

For immediate release

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Agent Orange Victims to Call for Justice and Compensation at Wednesday Press Conference

ATLANTA – U.S. Vietnam veterans will join Vietnamese Agent Orange victims at a **press conference at 11 a.m. this Wednesday, April 28th, in front of Congressman John Lewis’ office in the Equitable Building, 100 Peachtree St. NW.** State Senator Nan Orrock, human rights advocates and other community leaders will join them in calling for government action to help millions of Vietnamese, as well as the children and grandchildren of U.S. veterans who suffer from dioxin-related conditions.

After the press conference the delegation will meet with Lewis’ staff to seek his support for legislation compensating Vietnamese and American victims of Agent Orange.

More than three million Vietnamese, including children and grandchildren of those directly exposed, have been killed, maimed, and disabled by the Agent Orange herbicide dropped by U.S. planes during the Vietnam war. Thousands of offspring of U.S. veterans, as well as Vietnamese-Americans who fought with the U.S. during the war, have also suffered birth defects, cancers and other dioxin-related illnesses.

“I served in Vietnam as a combat medic in areas that were defoliated by Agent Orange,” said Vietnam veteran John Zientowski of Stone Mountain. “I lost fellow veterans to cancers caused by Agent Orange. I believe that my government has a responsibility to heal the wounds of war and provide comprehensive assistance to all those suffering from this deadly poison.”

“While Vietnam vets have won a measure of compensation for service-connected diseases, our children still receive no help when they are born sick or disabled due to our Agent Orange exposure. Vietnamese victims deserve assistance from the U.S. government to ameliorate their suffering and to clean up the dioxin which still remains in their soil.”

Pham The Minh, a 33-year old English teacher from Vietnam, is one of many second generation victims of Agent Orange, with a leg that is twisted and bent and many other ailments.

“Millions of Vietnamese have died, been disabled and sickened by Agent Orange,” Minh says. “The U.S. Congress has allocated a small sum for environmental cleanup and assistance to victims in Danang. But this money has yet to reach the victims in my country, and is vastly inadequate to overcome the human suffering and ecological devastation caused by Agent Orange. We are here to share our experiences with U.S. veterans who also suffer the effects of Agent Orange and to ask for support from the American people and their representatives.”

Last May, the International Peoples’ Tribunal of Conscience in Support of the Vietnamese Victims of Agent Orange met in Paris. The Tribunal found that the U.S. government and the chemical’s manufacturers knew that Agent Orange contained dioxin, one of the most dangerous chemicals known to man, yet continued to use it and suppressed a study which

showed in 1965 that dioxin caused birth defects in experimental animals. The Tribunal concluded that the U.S. government and Agent Orange's manufacturers must fully compensate the victims and their families.

“This Friday, April 30, is the 35th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam war,” concluded Azadeh Shahshahani, co-chair of the National Lawyers Guild International Committee, a sponsor of the Agent Orange tour. “The U.S. government's continuing failure to address the urgent health and environmental issues of those it has harmed calls out for immediate action.”

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VIETNAM AGENT ORANGE RELIEF & RESPONSIBILITY CAMPAIGN