Victims of Agent Orange/Dioxin in Binh Dinh

BINH DINH RED CROSS ASSOCIATION

I. CHEMICAL WARFARE IN BINH DINH PROVINCE – VIETNAM:

After the war ended in 1975, peace seemed to be evident, not a questionable issue. But more than 31 years have passed, pain and sufferings drag on and tears continue to drop.

War vestiges remain!

The consequences of Agent Orange are heavy and terrible:

Incurable diseases, monstrous births and birth defects suffered by Agent Orange victims and their children are still haunting. More than that, they will somehow affect the nation's racial development and its eternity.

The chemical warfare ended, but its consequences remain a hot issue at present and in the future.

*** Overview on the origin of DIOXIN**

1. Defoliants used in agriculture:

DIOXIN is a small compound, unexpected impurities appeared during the production of herbicides 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T, and a component of Agent Orange.

For a long time now, farmers everywhere in the world have understood that weeding will help increase their crop yield. For this reason, scientists have tried to find out all measures and chemicals for weeding while protecting plants and crops.

In the 19th century, a French scientist found herbicide of Asen origin which was very hazardous and so could not be used.

By 1937 – 1938, American chemical companies discovered herbicides of Phenoxy origin (Phenoxy herbicides) which were very effective. The two chemicals widely used were 2,4-D (2,4-Dichloro Phenoxy acetic acid) and 2,4,5-T (2,4,5-Trichloro Phenoxy acetic acid). It was considered a great invention and the chemicals have been soon used in many countries worldwide: the United States, South American and Northern European countries and Australia.

In fact, herbicides, together with pesticides have played an important role in the "Green Revolution" in many countries.

2. Herbicide used to military purposes:

Right after being invented and used for production development in service of human beings, herbicides have been studied and used by the warmongering militarists in a genocidal war against humans.

It is known to everyone that to live, all living beings have to eat food. The common food resources such as food and food-stuff come from vegetation and crops. Therefore, in war, if food supplies of the enemy were destroyed, enemy forces will starve and lose their fighting capacity, thus military victory will be won.

From this point of view, after the invention of herbicides, the Western militarists saw them as very effective weapons to be used in war.

In the Second World War, many military laboratories of the US and British armies secretly studied the use of herbicides to military purposes.

In the final stage of the Second World War, pilot 2,4-D spraying missions were conducted by military aircraft during 1911 – 1945. The US air force was ready to use herbicides to destroy rice fields around 6 major cities in Japan: Tokyo, Yokohama, Osaka, Lagaya, Kyoto, and Kobe. But, because the Japanese army surrendered so quickly that the US could not implement its plan.

After the Second World War, studies continued. The British army used herbicides in the war against Malaysian guerrilla in 1950.

In the United States, studies were conducted at the War Research Service. There, many types of chemicals were tested, but two of them 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T were most interested. In 1959, the Crop Destruction Research Agency organized a maneuver called Fort Drum (New York) – in which aircraft sprayed the compound Butyl – Estes 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T on an area of 4 square miles.

The success of the maneuver was quickly recognized by the US Defense Department which instructed the Agency to develop a Plan *on herbicide and defoliant spraying* in the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) which was in the framework of herbicide spraying in the Southeast Asian battlefields.

3. Herbicides in the Vietnam War

In 1960, the enemy scheme to repress the Revolutionary Movement in South Vietnam suffered continuous defeats; the General Uprising in Ben Tre Province started the armed struggle of the southern Vietnamese people and army; the liberated area was constantly expanded and in December 1960 the South Vietnam Liberation Front was officially established. In face of the development of the South Vietnam Revolutionary Movement, under the Staley-Taylor Plan to pacify South Vietnam within 18 months, the US, with consent from the Ngo Dinh Diem Puppet Administration made active preparations for the defoliation operation in the South Vietnam battle front (using herbicides and defoliants).

- In August 1960, in Langley, a meeting was held with the participation of representatives from the Department of Agriculture, TAC Agency and Ground and Naval Forces of the United States to discuss how to use C123 aircraft on spraying missions.

