks.
(~~an assumption~~)

Q. Do you have current addresses on all the Ranch Hand Personnel?

A. Yes

Q. How many of the people to be studied have children who have birth defects?

A. We don't know. We will be able to answer that following the analyses of the questionnaires.

Q. How much will the study cost?

A. Over a 20-year period, approximately \$40 million.

Q. Who will review the study results to ensure they are not "whitewashed?"

A. An outside monitoring group (yet to be selected) with appropriate scientific credentials representing the Government, academia and veterans organizations will closely monitor and review the conduct of the study. This advisory group will be under no obligation to the Air Force and will conduct their observations in an independent manner. They will report directly to the White House's Office of Science and Technology. It should be noted that the Air Force subjected its protocol to an unprecedented peer review in order to assure the scientific validity of its study and to alleviate any concerns of credibility.

Q. What group of people will be studied?

A. The aircrew members and ground support personnel assigned to Operation Ranch Hand as well as a control group, comprised of individuals of comparable military background, age and race.

Q. The National Academy of Sciences has stated that if the Air Force does the study, neither the public nor the veterans will believe the results of the study. What is your response?

A. The credibility of the Air Force has not been questioned, only the public "perception." The scientific review of the protocol and monitoring of the study by an outside agency reporting to the Office of Science and Technology should alleviate any concerns.

Q. The National Academy of Sciences charged that the follow-up phase of the study was not long enough to determine concise health effects. What is your response?

A. The original protocol allowed for extension of the study for specified periods beyond the first six-years. The study could go as long as 20 years.

Q. The National Academy of Sciences report has charged that your study even if well done, lacks sufficient numbers to be meaningful. What is your response?

A. The Air Force has always acknowledged that the number of Ranch Hand members is not large. But that is the total group. From the overall perspective, the Ranch Hand group represents the world's second largest identifiable, highly exposed group of people. (The population of Seveso, Italy is the largest.)

12.

Q. How many Ranch Hand people have you tracked down?

A. We have been able to determine that there are ~~1-129~~ known Ranch Handers whom we can contact.

Q. How many of the Ranch Hand group have died of cancer or other serious ailments since their exposure to Herbicide Orange?

A. We know of ⁹ 46 deaths of the Ranch Hand group as of this point of the study. The majority of those deaths have come from aircraft accidents or hostilities in Vietnam.

Q. Are there any known deaths from cancer or other serious diseases?

A. We are in the process of determining this, but at this point have no information to that effect.

Q. Don't you think this study reflects conflict of interest because of the compensation issue?

A. No, there is no conflict of interest involved. The Air Force Medical Service is studying an Air Force population and will make a determination as to physical condition. The Medical Services does not determine compensation.

Q. Will the results of the comprehensive physical examination be released?

A. The results of the physical exams will be released only to the individual or to his personal physician with the consent of the individual or to the appropriate Government agencies as provided for in the Privacy Act. They will not be released to the public; however, the statistical group findings will be a matter of public record.

Q. How will the questionnaire be administered?

A. By personal interviews. ~~(Decision pending)~~

Q. Have the chemical manufacturers of Herbicide Orange offered to assist the Air Force in the study?

A. No, but we have reviewed much of the material which they have publicized.

Q. Were there any civilians assigned to Operation Ranch Hand?

A. The records do not reflect any civilians in the operational aspects of the Ranch Hand mission.

Q. What scientific results do you expect?

A. We would hope the results would show whether there is a causal relationship between the health problems, if any, of the Ranch Hand group and their exposure to Herbicide Orange. At the least, it will add invaluable data to the knowledge bank concerning the health effects of dioxin exposure.

Q. Are you going to use a control group and who are they?

A. Yes, we plan to use appropriate controls throughout all phases of the study. The general group has been identified and will be personnel who had similar military functions. The individual controls will not be selected until the Ranch Hand participants are defined. The controls will be matched as to age, time in Vietnam, race, job, etc.

