

September 5, 2000

**REGISTRY EXAMINATIONS FOR VETERANS
POSSIBLY EXPOSED TO AGENT ORANGE IN KOREA**

1. PURPOSE: This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive establishes the policy and procedures to offer the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Agent Orange Registry (AOR) examinations to veterans who served in Korea during 1968 or 1969.

2. BACKGROUND

a. VA currently offers the AOR examination to all United States (U.S.) veterans who served in Vietnam during the Vietnam War. Participating veterans are given baseline laboratory work-ups, with particular attention to those illnesses that VA presumptively links to Agent Orange exposure.

b. The AOR examination has helped Vietnam War veterans by providing an entrance into VA health care, providing the opportunity for recording a comprehensive military history, and as a means of veteran outreach to share future developments and provide access to VA's Agent Orange Review newsletter.

c. The Department of Defense (DOD) recently released information that the herbicide Agent Orange was used in Korea. DOD has stated that 21,000 gallons of Agent Orange were sprayed in Korea in 1968 and 1969 in an area from the Civilian Control Line to the southern boundary of the Demilitarized Zone. Only Republic of Korea troops were involved in the actual spraying of the herbicide Agent Orange in Korea. However, it is plausible that U.S. service members in the area near spraying operations may have been exposed to Agent Orange during this period. There were approximately 40,000 U.S. service members deployed annually in Korea in 1968 and 1969, with nearly 100 percent turnover each year, i.e., as many as 80,000 service members over the 2-year period.

d. VA may provide a veteran who served in the Korean Conflict in 1968 or 1969 with an AOR examination, consultation, and counseling, if the veteran requests participation in the AOR examination program (Section 703 of Public Law 102-585). Accordingly, the benefits alluded to in preceding subparagraph 2b may likewise extend to these covered Korea veterans. In addition, although section 1204 of the Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act of 1988 (see Public Law 100-687) mandates continued outreach activities for Vietnam veterans included in VA's AOR program, VA's general outreach authority permits VA to notify veterans who served in Korea in 1968 or 1969 about the AOR examination program, and to include them in the Department's AOR program updates and newsletters.

e. Registry participation offers an education and outreach opportunity, as the veteran is automatically added to the mailing list for VA's Agent Orange Review.

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f. Veterans who are covered by this policy are not entitled to compensation or to priority health care under Title 38 United State Code 1710(a)(2)(f) based upon their possible exposure to Agent Orange during their service in Korea in 1968 or 1969.

g. VA has received a number of inquiries from veterans and members of Congress about the value of offering VA's AOR examination to U.S. service members who may have been exposed to Agent Orange while stationed in Korea.

3. POLICY: It is VHA policy for VA medical centers to provide VA's AOR examinations to veterans who served in Korea during 1968 or 1969 who request the examination.

4. ACTION

a. **VA Medical Center Director.** Each VA medical center Director is responsible for ensuring that:

(1) An AOR examination is provided to veterans who served in Korea during 1968 or 1969 and who request the examination.

(2) Participants are informed that the policy contained in this Directive applies only to access to VA's AOR examination and does not cover compensation or access to priority health care. Furthermore, receipt of the examination does not constitute a claim for compensation.

(3) Additional diagnostic evaluation of signs or symptoms identified during the examination is completed as clinically indicated. Eligible veterans who wish to have VA follow-up care are to be assigned to a primary care team.

b. **Environmental Agents Service.** Environmental Agents Service is responsible for ensuring that:

(1) AOR code sheets are modified to allow a code to be added to indicate that the Registry participant served in Korea rather than Vietnam. This will ensure that data collected from Korean veterans is not included in the routine analysis of Vietnam veterans.

(2) The name and address of Korean veterans entering the AOR will be added to the distribution list of VA's Agent Orange Review to ensure that they benefit from this education and outreach activity.

5. REFERENCE: Section 703 of Public Law 102-585 and Public Law 100-687.

6. FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITY: The Chief Public Health and Environmental Hazards Officer (13) is responsible for the contents of this Directive. Questions about Agent Orange should be addressed to the Environmental Agents Service (131) at (202) 273-8579.

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7. RECISSION: None. This VHA Directive expires September 30, 2005.

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Acting Under Secretary for Health

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