

Vietnam Report

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1961- 2011

FIFTY YEARS OF AGENT ORANGE

While the recent agreement between the Vietnam government and U.S.. To begin the clean-up of the Da Nang air-base is to be welcomed, the amount set aside \$17 million is, for want of a better word peanuts.

What is involved in the 'clean-up' due to begin in July this year and be completed in October 2013 with a total cost of \$34 million is not yet known apart from building a secure landfill site to hold contaminated soil and sediment at the airport. However, what is known is that it is Fifty-Years late.

On this page is just three of the many victims of Agent Orange that I have met in the yearly visits made since 1989. When the number of victims of Agent Orange in Vietnam is over 3.5 million, you can, I hope, begin to understand the anger felt by the victims, and their families.

In these fifty-years neither the US government nor the thirty-five US Chemical companies that include Monsanto and Dow Chemicals have made any apology or paid any compensation to the Vietnamese victims or to their families. Indeed I will go as far to state that they have treated the victims and their families with contempt.

From President Kennedy to President Obama, the US Governments have betrayed the Vietnamese peoples affected by Agent Orange, and their families.

Strong words? Well here is the statement made by President Obama from the Oval Office in the White House at the time of the oil leak in the Gulf of Mexico that cost the lives of 11 men working on the oil-rig.

"We will make BP pay for the damage their company has caused." "I will meet with the chairman of BP and inform him that he has to set aside whatever resources are required to compensate the workers and business owners who have been harmed as a result of his company's recklessness," he continued

"This fund will not be controlled by BP. In order to ensure that all legitimate claims are paid out in a fair and timely manner, the account must and will be administered by an independent, third party."

If only Obama had said Monsanto, Dow Chemical etc instead of BP he would have had the support of the victims, their families and all who have been campaigning over these years for Justice.

There is still time to act Mr. President.

Meanwhile, President Obama I will mail this issue to illustrate the concern felt by many at the injustice done to the Vietnamese victims of Agent Orange.

Take a look at the photograph of the mother and her two daughters who I met two years ago in Dong Nai province. The eldest daughter is 42 years of age and other is 36. Both are unable to move or do anything without help from their mother.

Imagine if you can, your two daughters born affected as the two in the photograph, and your wife Michelle having to look after their every need for **forty-two years**. How would you feel, how would Michelle feel, day in day out for forty-two years?

**There is still time to act Mr. President,
to correct the injustice your country did to the people and
land of Vietnam by using Agent Orange. It is time to accept
responsibility for what the U.S. did beginning
10th August 1961
Fifty Years ago.**



The young lad above is Nam who I met a few years ago in his home along with his father and grandfather.

The grandfather fought in South Vietnam during which he was affected by the spraying of Agent Orange.

His son the father of Nam was born with deformities in his feet.

Nam was born minus both legs, but is a very cheerful lad and is a great driver in his small wheelchair. He is going to school and is a bright lad.



VIETNAM TO GROW GM CROPS

Vietnam will start growing genetically modified maize from 2011, said Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Bui Ba Bong.

Speaking at a field-day to evaluate pilot cultivation of genetically modified maize in Ba Ria-Vung Tau province the Minister said Vietnam is taking the lead in the region in cultivation of genetically modified crops. He continued, GMCs are recognized safe for both food and animal feed production Cultivation is expected to help Vietnam reduce dependence on imported maize for animal feed production.

The Department of Crop Production said that Vietnam produces around 1.1 million -1.2 million tons of maize yearly, failing to meet its demand for 1.5 million tons. After maize, Vietnam will cultivate genetically modified cotton and soybean from 2013-2014, the deputy minister added.

Countries and territories worldwide have grown GMCs for more than 16 years, with nearly 126 million hectares, said Le Huy Ham, head of the Agricultural Genetics Institute, which was assigned to study GMCs in Vietnam. Maize, cotton and soybean are the most popular crops, which are grown on 41 million hectares, 16 million hectares and 69 million hectares, respectively.

Vietnam has studied seven varieties of genetically modified maize, including MON 89034, NK603, TC1507, Bt11, and GA21.

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CLUSTER WEAPONS DISPLAYED

Norwegian Ambassador, Stale T Risa with colleagues from the Embassy along with John Rodsted and Gus Guthie from NPA, were thanked for organizing an informational and inspiring exhibition of photos and video presentations focused on the international Convention on Cluster Munitions, and its potential positive impact on countries like Vietnam.

The presence at the Cinematheque event of several ambassadors and embassy staff, as well as NGO representatives, was strong testimony to the progress that has been made since the Oslo process began.

The presence of Mr. Pham Quy Thi from Quang Tri Province, a farmer who lost his right arm to a cluster bomb accident in 1997, was personal and powerful evidence of the need for rapid and universal implementation of all the treaty's components, including assistance to victims,

their families, and their communities.

It was expressed that the first meeting of States Parties in mid-November in Lao PDR will mark strong and definitive steps toward full implementation of the treaty, and countries such as Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia will start to benefit from increased international assistance in removing the existing danger of cluster munitions and making these countries safe for future generations. Thanks was also expressed for Norway's strong leadership on this issue.

Extract from report by Chuck Searcy, Co-Chair Landmines Working Group.

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NZ TO FUND CLUSTER BOMB CLEARANCE IN LAOS

New Zealand's announcement of funding for the clearance of cluster bomb remnants in Lao People's Democratic Republic will help save lives and promote economic development, "This donation by New Zealand will help prevent further casualties from cluster bombs, landmines, and other explosive remnants of war in a country that urgently requires international assistance," said Mary Wareham, Coordinator of the Aotearoa New Zealand Cluster Munition Coalition (ANZCMC). "The funding is also a clear demonstration of New Zealand's commitment to ensuring that all members of the Convention on Cluster Munitions are able to implement its provisions."

