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Veterans assist with Agent Orange investigation

- [John O'Connor | Post News Staff](#) 2-16-2017

The Guam Environmental Protection Agency has obtained eight signed affidavits from veterans on the use of Agent Orange on Guam and will use these statements to determine where they should get testing, according to agency Administrator Walter Leon Guerrero.

Agent Orange was one of the “rainbow herbicides” used by the U.S. military as part of its herbicidal warfare program during the Vietnam War from 1961 to 1971. Veterans who were exposed to the chemical state that they now suffer from debilitating diseases as a result.

The military has maintained that Agent Orange was never used on Guam.

However, in early January, retired veteran Leroy Foster, a Florida resident, publicly stated that he sprayed hundreds of thousands of gallons of the herbicide while stationed at Andersen Air Force Base.

Since Foster's remarks, about seven more veterans have come forward to testify that Agent Orange had been used on Guam, Leon Guerrero said. GEPA is investigating whether the chemical or any of the "rainbow herbicides" were ever used on Guam and Foster is leading efforts from veterans to help identify test sites.

Samples to be taken

The agency is currently evaluating quotes from firms interested in conducting soil sampling services.

GEPA is also working with the Guam Waterworks Authority to conduct water sampling on their production wells. GEPA's water division will also be conducting routine testing of monitoring well on Andersen AFB.

"I have ordered the division to collect additional samples so that they can be tested for chlorinated herbicides as well. There are a total of 14 wells we will sample from," Leon Guerrero stated in a Feb. 9 letter to the governor.

Leon Guerrero said he is working with John Salas, the environmental director for Joint Region Marianas, so that GEPA can gain access to potentially affected sites under the control of the U.S. Department of Defense. Leon Guerrero said Joint Region is also interested in conducting split sampling, in which half of the samples from GEPA will be handed over to military officials, so that the two entities can verify their results.

Gov. Eddie Calvo has also tasked GEPA to work with the federal receiver to test at Ordot Dump, which was a Superfund Site or land in the United States that has been contaminated by hazardous waste and identified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as a candidate for cleanup.

Oyaol Ngirairikl, the governor's spokeswoman, said the Office of the Governor is working to set up meetings between GEPA, the governor and the USEPA to talk about the Agent Orange issue.

Leon Guerrero said that if evidence of Agent Orange use is found on island, then the government will pursue relief action. He stated it would be premature to specify what this would entail before first confirming that the chemical had been used on Guam.