

Agent Orange

Various war weapons were used in the Vietnam including herbicides. These herbicides were developed for the military to help reduce plant and vegetation in dense terrains, bringing the enemy out of hiding and protecting the American troops and their allies from ambush. They were also used to destroy any food crops that the Viet Cong relied on to feed their army of soldiers. Statistics show that over 20 million gallons were sprayed with 15 different herbicides, some being color coded arriving in barrels, and all supposedly with no harmful effects to humans.

The spray was released from airplanes, helicopters, trucks, and soldiers carrying backpack sprayers. Little did anyone know at this time, that more tragic history surrounding the Vietnam war was about to unfold, and the name of the devil was Agent Orange.

Agent Orange was a powerful mixture of chemical defoliants used by U.S. military forces during the Vietnam War to eliminate forest cover for North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops, as well as crops that might be used to feed them. The U.S. program of defoliation, codenamed Operation Ranch Hand, sprayed more than 19 million gallons of herbicides over 4.5 million acres of land in Vietnam from 1961 to 1972.

Agent Orange was a code name for the barrel with the orange colored steel band. Chemically, it is a 50/50 mixture of two different herbicides, 2, 4-D, and 2, 4, 5-T, and 11 million gallons of this toxic defoliant was used between 1965 through 1970. Over 6,000 missions, with 10% being over Vietnam, were sprayed with Agent Orange, and some in Cambodia and Laos to utilize the Ho Chi Minh Trail, which was a key supply route for the Viet Cong. Agent Orange killed vegetation of all types including the root systems, leaving barren trees and undergrowth blackened and foul smelling.

It was later revealed to cause serious health issues--including tumors, birth defects, rashes, psychological symptoms and cancer--among returning U.S. servicemen and their families as well as among the Vietnamese population.

Agent Orange, which contained the chemical dioxin, was the most commonly used of the herbicide mixtures, and the most effective. The chemical called Dioxin is considered to be one of the most dangerous substances in the world. Dioxin is also known as TCDD, which caused a variety of adverse health effects in lab animals, and has been linked to numerous potentially dangerous and deadly health problems. The World Health Organization has since classified the chemical Dioxin as a known human carcinogen which can damage sensitive parts of the body like the endocrine, immune, and nervous systems.

Many Americans still continue to suffer from different health problems due to Agent Orange and Dioxin with some being passed on down to their children with various complications. In 1978 the Veterans Administration set up a program to help veterans with their needs from being exposed to Agent Orange.

Some of the effects from this devastating chemical are as follows:

- Skin irritation and some skin diseases like Chloracne
- Nerve disorders including peripheral neuropathy
- Type 2 diabetes

Miscarriages in women
Birth defects, some physical deformities and Spina Bifida
Neurological disorders
Cancers

Lawsuits have been filed accusing the chemical companies of war crimes because they sold Agent Orange to the military and companies such as Monsanto, Hercules, Dow, and Diamond Shamrock knew about the dangers of the herbicide but did not reveal them. In 1984 a huge class-action lawsuit was settled in the U.S. courts, with seven U.S. companies agreeing to pay a total of 180 million dollars to 291,000 people, with most of them being Vietnam war veterans. The final settlement which included interest was around 240 million dollars.

The tragedy surrounding Agent Orange with Dioxin still goes on today.

<http://www.articlesbase.com/politics-articles/agent-orange-its-affects-in-the-vietnam-war-and-after-1647753.html>