

the US government rejected it out of hand as “not good enough”, as “lacking credibility”. For example, in a February 5, 2007, press release, then US ambassador in Vietnam, Michael W. Marine, responded to a question in relation to possible US assistance to victims of Agent Orange by saying: “But honestly, I cannot say whether or not I have myself seen a victim of Agent Orange. The reason for that is that we still lack good scientific definitions of the causes of disabilities ... that have occurred in Vietnam ... We just don’t have the scientific evidence to make that statement with certainty.”

Liar. The US military and the government have always known the lethal power of Agent Orange. In a 1988 letter to a member of the US Congress investigating the issue of Agent Orange, US Air Force scientist Dr James Clary, who helped write the history of Operation Ranch Hand (the official operational name of the military’s Agent Orange campaign), stated: “We were aware of the potential for damage due to dioxin contamination in Agent Orange. We were even aware that the military formulation had a higher dioxin concentration than the civilian version due to the speed of manufacture. However, because the material was to be used on the enemy, none of us were overly concerned. We never considered the scenario in which our own personnel would become contaminated with

the herbicide.”

With respect to the toxic mess and the still unfolding humanitarian crisis caused by the application of Agent Orange in Vietnam, one after another US administration continued to string the Vietnamese along, throwing in the occasional minor concession to buy time, without any sign of addressing the issue seriously

Five decades have passed since Agent Orange was first sprayed in Vietnam. Tens of thousands have died directly or indirectly from its lethal effects. Millions have their lives reduced to a nightmare, and the deadly chemical is already claiming its third generation of victims. Should Washington continue to play games with these vulnerable and ravaged people, putting up excuses and washing their hands of the mess it created?

For the sake of these long-suffering and vulnerable victims and for the sake of Vietnam’s ravaged environment, urgent action is needed now!

For more information about this issue and the associated international justice campaign, **visit our website:** www.agentorangejustice.org.au.

How can you help?

- **Join Agent Orange Justice (AOJ)**– Membership fee: **Individuals:** \$20 per year; \$10 concession; \$50 solidarity; **small organisations:** \$50 affiliation per year; **large organisations:** \$100 affiliation per year.
- **Take part in AOJ’s campaigning activities** – to raise consciousness about this issue among the broader Australian population.
- **Donate to AOJ**– We need resources to reach people in Australia about this important issue – leaflets, posters, badges, DVDs, film showings. Any funds raised above our operating and publicity expenses will be sent to VAVA in Hanoi.

Contact us at info@agentorangejustice.org.au

AGENT ORANGE JUSTICE



Australia Vietnam Solidarity Network

www.agentorangejustice.org.au

OUR MISSION

Agent Orange Justice – Australia Vietnam Solidarity Network is a new organization being established as the Australian section of the international campaign to hold the US government responsible for the disaster it created for millions of Vietnamese people as a result of its 10-year spraying of Agent Orange – a chemical weapon – in Vietnam between 1961 and 1971.

This international campaign is spearheaded by the Vietnam Association of Victims of Agent Orange/Dioxin (VAVA), with chapters in many countries, and aims to pressure the US government, and the chemical companies which produced Agent Orange, to pay to clean up the toxic mess still contaminating parts of Vietnam's environment and to provide adequate compensation to some 3 million Vietnamese who are affected by this chemical, especially in the form of horrific birth defects which now affect the third generation. To date the US has refused to accept its responsibility.

In addition to this solidarity with this campaign, our organization will also aim to raise awareness of the issue more broadly in the Australian community, pressure the Australian government to recognise its responsibility for this disaster as part of the US war on Vietnam, link this issue with other anti-war issues, and do our own small part in raising solidarity funds for the victims.

WHY IS AGENT ORANGE AN ISSUE

Even though the US war on Vietnam ended nearly 40 years ago, the US's saturation chemical bombing during that war is still wreaking havoc on the life of at least 3 million people in Vietnam – including the newly born, making them third generation victims. Nobody knows when the congenital deformities, one of many horrific health consequences of the toxic chemicals, will end.

The main chemical in question is nicknamed Agent Orange – a class-one human carcinogen dioxin and some 80 million litres of it and other similar “defoliants” – which the US military sprayed or dumped regularly in some 10% of central and southern Vietnam for 10 years until 1971.