John F Kennedy, after taking office as President of the United States (on May 11, 1961) held a meeting with the US National

Security Council where he stated: "To prevent the Communists from invading South Vietnam, it is decided to use herbicides ... and other modern technologies to control roads and waterways along the borders of Vietnam..."

- In July 1961, means and equipment for chemical sprayings were shipped to Vietnam. The US air force sent in another 6 UC 123 aircraft together with crew members and necessary chemical equipment.

After the meeting in Kon Tum Provincial Town on August 3, 1961, the US Military Aid Agency in South Vietnam (MAAG) decided to select Dac To as a pilot place for the first defoliant spraying mission.

So, the first spraying mission was conducted on August 10, 1961, along Highway No. 14 – North of Kon Tum Provincial Town by H34 helicopter installed with Fidal sprayer and carried a 3- red stripped yellow flag of the Saigon Puppet Administration.

By Nov. 30, 1961, President John F. Kennedy officially prepared *a plan to use herbicides and defoliants to destroy a natural vegetation stretch in South Vietnam in an attempt to cut off food supplies to South Vietnam.*

An arm of the US air force code-named "Air Force Arm 309" was assigned to be in charge of chemical spraying missions. An operation using herbicides and defoliants, co-named "Operation Ranch Hand" was launched and Elmo Zumwalt Zr – a 3-Star General, Admiral of the US Naval Force was assigned to command the operation. To closely coordinate with US military agencies, the Saigon Puppet Army established a specialized agency code-named Committee 202. An instruction signed on Dec. 14, 1962 by the Chief of the General Staffs of the Saigon Army wrote: "To make the defoliation effective, a committee code-named Committee 202 is set up in Tactical Regions, Tactical Zones and sub-zones".

Operation Ranch Hand was conducted from 1961-1971 in Vietnam using about 15 chemicals. The most popular chemicals used during the war were defoliants including Agent Orange, white, turquoise, violet, pink and green substances and other herbicides. In addition, the US army also used tear gas, CS gas and nerve hazardous gas.

According to documents of the US National Science Institute and some American scientists such as Craig, Westing and Young, the amount of toxic chemicals sprayed in South Vietnam was 72 million tons, including 44,338,000 liters (accounting for 61% of the total amount) of Agent Orange which contain 170kg of 2,3,7,8 TCDD – Tetra Chloro – Dibenzo Para Dioxin called Dioxin for short– an extremely poisonous sustainable substance known so far and produced so far by men. DIOXIN has a large family. There are 75 isomers and congeners having chemical formula. All of them are commonly called PCDD (Polychlorinated Dipenzo – para – Dioxin). In terms of the quantity of Dioxin sprayed in Vietnam, there is still much dispute: according to Forkin, an academician of the Academy of Science of the former Soviet Union, the

amount of Dioxin sprayed in Vietnam was not 170kg as US scientists admitted, but 500kg. The basis for his calculation includes:

- The technology for the production of 2,4,5 – T during the 1960s by the US chemical companies (8 companies) was then quite low.

- To supply a large amount to serve the war in time, chemical companies did not fully observe the technical process, thus increasing DIOXIN in their chemical products.

- The use of Napalm bombs after herbicide spraying increased the amount of Dioxin in the sprayed areas.

No one knows how large is a *DIOXIN* dose that can kill humans. However, based on animal tests, scientists calculate that only 80g of DIOXIN mixed in food can kill the population of a city of New York size (7.8 million people). Because it is highly poisonous, many military organizations such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) have for many years studied the use of DIOXIN in war.

Means used for chemical sprayings include cargo aircraft C130, C123, Dacota, Canbera and helicopters - H34, HU-1A, HU-1B, and in some cases motor vehicles and boats equipped with Buffalo Turbin or compressed pumping machines ...

In Binh Dinh province, according to Robert E. Blak, Massachusetts Naval Institute, the United States used the data in the "Vegetation" document of the US National Institute of Science and the document "Use of Vegetation" of the US Military Agency saying that Binh Dinh Province was the third province (after Phuoc Long and Thua Thien Hue) suffered most spraying missions and 6% of the total of 18,582,101 gallons of Agent Orange.

