

February 23, 2016

**REF: HJ 25, SUPPORT FOR BLUE WATER NAVY**

My name is William Durant Johnstone and I am a Blue Water Navy Vietnam veteran. I am here to give testimony in support of **HJ 25**.

**DANANG HARBOR:**

I served in Vietnam on both the USS PROVIDENCE GLG6 and the USS OKLAHOMA CITY CLG5 from November 1967 thru March 1970. Our Mission was offering gunfire support to our troops on the ground. What we did was no different than what the "big guns" did on land, only we were on the water.

In the 29 months that I was attached to the 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet we visited Vietnam at least 26 times and entered Danang Harbor about 23 times. Less than a mile from Danang Harbor and 28 feet about sea level is Danang Airport. This airport was one of the distribution points for OPERATION RANCH HAND, the operation that delivered out AGENT ORANGE throughout Vietnam. There was a drainage ditch that ran from the airport directly into the Harbor. It defies common sense that in all the years that Agent Orange was stored there and loaded onto the planes that large amounts did NOT make it's way into Danang Harbor.

Another way Agent Orange made it's way into the harbor was in what were thought to be empty barrels. But in fact, these barrels contained up to 4 gallons of unused Agent Orange. There were thousands upon thousands of these barrels. The barrels were either given or sold to the locals to use as BBQ grills. The locals would rinse the barrels out either in the river, which was in close proximity to the harbor or the harbor itself. Agent Orange was mixed 50/50 with diesel fuel. At the time it was not uncommon to see large pools of diesel fuel floating in Danang Harbor. There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that this came from the airport and indeed contained Agent Orange.

Another avenue for the toxic contaminate to reach Danang Harbor was thru the water cycle. The dioxin was washed into the harbor or coastal waters by the rainwater. Unlike rainwater in the United States, South Asia has what is called MONSOON SEASON when it rains and rains for weeks on end with water equivalent to that of a powerful fire hose. Once in Danang Harbor this run off, laced with Agent Orange, was taken in by the sailors through inhalation.

There was also LEACHING. At higher altitudes, rainwater mixed with dioxin would make its way through the ground soil and into the harbor. These are just some of the ways in which Agent Orange made its way into Danang Harbor. Once again, it defies ALL logic and common sense to conclude that Navy personnel working on the ships were NOT exposed to Agent Orange.

In addition, over the last several years the United States government has agreed to spend MILLIONS of dollars cleaning up Danang Airport and the surrounding areas due to HIGH LEVELS of dioxin in the soil.

**ALONG THE COAST OF VIETNAM:**

As we watched tracers being fired from helicopters in the evening, we also watched planes drop Agent Orange in the morning. During heavy rains, the rainwater washed the trees and land of contaminates. The water, along with its toxins, would then find its way to the coast and into the sea. Along the coast ships had to replenish their supply of fresh water. This is done by taking in salt water and distilling it to produce fresh water. This fresh water was then used to run the boilers, for drinking, showering and washing. In order to accomplish this distillation process, seawater had to be heated to a high temperature. Studies have shown that this heating process actually ENHANCES the dioxin and make it MORE POTENT. I believe this process alone is, more likely than not, the cause of most exposures to Agent Orange.

**SUMMARY:**

HUNDREDS if not THOUSANDS of Blue Water Navy veterans are dying each year without ANY help or support of the VA. The VA claims that there is no proof that the Blue Water Navy was exposed to AGENT ORANGE. As I said earlier in my testimony, their reasoning DEFIES ALL COMMON SENSE AND LOGIC.

In April of 2015 the VA Court of Appeals called the VA's reasoning for "denying presumption of Agent Orange exposure" to Navy Vietnam veterans ARBITRARY and CAPRICIOUS. What do you think? The VA once again defied the order and refused to change its definition of INLAND WATER WAYS.

I urge you to read the DANANG HARBOR REPORT by John Rossi. You can access it on the Blue Water Vietnam Veterans website at [www.bluewaternavy.org](http://www.bluewaternavy.org). Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



William Durant Johnstone

*...."I regret having but one prostate to lose for my country"*

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