Dioxin is chemically stable, isn't diluted by water and so it doesn't easily decompose. It, therefore, still exists in concentrated forms in Vietnam today, penetrating the eco-systems and food chains of parts of Vietnam, enabling it to continue to claim new prey, especially among the younger generations, for the mere fact that people – many of whom are dire poor and impoverished – live off the land and water systems contaminated by it. Women with dioxin in their blood can pass it on their offspring, including through breast milk.

LINGERING CONTAMINATION

There're about 50 especially contaminated Agent Orange “hot spots” in Vietnam, many of which were US military bases. For example, a declassified US defense department document on March 1, 1970, reveals that some 7500 gallons of Agent Orange were spilled at Bien Hoa, home of a US military base. Similar spills and dumping of aborted Agent Orange spray runs were common.

In 2003, US dioxin expert Arnold Schecter found that the soil samples in Bien Hoa contained dioxin levels **180 million times** above the safe level set by the US Environmental Protection Agency. In 2005, Vietnam's Research Centre for Gender, Family and Environment in Development, revealed that blood samples from Bien Hoa showed dioxin levels of up to 271 parts per trillion (ppt), as opposed to 2 ppt in samples from Hanoi which wasn't attacked with Agent Orange. On June 24, 2002, the US magazine *Mother Jones* reported that dioxin levels in Bien Hoa blood samples were as high as 431 ppt.

HEALTH NIGHTMARE

A cocktail of health nightmares is plaguing millions of Vietnamese who, after 50 years of war, foreign invasion and embargo, have lived in peace only since 1989.

A 1983 international conference on dioxin in Ho Chi Minh City highlighted many varieties of congenital malformations that were common in Vietnam after the US War there, but rare in other parts of the world: malformed nervous systems (including anencephalus or the absence of the brain – sometimes entirely); deformed (including absence of) eyes, ears and noses; facial and auricular anomalies; deformed (including absence of) limbs; conjoined twins; cleft lips and cleft palates.

Dioxin is also notorious for wrecking the human reproductive system. According to a study by Le Thi Nham Tuyet and Annika Johansson, dioxin interferes with various hormones, growth factors and enzymes. Its toxicity is more damaging in children than in adults. Around 10% of Agent Orange victims in Vietnam are children.

According to Tuyet and Johansson, other frequent health problems associated with Agent Orange in Vietnam in recent decades include spina bifida, hydrocephalus, childhood cancers, intrauterine growth retardation, miscarriages, premature births and low birth-weights.

The US veterans affairs department recognises 15 “side effects” arising from Agent Orange that include prostate cancer, respiratory cancers, chronic lymphocytic leukaemia, multiple myeloma, Type 2 diabetes, Hodgkin's disease, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, soft-tissue sarcoma, chloracne, porphyria cutanea tarda, acute and subacute transient peripheral neuropathy, AL amyloidosis, B-cell (or hairy-cell) leukaemia, Parkinson's disease and ischemic heart disease.

Keen to establish a family after the war, many war-traumatised Vietnamese, especially war veterans, were shocked to give birth to seriously deformed children. Many families have multiple disabled children.

A World Health Organisation warning revealed: “Once TCCD [dioxin] has entered the body it is there to stay due to its uncanny ability to dissolve in [body] fats and its rock solid chemical stability.”

Unless the areas of Vietnam contaminated by Agent Orange/dioxin are cleaned up, the deadly chemical will continue to claim new generations of victims and wreak havoc on the lives of many more.

WASHINGTON AND ITS ALLIES DODGE RESPONSIBILITY

As part of the 1973 Paris Peace Accord, the US pledged US\$3.25 billion to help tackle the consequences that its war had inflicted on Vietnam, but in fact it has not paid one cent.

For years, the Vietnamese have been pursuing the US government through diplomatic channels to get it to accept responsibility for the health and environmental consequences left by its use of Agent Orange. The US government has repeatedly said that it doesn't recognise any legal liability for damages “alleged” to be caused by Agent Orange. It continues to hide behind the pretext that “more scientific research is needed”.

When Vietnamese evidence was presented,