

**GOOD AFTERNOON LADIES AND GENTLEMEN. MY NAME IS KEN WITKIN AND I'M THE CURRENT PRESIDENT OF THE AIRBORNE BATTLEFIELD COMMAND AND CONTROL CENTER ASSOCIATION.**

**THE ABCCC ASSOCIATION WAS ESTABLISHED IN OCTOBER 2007 AS A RESULT OF AN ORGANIZATIONAL REUNION THAT TOOK PLACE IN LAS VEGAS, NEVADA.**

**THE AIRBORNE BATTLEFIELD COMMAND AND CONTROL CENTER, ALSO KNOWN AS THE AB TRIPLE C, WAS AN EC-130E AIRBORNE COMMAND POST THAT FLEW OVER LAOS DURING THE ENTIRE VIETNAM WAR. THE ABCCC CONDUCTED THE AIR WAR OVER LAOS AND THE GROUND WAR IN LAOS DURING THE VIETNAM WAR. IN ACTUALITY, THERE WERE ALWAYS THREE WARS BEING CONDUCTED SIMULTANEOUSLY DURING THE VIETNAM WAR ERA. THE WAR IN SOUTH VIETNAM, THE WAR IN NORTH VIETNAM AND THE WAR IN AND OVER LAOS. LATER OF COURSE, THERE WAS ALSO A WAR IN CAMBODIA. THE ABCCC WAS INVOLVED IN ALL OF THESE WARS.**

**THE PERSONNEL WHO FLEW ON AND MAINTAINED THE EC-130E ABCCC WERE ALL ASSIGNED TO THE 7<sup>TH</sup> AIRBORNE COMMAND AND CONTROL SQUADRON OR THE 7<sup>TH</sup> ACCS. THE 7<sup>TH</sup> ACCS WAS STATIONED AT UDORN RTAB FROM OCTOBER 1968 TO APRIL 1972 AND THEN THE SQUADRON MOVED TO KORAT RTAB IN APRIL 1972 AND REMAINED AT KORAT UNTIL MAY 1974. THUS THE 7<sup>TH</sup> ACCS WAS STATIONED IN THAILAND A TOTAL OF ABOUT 6 YEARS.**

**ALMOST FROM THE FIRST DAY THE ASSOCIATION WAS ESTABLISHED, I BEGAN TO RECEIVE TELEPHONE CALLS, LETTERS AND E-MAILS FROM FORMER 7 ACCS PERSONNEL INFORMING ME THAT THEY HAD VARIOUS FORMS OF CANCER AND OR TYPE 2 DIABETES. ALL THE TELEPHONE CALLS, LETTERS AND E-MAILS ASKED IF IT WERE POSSIBLE THAT THESE AILMENTS WERE CAUSED BY EXPOSURE TO AGENT ORANGE.**

**BY DECEMBER 2007, I HAD RECEIVED SO MANY TELEPHONE CALLS, E-MAILS AND LETTERS FROM FORMER 7 ACCS PERSONNEL INFORMING ME THAT THEY HAD CANCER AND OR TYPE II DIABETES THAT I FINALLY BECAME TOTALLY CONVINCED THAT AGENT ORANGE HAD TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THESE AILMENTS.**

**ON FEBRUARY 13, 2008, I TELEPHONED MR RICK GILLETE FROM THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION'S AGENT ORANGE OFFICE ASKING MR. GILLETTE FOR ANY ASSISTANCE HE COULD OFFER ME IN DETERMINING IF AGENT ORANGE WAS EVER USED IN THAILAND. MR.GILLETTE NEVER ANSWERED MY QUESTION AND WAS ABSOLUTELY NO HELP TO ME. AS A MATTER OF FACT, MR. GILLETTE ASKED ME TO GET IN CONTACT WITH THE VIETNAM VETERANS OF**