In March 1968, a squadron named Squadron 12 in charge of the Operation Ranch Hand was established in Phu Cat airport (Go Quach) Binh Dinh Province. This squadron was responsible for chemical spraying missions.

Phu Cat Airport was one of the airports having big chemical storage with the capacity of 60,000 gallons. In addition to the main storage, Phu Cat Airport has three cylinder-shaped chemical tanks with a capacity of 3,000 gallons each. Here, a pumping system was installed. A unit was in charge of chemical pumping to aircraft comprising an officer and two non-commissioned officers and 18 men and 3 trucks capable of pumping chemicals to 7 C123 cargo aircraft a day. By 1972 due to the need to expand Phu Cat Airport, the chemical pumping station was moved to a new site, but still inside the Phu Cat Airport area.

At present at the airport (Phu Cat), the Goddess Mountain area (Phu Cat), An Son area (Tuy Phuoc), Bui Thi Xuan Ward (Quy Nhon City), chemicals are still found.

Binh Dinh Province is 134 km long in the North-South direction. The province leans on the Truong Son Mountain Range to the West and the Ba (Goddess) Mountain range to the East. These mountain areas were the former Revolutionary bases. The area between the sea coast and mountain is narrow and in some places, mountains reach the sea. Due to the

topography of mountains in both east and west and narrow area, with 558 spraying missions and 6% of the total amount of Agent Orange, not to mention other chemicals such as tear gas and CS gas never used before by the US, dropped in barrels or sprayed into caves where Vietnamese soldiers were hiding and on the upstream areas of rivers and streams to poison people and soldiers in Binh Dinh Province ... almost all areas in the province were sprayed by toxic chemicals and most of the population in this province were exposed to toxic chemicals to different extent.

II. IMPACTS OF CHEMICAL WARFARE ON NATURE AND HUMAN HEALTH:

1. The struggle to end the chemical warfare in Vietnam

The warfare in Vietnam was later considered the *largest environment war in human history.* The war, right from its start, was protested by many scientists of conscience in the world and even in the United States.

On June 15, 1966, a regular meeting of the Science Council of the Association for the Advancement of American Sciences (AAAS) announced "...The use of chemicals in the Vietnam War by the US Defense Department causes concern to scientists on its impacts. Therefore the AAAS Pacific Sub-Institute will form a group of leading scientists to study the ecological effects in Vietnam and will report the result at the next meeting."

Also in 1966, Arthur Gallstone, Professor of Biology of Yale University together with the US Association of Plant Physiology sent a letter to US President Lyndon Johnson, protesting the use of herbicides in Vietnam.

In February 1967, a group of more than 5,000 American scientists including 17 Nobel Prize winners and 129 academicians of the US National Academy of Science headed by Dr. John Sdsall from Harvard University signed a petition and sent to President Lyndon Johnson asking the US government to halt immediately the use of herbicides in Vietnam.

In 1968, a study of the Bionetics Research Laboratories shows the deformities caused by Agent Orange; and the media in Saigon then reported the existence of many cases of birth defects and deformities in the areas sprayed by Agent Orange. Then other experimental studies acknowledged possible birth defects and deformities related to Agent Orange. Later on, research studies showed further effects on deformities caused by DIOXIN.

In face of public pressure, on October 29, 1967 the United States had to ban the use of herbicides in populated areas.

By April 1970, the US Defense Department had to announce the halt of the use of herbicides in Vietnam.

The last spraying mission of US winged aircraft was in January 1971, but sprayings by US helicopters continued until October 1971. However, it is noted that that was only the end of the chemical warfare by the US air force. In fact, according to different documents, after the halt of the US chemical spraying, the Saigon Administration continued the chemical warfare using the means and chemicals left by

the US until its total collapse (Some documents write that after the US ended its herbicide spraying, in the storages in Vietnam, there remained 1.37 million gallons of Agent Orange).

2. Consequences of chemical warfare on nature and environment

The impacts of chemical warfare on environment and ecology are very serious and lasting.

According to statistics released by the Forest Planning and Investigation Institute, the total area of forests sprayed by toxic chemicals is 3,104,000ha, accounting for 17.8% of natural area, including 2,954,000ha of inland forests, or 95% and 150,000ha of mangrove forests, or 5% of the area of sprayed forests.