Q. Will you use any parts of some of the foreign studies already done on Herbicide Orange? Why?

A. Yes, many of the findings and approaches of foreign studies have been incorporated. To not do so would be significantly remiss.

Q. What if this study results in disqualification from certain jobs, such as flying, public safety, etc.?

A. The chances of this happening are very remote. Flying personnel get a very comprehensive annual physical examination which would normally detect any problems of such significance as to be hazardous to public safety. In the unlikely event this did occur, the physical examination would be referred to the individual's occupational physician for further examination and appropriate action. We are working to develop an indemnification program in such a circumstance. (This answer depends on pending decision)

Q. Is participation in the study voluntary?

A. Yes, the success of the study depends on their participation and we are soliciting their cooperation, individuals and as a group. (decision pending)

Q. Why is the study limited to the Ranch Hand group?

A. This group of people was involved in the actual spraying operations involving Herbicide Orange, and had greatest potential exposure. We believe them to be the best documented and most accurately assessable group of individuals exposed.

Q. In February of this year, the Deputy Surgeon General testified that the "Base line questionnaire has been developed." Why are you now saying six months later that you will have to contract out the questionnaire?

A. A base line questionnaire had been developed in consonance with the original protocol for the study. However, because of recommendations of the peer review agencies to expand the area of study of the health effects, it is necessary to key the questionnaire directly to the physical examination. A different and much more extensive questionnaire is required.

Q. What has been done on the Ranch Hand study so far?

A. We have reviewed the scientific literature, contacted established leading dioxin experts, conducted a peer review process, established the scientific protocol, received indorsement of the study by Ranch Hand Association, developed preliminary questionnaires, ascertained the study population, worked on study control matching, designed a data base management system concept, coordinated locator services, screened thousands of personnel records, determined the flying status of the study group and have begun the base line mortality study.

Q. Where will the Ranch Hand study be made?

A. The United States Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine at Brooks AFB, Texas will conduct the study, augmented by contracting of the questionnaire and physical exams. (This decision still pending)

Q. Who in the Air Force will be responsible for the study?

A. The Air Force Surgeon General, Lt Gen Paul W. Myers, will monitor the project but has delegated the implementation to the Commander of the Aerospace Medical Division, Maj Gen (Dr.) John Ord, and the Commander, USAF School of Aerospace Medicine, Col (Dr.) Roy L. DeHart, both at Brooks AFB, Texas.

Q. How long will the study last?

A. The study could last up to 20 years.

Q. What kind of tests will be made?

A. Standard blood tests, chest x-rays and electrocardiograms will be obtained much in the same fashion as a comprehensive physical examination. Special neurophysiological tests measuring nerve conduction and muscle function will be administered. In addition, special blood tests emphasizing liver; kidney function, etc., will be added as appropriate (see attached list of tests).

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ANNUAL FLYING PHYSICAL
EXAMINATION AND THE HERBICIDE ORANGE EXAMINATION

Routine Flying
Physical Examination

Herbicide Orange
Research Examination

General Areas

Chest X-Ray	Yes	Yes
Cardiogram	Yes	Yes
VD Tests	Yes/No	Yes/Yes
Urinalysis	Yes	Yes
3 Blood Counts	Yes	Yes
9 Blood Chemistries	No	Yes
Diabetes Tests	Yes/No	Yes/Yes

Specific Areas

Dermatologic Exam with 3 blood chemistries	No	Yes
Neuro-Psychiatric Exam Psychological Battery	No	Yes
Nerve Conduction Tests	No	Yes
Reproductive Exam Semen Analysis	No	Yes
3 Hormone Tests	No	Yes
Cancer/Liver Exam 5 Blood Chemistry Tests	No	Yes
Specialized Tests Karyotyping Hepatitis Antigens Antinuclear Antibodies Immunoelectrophoresis Monilia Skin Test Quantitative Immunoglobulins Dioxin Level Assay	Not ever performed	Performed if indicated by other tests