**AMERICA AND COORDINATE MY EFFORTS THROUGH THEIR ORGANIZATION.**

**ON JUNE 8, 2010, THE ABCCC ASSOCIATION WROTE A LETTER TO MR BRADLEY MAYES, COMPENSATION & PENSION SERVICES, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS, VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION, INFORMING MR. MAYES THAT THERE WERE THOUSANDS OF US VETERANS WHO FOUGHT IN AND OVER LAOS DURING THE VIETNAM WAR AND THAT AGENT ORANGE WAS USED EXTENSIVELY IN LAOS TO DEFIOLIATE THE HO CHI MINH TRAIL. THE LETTER FURTHER STATED THAT “35 YEARS AFTER THE END OF OUR SECRET WAR IN LAOS, THE US GOVERNMENT IS STILL IGNORING ALL OUR VETERANS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE LAOTIAN WAR”.**

**ON SEPTEMBER 18, 2010, THE ABCCC ASSOCIATION RECEIVED A LETTER FROM THOMAS J. MURPHY, DIRECTOR, COMPENSATION & PENSION SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS STATING THE FOLLOWING: “AS A RESULT OF YOUR LETTER, MY OFFICE HAS OBTAINED AND REVIEWED A COPY OF THE 1969 CHECO REPORT TITLED THE ABCCC IN SEA, WHICH DESCRIBES THE VALUABLE SERVICE OF VETERANS OF THIS COMMAND IN CONTROLLING AND DIRECTING AIRCRAFT OPERATIONS IN SUPPORT OF THE WAR EFFORT. REGARDING YOUR REFERENCE TO LAOS. DOD HAS ACKNOWLEDGED AERIAL SPRAYING OF TACTICAL HERBICIDES ALONG THE LAOTIAN-VIETNAM BORDER TO REVEAL ENEMY ACTIVITY ON THE HO CHI MINH TRAIL. ANY VETERAN PROVIDING EVIDENCE OF SERVICE IN THIS**

**AREA OF LAOS WOULD QUALIFY FOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF EXPOSURE ON A DIRECT FACT-FOUND BASIS.”**

**SO HERE WE HAVE ESTABLISHED OUR FIRST SUCCESS IN CONVINCING THE VA TO ADMIT THAT VETERANS WHO SERVED IN LAOS WERE EXPOSED TO AGENT ORANGE DURING THE VIETNAM WAR. WHY DID MY ORGANIZATION PURSUE COMPENSATION FOR VETERANS OF THE WAR IN LAOS INSTEAD OF PURSUING AGENT ORANGE COMPENSATION FOR ALL THE VETERANS WHO SERVED IN THAILAND DURING THE VIETNAM WAR? BECAUSE, THE CHECO REPORT REFERRED TO BY MR. MURPHY IN HIS LETTER UNEQUIVABLY STATES THAT “TACTICAL HERBICIDES, INCLUDING AGENT ORANGE, WERE USED ON EVERY US AIR FORCE BASE IN THAILAND DURING THE VIETNAM WAR”.**

**AFTER READING THE CHECO REPORT, THE VA CHANGED THEIR AGENT ORANGE EXPOSURE POLICY FOR VETERANS OF THE VIETNAM WAR WHO WERE STATIONED IN THAILAND DURING THE WAR.**

**AFTER DENYING FOR 35 YEARS THAT AGENT ORANGE WAS USED IN THAILAND DURING THE VIETNAM WAR, THE NEW POLICY STATED: “AFTER REVIEWING DOCUMENTS RELATED TO HERBICIDE USE IN VIETNAM AND THAILAND, C&P SERVICE HAS DETERMINED THAT THERE WAS SIGNIFICANT USE OF HERBICIDES ON THE FENCED IN PERIMETERS OF MILITARY BASES IN THAILAND INTENDED TO ELIMINATE VEGETATION AND GROUND COVER FOR BASE SECURITY PURPOSES. EVIDENCE OF THIS CAN BE FOUND IN A DECLASSIFIED VIETNAM ERA DEPARTMENT OF**

