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Fifty Years of Silence: Agent Orange in Canada

The Tripartite Technical Cooperation Program (TTCP)

Like the USA and the UK, our nation has a history of using soldiers in experiments testing weapons of war. This is the story of Agent Orange use in Canada, and this time the families of those soldiers were guinea pigs too.

The governments of Canada, the USA and the UK entered into a pact called the Tripartite Technical Cooperation Program in November of 1957. This alliance formalized what had been going on since before World War Two – the sharing of research into more effective methods of waging war.

One of the areas of collaboration was sub-committee E, the unit assigned biological, radiological and chemical warfare. This included Agent Orange.

The recipe for Agent Orange is one part 2,4-D and one part 2,4,5-T. Add in a sprinkle of a deadly contaminant called dioxin. This is what was sprayed on Vietnam. And on Canadians.

My father was transferred to Canadian Forces Base Gagetown, New Brunswick, on my first birthday November 25th 1958. The base had been spraying 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T on the forests in huge quantities since 1956, and this amount doubled when our family arrived there to live. We had no clue.

In the ensuing years before my father quit the army in 1964, the base sprayed those forests surrounding where we lived with about 200,000 US gallons. I'm taking these figures from a government document the Department of National Defence sent me.

This means more 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T per acre fell on Gagetown than on Vietnam.

The Big Orange Herring

If you ask anybody running this country today about the spraying of Agent Orange on CFB Gagetown, they will tell you the Americans sprayed a couple of barrels during a three-day period in June 1966 and a four-day period in June 1967. You might even be told this American "proper Agent Orange" is not the same as what was sprayed on CFB Gagetown from 1956 until 1964, although it had the same ingredients and level of dioxin contamination. You certainly will not be told that Canada manufactured Agent Orange in Ontario, and then sold it to the Americans for subsequent spraying on the Vietnamese.

This cover story does one other thing to obscure the truth: It blames the USA. Yet the Americans were here at our invitation. Then there is that TTCP alliance and the testing done in its name. Maybe we traded non-participation in the Vietnam War for something.

Similarly, nobody in Ottawa will admit that Gagetown was sprayed with Agent White in amounts that dwarf even the use of Orange. Over 2,000,000 pounds of "Tordon" were sprayed from 1964 until 1984. In total, over a billion grams of toxic chemicals were sprayed on the base between 1956 and 1984.

Enter the Base Gagetown and Area Fact-Finders Project (BGAFFP), a construct of the Department of National Defence tasked with investigating itself. Instead of a Public Inquiry into the largest poisoning of its own citizens by a

country, this outfit with no powers or authority has itself produced a steady, obscuring spray of pure whitewash. By limiting itself to the 1966-1967 window, it is precisely as though the investigators of a big, toxic train derailment have opted to focus on the caboose while ignoring hundreds of wrecked and leaking cars.

One study produced by the BGAFPP concluded that Agent Orange spray is not a hazard unless you are closer than 800 metres to it when it falls from a passing plane. The most powerful war-defoliant yet devised simply disappears past that distance, immediately. All mention of the fact that we breathed there, ate the fish and berries, drank the milk and ate the vegetables from nearby farms and LIVED there was carefully abstracted and massaged into thin air.

Yet in 1964 there was a spray application accident of 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T that affected an area over 25 kilometers wide, and the Crown paid out \$250,000 in compensation to local off-base farmers whose crops were destroyed. Nor was this the first time the spray got away. Soldiers, civilians, residents, upwards of 1,000,000 Canadians, including Boy Scout troupes camping on the base, are believed to have been potentially affected by the spray program.

2,4,5-T has since been banned in Canada. If spray drift is an enormous problem today even with GPS, computers and professional applicators, what was the case 50 years ago when the technical apparatus consisted of a wet finger held aloft?

Timelines

If you write down what was sprayed in CFB Gagetown by year and then put that list next to one for Vietnam, a pattern emerges. Whatever was first sprayed on Gagetown ended up on Vietnam without exception. This, and the huge liability of the parties involved, at least partly explains the total silence from Ottawa. We have a national skeleton in the closet, and I don't believe Canada can survive with it on its conscience. I think we were the willing proving ground for what befell Vietnam.

The Agent Orange Association of Canada (AOAC), (and Others)

Address: Agentorangealert.com

I am a member and researcher for the AOAC. It was created in mid 2005 because the Canadian government has lied about the chemicals used in Canada and concealed it, resulting in deaths and horrible diseases. My family and I - what is left of my family - didn't find out about Agent Orange until late 2005 when I read a letter to the editor in a local Nanaimo newspaper by a member of the AOAC.

One event that finally blew the lid off this story was that Canada's military awarded a medical pension to Brigadier General Sellar for Agent Orange exposure while he served in CFB Gagetown. He died a successful pensioner of the Canadian Forces two weeks later.

Stephen Harper promised us medical treatment and compensation for Agent Orange exposure in CFB Gagetown. Then he got elected.

When the Maine National Guard, which trains on the base, found out it offered its servicemen a medical pension for having set foot in CFB Gagetown.

None have been awarded, mainly due to that Big Orange Herring limiting the time to seven days in 1966-1967.

When the more than 20,000 soldiers from the UK who trained in CFB Gagetown found out, the sick began putting in for medical pensions using research we provided. The first precedent-setting Royal pension was awarded to Yorkshireman Keith Pilmoor a few days ago. After decades of illness, he now wears a colostomy bag. Hundreds more of the Green Howards regiment are expected to file claim soon.

The Vietnamese case against the USA's use of Agent Orange will be heard in New York on June 18th. There are over 4 million victims there.

New Zealand's Vietnam veterans – who say criminals get a better deal from their government than they do - have just hired an Australian law firm to sue all surviving NZ officials for \$5 billion. They are claiming malfeasance.

We here in Canada have launched a class action. The government of Canada dragged Monsanto and Dow in as co-defendants. A critical phase of certification is being decided in Newfoundland as I write this. In my affidavit to the court in this case, I included an old picture of my father proudly holding up a fish he had caught on the base. Our supper.

The End of Patriotism

A fellow member of the AOAC suffers from the same disability as Mr. Pilmoor of England, mentioned above. No Canadian official has told her what she was exposed to. She was a child starting school when Mr. Pilmoor was stationed there. Not a soldier or civilian in the midst of a war, or a foreign serviceperson attending a combat training centre like Gagetown. She was just unlucky enough to be born Canadian, in CFB Gagetown.

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