The destruction of millions of hectares of forests has caused imbalanced ecology. The damage has been caused to timbers, wildlife and other forest products. Forest tree seeds have been destroyed, thus causing difficulty for the recovery of forests. The function of preservation of surface water has been lost, causing drought during dry season and flood during the rainy season, thus badly affecting agricultural production. The functions of protecting and enriching nutrition on surface ground for forests have also been lost. Flood washes away the nutritious soil layer and causes soil erosion, exhausting soil, thus causing more difficulties for forest rehabilitation.

While the upland is eroded, the downstream rivers are filled up, obstructing the water currents, thus increasing the risks of flooding.

The forest wildlife has also been affected by forest destruction: bird and animal species which live on forest plants, leaves, roots and fruit were partly killed by toxic chemicals and partly by the shortage of food. Mammals also died for the shortage of food or have to move to other places.

3. Impacts of Agent Orange on human health.

During the chemical warfare, Vietnamese scientists were already concerned about its immediate and long-term effects.

Leading such studies was former Professor Ton That Tung. At an international workshop in Orsay (Paris 1970), Prof. Ton That Tung and Vietnamese scientists denounced the use herbicides/ DIOXIN by the US in South Vietnam that caused cancers, sudden genetic mutation, birth defects, deformities and other childbirth complications.

In October 1980, the Council of Ministers (now the Government) decided to set up an International Committee for Investigation into Consequences of Chemicals used in the Vietnam War (Committee 10-80 for short). For many years, the Committee had sponsored many research studies by universities and hospitals in the countries and foreign scientists from the United States, France, Japan, Canada...

The studies which presented at domestic and international seminars have been published by newspapers and science magazines at home and overseas.

Baughman and Meselson, two American scientists, in 1970, for the first time found DIOXIN in the breast milk of women in Can Gio (Ho Chi Minh City) and Tan Uyen district– Song Be Province (now Binh Duong and Binh Phuoc Provinces) (on a average 484.98ppt and highest 1,450ppt). These studies confirmed the presence of DIOXIN with high concentration in the blood, adipose tissue and breast milk of mothers and population in the areas sprayed by US toxic chemicals, proving the cause/effect relation of miscarriages, premature births, still births, birth defects and monstrous births to DIOXIN. It is noted that the analysis and measurement of DIOXIN residue in the environment and human bodies are of important significance because herbicides are rapidly disintegrated in the environment, only DIOXIN impurities of Agent Orange exist for a long time. For this reason, after removing other herbicides, the presence of DIOXIN in the environment and human bodies is an objective proof showing exposures to Agent Orange during the war.

Up to now, there is no official list of diseases caused by Agent Orange made by the State. However, recently along with allowing the Vietnam Red Cross to set up the Fund in Support of Agent Orange Victims, the Government planned to investigate into victims of Agent Orange. To assist the Government, Vietnamese scientists set criteria to define Agent Orange victims which include:

1.Exposure to Agent Orange used by the US during the war in Vietnam.

2.Contracting one of the following diseases:

List of diseases caused by Agent Orange in Vietnam (after excluding other illness factors)

1. Cancers:

Liver Cancer

Cancer of soft parts*

Malignant luyphor tumors*

Hodgkin*

Respiratory cancers (larynx, trachea, bronchi and lung cancers)*

Prostate gland cancer *

2.Illnesses due to disorder and transformation:

Lipid: nerve blood vessel accidents, coronary artery diseases

Gluxit: diabetes

3. Mental illness:

Acute and chronic peripheral neurological diseases *

Multiple myeloma*

4. Skin diseases:

Pale*

Porphyrin affected dark skin

5. Birth complications:

Miscarriage, premature birth

Still birth

Mole, membrane cancer

6. Birth defects and monstrous births can happen to one or many children and can also be seen in the second generation (grandchildren).

Note: (*) are diseases recognized by the US Academy of Science that are related to Agent Orange.

