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Press Release

VA TO REVIEW CASES OF NEARLY 17,000 "BROWN WATER" AND OTHER VIETNAM VETERANS PREVIOUSLY DENIED AGENT ORANGE BENEFITS

Chairman Akaka posts information on committee website to help veterans and advocates

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Following oversight requests from Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Daniel K. Akaka (D-Hawaii), the Department of Veterans Affairs has agreed to review the cases of nearly 17,000 "Brown Water" and other Vietnam Era veterans who claimed disabilities related to Agent Orange. VA had previously denied a number of claims without properly determining whether veterans served in Vietnam's inland waterways ("Brown Water") or otherwise served in locations where veterans may have been exposed to herbicides, such as Agent Orange.

"I commend VA for responding to data showing that many Navy vessels thought to have stayed at sea actually traveled into the inland waters of Vietnam. As a result, veterans who served on these vessels are eligible for the same benefits as Vietnam veterans who served on land. I urge veterans and advocates to visit the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee website to determine if evidence of ships in inland waters or service on the perimeter of Air Force bases in Thailand entitles them or someone they know to health care and benefits," said Senator Akaka.

Akaka successfully urged VA to reconsider cases in which claims by Vietnam veterans potentially exposed to Agent Orange were denied without obtaining relevant military records, such as deck logs. These claims had been held in abeyance by VA while litigation was pending concerning so-called "Blue Water" veterans and their exposure to Agent Orange and other herbicides, and were subsequently denied. Akaka discovered that many of these veterans actually served in so-called "Brown Water" or inland waters of Vietnam, and should have received the same presumption of service-connection as veterans who had "boots on the ground" in Vietnam. By law, VA presumes that veterans who served in inland waterways were exposed to Agent Orange or other herbicides. Any of those veterans who suffer from certain diseases, and their survivors, may qualify for monetary benefits and health care.

With this review, certain veterans who were previously considered "Blue Water" veterans will have their claims re-evaluated for evidence of "Brown Water" service, or evidence of service in other locations where VA acknowledges that herbicides may have been used, such as the perimeter of Air Force bases in Thailand.

The Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee website provides a list of the ships VA has acknowledged traveled in inland waters, as well as evidence about other ships that the committee has received. A list of the ships identified to have traveled in Vietnam's inland waters by VA is available here: [LINK](#)

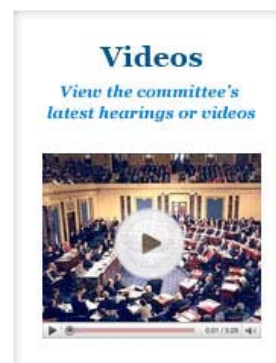
Akaka's committee staff has compiled an additional list of ships with evidence or suggestion of service in Vietnam's inland waters. That list is available here: [LINK](#)

For a list of the conditions Vietnam veterans are presumed exposed to, please click here: [LINK](#)

In addition, monetary benefits and care are provided to Vietnam veterans' offspring with spina bifida, and to children of women veterans who served in Vietnam who have birth defects (more information here: [LINK](#)).

-END-

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