**DEFENSE (DOD) DOCUMENT TITLED *PROJECT CHECO SOUTHEAST ASIA REPORT: BASE DEFENSE IN THAILAND*. THEREFORE, WHEN HERBICIDE RELATED CLAIMS FROM VETERANS WITH THAILAND SERVICE ARE RECEIVED, RO PERSONNEL SHOULD NOW EVALUATE THE TREATMENT AND PERSONNEL RECORDS TO DETERMINE WHETHER THE VETERAN'S SERVICE ACTIVITIES INVOLVED DUTY ON OR NEAR THE PERIMETER OF THE MILITARY BASE WHERE THE VETERAN WAS STATIONED”.**

**SO HERE WE HAVE ESTABLISHED OUR SECOND SUCCESS. THIS TIME IN CONVINCING THE VA THAT AGENT ORANGE AND OTHER HERBICIDES WERE INDEED USED IN THAILAND DURING THE VIETNAM WAR.**

**UNFORTUNATELY, THE CURRENT VA POLICY LIMITS THE AGENT ORANGE EXPOSURE TO PERSONNEL WHO SERVED ON OR NEAR THE BASE PERIMETER OF THAILAND BASES DURING THE VIETNAM WAR. THE ABCCC ASSOCIATION UNEQUIVOCABLY DISAGREES WITH THIS LIMITATION AND HAS ARGUED AGAINST THIS LIMITATION IN A LETTER SENT TO PRESIDENT OBAMA ON 31 MARCH 2011.**

**WE WROTE THE FOLLOWING IN OUR LETTER: “MR. PRESIDENT. WHAT CONSTITUTES BEING “NEAR” A BASE PERIMETER? THE WORD “NEAR” IS A TOTALLY ARBITRARY TERM THAT HAS ABSOLUTELY NO DEFINITIVE VALUE. BY USING THE TERM “NEAR” IN THEIR FEBRUARY 15, 2011 AGENT ORANGE ADVISORY, THE VA HAS PROVIDED EVERY AO WITH A MECHANISM TO DISAPPROVE ANY AGENT ORANGE CLAIMS SUBMITTED BY USAF VETERANS WHO WERE STATIONED IN THAILAND DURING THE VIETNAM WAR”.**

**AFTER MORE THAN A YEAR, THE PRESIDENT HAS NEVER RESPONDED TO OUR LETTER.**

**ON 27 OCTOBER 2011, THE VA OFFICE IN OAKLAND CALIFORNIA APPROVED AN AGENT ORANGE COMPENSATION APPEAL, CITATION NR: 1139851, FROM AN AIR FORCE VETERAN WHO WAS STATIONED AT UDORN RTAB FROM SEPTEMBER 1971 TO SEPTEMBER 1972. (See Enclosure 1.) THIS AIR FORCE VETERAN STATED THAT HE WAS EXPOSED TO HERBICIDES AS HE “PERSONALLY MIXED AND SPRAYED THE DEFOLIANT USED ON THE FLIGHT LINES, BARRACKS, AND ALONG THE PERIMETER OF THE AIR FORCE BASE”.**

**SO NOW WE FINALLY HAVE PROOF THAT FROM SEPTEMBER 1971 TO SEPTEMBER 1972 AGENT ORANGE AND OTHER HERBICIDES WERE SPRAYED NOT ONLY AROUND THE PERIMETER OF UDORN RTAB BUT ALSO IN THE BARRACKS AREAS AND ALONG THE BASE FLIGHT LINE.**

**BASED ON THIS NEW EVIDENCE, THE ABCCC ASSOCIATION WROTE ANOTHER LETTER TO MR. MURPHY ON 26 APRIL 2012 REQUESTING THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS REVISIT ITS DECISION TO AWARD AGENT ORANGE COMPENSATION ONLY TO THOSE 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.**

**TO DATE WE HAVE NOT RECEIVED ANY REPLY FROM MR. MURPHY, OR FOR THAT MATTER, ANYONE FROM THE VA.**

**ENCLOSURE 1:**

**<http://abcccassociation.org/agentorangesprayingatudornthailand.pdf>**