4. Agent Orange victims in Binh Dinh Province:

Initial statistics show that:

Victims of toxic chemicals are found in 157 out of the 157 communes, wards and district towns in Binh Dinh Province. Some 38,825 persons are affected by toxic chemicals, including 17,823 adults and 21,002 children. Of the children, 1,564 died right after birth or after a short period of time suffering from serious diseases and 9,428 are living with disabilities. Of the 9,428 children with disabilities, many families have two children with disabilities, 76 families have three, 26 families have four and 11 families have five and more than five children with disabilities.

Compared to the criteria and the list of diseases caused by Agent Orange listed earlier, the number of victims of Agent Orange in Binh Dinh Province is higher. But even if the figure is not correct, we can imagine the pain and sufferings of thousands of families of Agent Orange victims in Binh Dinh Province caused by the US chemical warfare. What can we share and do to help relieve the pain of the victims.

III. ACTIVITIES OF BINH DINH RED CROSS ASSOCIATION IN THE CARE FOR AGENT ORANGE VICTIMS:

1. Fund-raising for the Fund in Support of Agent Orange Victims: Individuals and organizations are encouraged to contribute to the Fund to help victims of Agent Orange.

- With permission from the Government and under the guidance of the Vietnam Red Cross, the Binh Dinh Red Cross promoted the establishment of the Fund in Support of Agent Orange Victims under different forms such as contributions to the Fund; Humanitarian Golden Book; Fund-raising through lotteries; launch of fund-raising campaigns etc. to support and assist victims of Agent Orange.

2.. In coordination with the health and Labor, Invalid and Social Affairs sectors, the Red Cross conducted surveys and identified victims of Agent Orange to be submitted to the Government to be recognized as beneficiaries of Government social policies.

3. The Red Cross has directed its branches to discover and identify victims of g Agent Orange who are in great need and very disadvantaged to call for assistance through mass media (newspapers, radio, TV).

4. Conducted surveys on the need of victims of Agent Orange to formulate projects/programs to call for funding to:

4.1. Help victims of Agent Orange improve their living standards such as building of houses, credit support for production development, support of crop seeds and animal breeds such as cows, pigs, buffaloes, goats; support of means of production and farming techniques etc.

Since 1998 the Provincial Red Cross has supported 516 families of victims of Agent Orange to improve their living standards. Good achievements have been recorded in this field.

4.2. Help victims in education, job training and job placement: particularly those who are capable to learn and do job.

So far 142 victims of Agent Orange have been helped in education, job training and job placement.

4.3. Help victims in healthcare, orthopedic operations and provision of artificial limbs, wheelchairs and free medical checkups and treatments.

This is very important. Over the past 8 years, 900 victims of Agent Orange have been assisted in this field with practical results have been achieved.

4.4. The remaining groups of victims need monthly allowance to survive and cared for.

IV. PROPOSALS – RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Cleaning up and rehabilitation of ecological environment

At present in Binh Dinh Province there remains a lot of Agent Orange around Phu Cat airport, Phu Cat Goddess Mountain area, An Son – Tuy Phuoc and Bong stream area in Bui Thi Xuan Ward, Quy Nhon City. Government investment is needed to help the province clean up and rehabilitate the ecological environment.

2. Stepping up of the identification of victims of Agent Orange to receive benefits from Government social policies

In fact, there are many victims of Agent Orange in Binh Dinh Province, but identification of these victims to benefit social policies is slow and also the benefit is little. Many victims of Agent Orange have not yet enjoyed any benefits from social policies.

On the rate of allowance given by the Government Policies to victims of Agent Orange is very low compared to their need. It should be increased to better care for the victims.

3. Education, job training and job placement should be given to victims of Agent Orange in Binh Dinh Province

The need for education and job training of victims of Agent Orange in Binh Dinh Province is big, so it is necessary to have schools for them to improve their education and job-training so that they can find jobs.

4. Centers caring for victims of Agent Orange should be set up

Victims of Agent Orange should be integrated in community (in communes) so as to better care for them.

5. Projects/programs are needed to "Support Agent Orange victims and people of disabilities in Binh Dinh province"

The US Government, the US Red Cross, international organizations and agencies at the central level should help Binh Dinh implement projects/programs to "Support Agent Orange victims and people with disabilities".

This will help Binh Dinh Provincial Red Cross to care for and help Agent Orange victims and people with disabilities more effectively.