



June 16, 2008

Representative Bob Filner
2428 Rayburn House Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Bob Filner:

Recently it has come to my attention that the Agent Orange Korea CD that was presented to the Veterans Affairs Committee some 2 years ago has not been viewed and acted upon. Congress failure to revisit the issue of herbicide use in Korea has created problems for veterans who have medical problems related to their exposure to herbicides while they were stationed in Korea.

When you view the documentation on that CD Rom you will find irrefutable proof that Dioxin based herbicides were used as early as 1961 in Korea. It was used around and in camps, along roads and on hillsides where the men walked and or crawled and it was used on a regular basis to eliminate potential hiding places for North Korean infiltrators. Furthermore Congress must interview veterans who were in Korea during the "forgotten war" that was going on in Korea between 1966-1969 and after their interviews inform the VA that they are to grant claims for PTSD because there was indeed conflicts happening on a regular basis and those conflicts happened other places besides the DMZ. For some reason a correct list of units stationed in Korea during the 1960's is missing or was never made and there are veterans from several units that were stationed in Korea during the 1960's who have claims pending for benefits and can't get those benefits because their unit isn't on the current list of units stationed in Korea. Individuals from those units should not have to prepare mega page reports and spend what little money they have to document the existence of their units in Korea. Another problem that has occurred with some veteran's who were in Korea during the Cold War, they were assigned to units that were the brain child of both Army Intel and the CIA and somewhere along the line the records of these units have been stored and forgotten. For the victims of those assignments they were promised entitlements when they signed up for active duty and now that they try to collect on those entitlements they are told "no" because the official record of their unit is lost or stored and no matter how many stressors the veteran can produce he or she can't get help because the official records aren't available. There are at least two different sections of USC 38 and one section of M-21 that can be used by the VA to grant benefits and the VA still refuses to grant claims. For most veterans who were stationed in Korea and are trying to prove stressors the chances of finding official documentation for those stressors are slim to nil. Congress must address that that

problem and make the VA establish policy to insure that those veterans are treated the same as those veterans who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is not fair to our vets who were in Korea when times were tough to be forced to live with their nightmares and problems because the VA can't or won't establish policy to deal with granting PTSD claims w/o the official documentation of the stressor.

In a September 2006 Report made to congress by the American Legion's Deputy Director for Claims Services Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division Steve Smithson there were serious problems with claims raters, as a matter of fact the competency rate on claims raters was only 42% which means that 58% of the people hired to do claims ratings are incompetent. I find that number appalling to say the least. I also find it troubling that VA Claims raters are rewarded for denying claims. I would suggest that a serious look be taken at the VA claims process with regard to those men and women who were stationed in Korea during the cold war and establish a policy to get those claims approved ASAP. I would also suggest that you put the call out to all veterans' organizations to poll their membership and friends and find out what other units were stationed in Korea from 1960 to 1975 and put those units on the "Official List of Units Stationed in Korea" or if you don't have such a list then establish one. Cold War Korea Vets are developing bladder cancer, prostate cancer, skin rashes and other maladies associated with herbicide exposure and it is now time that the Veterans Administration admit to the use of toxic spray's and compensate these veterans accordingly.

I am looking forward to talking to you on this matter in the near future and would trust that by the August recess that this issue is resolved.

Sincerely yours,

Barbara A. Wright
National Secretary
Operation Firing for Effect
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