

VFW Salutes New Agent Orange Decision

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WASHINGTON — The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United is saluting today's decision by the Department of Veterans Affairs to begin accepting disability claims from veterans potentially exposed to Agent Orange-contaminated aircraft in the post-Vietnam era. The decision by VA Secretary Bob McDonald could now benefit as many as 1,500 to 2,100 Air Force and Air Force Reserve personnel who might suffer from any of 14 presumptive medical conditions that have been determined to be related to Agent Orange exposure.

The VA secretary made the decision to expand benefits following a 2015 report by the National Academy of Sciences Institute of Medicine on Post-Vietnam Dioxin Exposure in Agent Orange-Contaminated C-123 Aircraft. The report found evidence that those who served aboard or worked on the C-123 aircraft were exposed to the herbicide, both during and after Vietnam, when many of the aircraft remained in service for aeromedical transportation or in a mosquito abatement role back in the U.S.

"The VFW has been pushing for this decision for years," said VFW National Commander John W. Stroud, "because something inside these aircraft was making people sick years after the plane last flew a defoliating mission in Vietnam. We thank the Institute of Medicine for determining a contributing link between exposure and the 14 medical conditions, and Secretary McDonald for making a quick call to care for more veterans."

All airmen who were assigned to flight, ground or medical crew duties at Lockbourne/Rickenbacker Air Force Base in Ohio (the 906th and 907th Tactical Air Groups or 355th and 356th Tactical Airlift Squadrons), at Massachusetts's Westover AFB (the 731st Tactical Air Squadron and 74th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron), or with the 758th Airlift Squadron in Pittsburgh, during the period 1969 to 1986, and who may have developed an Agent Orange-related disability, are encouraged to file a disability compensation claim through the VA's eBenefits web portal (<https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/>), or to seek the free and expert assistance of a national VFW Service Officer at <http://www.vfw.org/NVS/>.

Read more about the today's decision at <http://www.blogs.va.gov/Vantage/20825/va-expands-disability-benefits-for-air-force-personnel-exposed-to-contaminated-c-123->

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ABOUT THE VFW: The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. is a nonprofit veterans service organization comprised of eligible veterans and military service members from the active, Guard and Reserve forces. Founded in 1899 and chartered by Congress in 1936, the VFW is the nation's largest organization of war veterans and its oldest major veterans organization. With nearly 1.9 million VFW and Auxiliary members located in more than 6,800 Posts worldwide, "NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS." The VFW and its Auxiliaries are dedicated to veterans' service, legislative advocacy, and military and community service programs. For more information or to join, visit our website at www.vfw.org.

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