New Zealand's Minister of Disarmament and Arms Control, Hon. Georgina Te Heuheu, announced the contribution of NZ\$1 million in her statement to the First Meeting of States Parties to the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions, held in Vientiane, 9-12 November 2010.

More than 100 governments attended the meeting of the Convention, which prohibits cluster munitions, requires clearance of land contaminated by the weapon, and provides for assistance to victims of cluster munitions. A total of 108 countries have signed the Convention on Cluster Munitions, of which 46 have ratified.

According to Cluster Munition Monitor 2010, the United States dropped more than two million tonnes of bombs on Lao PDR between 1964 and 1973, including more than 270 million submunitions. Up to 30% of the bombs dropped (81 million) are believed to have failed to explode. Today, ten of Lao PDR's 17 provinces are "severely contaminated" by explosive remnants of war, affecting up to

one-quarter of all villages.

New Zealand signed the Convention on Cluster Munitions on 3 December 2008 and ratified it on 22 December 2009, the 25th country to do so.

A tragic event brought home to the delegates attending the international Convention the reason why they were meeting, when a young ten-year old girl was killed in a province east the capital Vientiane by a cluster bomb that also injured her sister.

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14 KILLED BY ANTI-TANK MINE

Fourteen people died in western Cambodia when their homemade tractor ran over an anti-tank mine left over from the country's civil war in the 1980's, the incident occurred northwest of the capital Phnom Penh, while the farmers were on their way home from harvesting chilies.

Twelve were killed instantly, including a one-year-old girl, and the two others died on the way to a hospital. The area was the site of intense battles between the Khmer Rouge and government forces in the 1980's and early 1990's and thus was seeded with numerous mines.

An estimated 4 to 6 million land mines and other unexploded ordnance from more than three decades of armed conflict continue to maim or kill Cambodians each year.

Prime Minister Hun Sen said earlier this year that it will take years to clear the once war-torn nation of land mines that endanger lives in nearly half the country's villages.

Cambodian and foreign de-miners have destroyed 2.7 million mines and unexploded ordnance over about 200 square miles, the number of mine casualties have dropped significantly, but the explosives remain a major threat.

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REHABILITATION CENTRE FOR WAR VICTIMS

South Korea has completed the construction of a rehabilitation centre for Vietnamese victims still suffering from Agent Orange. The facility, funded by South Korea's Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs, is located in Vietnam's Quang Nam province. Named the "Korea-Vietnam Peace Village," the centre will care for about 80 war veterans or their descendants. A ceremony to mark the completion of the centre was attended by 150 government representatives and war veterans from the two nations.

BE CAREFUL HILLARY

When Hillary Clinton, US Secretary of State visited a torture house in Cambodia in September she urged the government to proceed with the trials of the former regime's leaders in order to "confront its past." She added, "a country that is able to confront its past is a country that can overcome it."

Mrs Clinton would be well served if she helped the US overcome **its past** by accepting its responsibility for the use of 80 million litres of Agent Orange on the people and land of Vietnam during the U.S. illegal war. It would also help by paying compensation to the over three million Vietnamese and their families that are today - fifty-years on - still suffering from the effects of Agent Orange.

Later in talks with Cambodia's leaders she stated that The United States would send a team to the country to seek repayment of a \$445 million debt to the United States owed by the government that preceded the Khmer Rouge. Hun Sen Cambodia's leader had asked the US to forgive the debt. Mrs Clinton replied the debt could be settled in various ways.

Oh dear Hillary, have a word with Henry Kissinger about article 21 of the Paris Treaty that ended the US War on Vietnam. It is the agreement by President Nixon to pay \$3.25 billion in reparations to rebuild North Vietnam. That's a debt long overdue and time it was paid. I am sure the Vietnamese would not ask for interest on the 37 year old Debt.

===== **PHILLIP JONES GRIFFITHS AO PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITION**

The late British photographer's photos of the consequences of the use of dioxin (Agent Orange) during the war in Vietnam are being shown at HCM City's War Remnants Museum.

It comprises 47 black-and-white photos featuring Vietnamese AO victims and the affects that dioxin has had in the country. Huynh Ngoc Van, director of the museum, said the exhibition would call for help from the community to aid AO victims.

The photos are also helpful to young Vietnamese who were not alive during the war, she said, adding that they demonstrated the value of peace and the need to build a stronger, healthier Vietnam.

The Philip Jones Griffiths Foundation for the Study of War will donate the photos to the museum when the exhibition ends.

JAPAN TO BUILD TWO NUCLEAR REACTORS

Japan has secured contracts to build nuclear power reactors in Vietnam. At summit talks between Japanese Prime Minister Naoto Kan and his Vietnamese counterpart Nguyen Tan Dung in Hanoi on Oct. 31, the Vietnamese side announced that it has chosen Japan as its development partner to build two of four nuclear reactors in central Vietnam.

A Japanese campaign to win orders through joint efforts by the governmental and private sectors paid off. Demand for nuclear power equipment and technology in emerging countries in Asia is projected to aggregate to the tune of 100 trillion yen over the next 15 years, and the latest order is expected to be a model of infrastructure-related exports in the future.

Vietnam, whose industrial development has been hampered by power shortages, plans to build and operate 14 nuclear reactors by 2030. Of those nuclear power projects approved by parliament, two reactors each will be built at two locations in Ninh Thuan Province.

Russia has won an order to build Vietnam's first two nuclear reactors by sweetening the deal with bilateral military cooperation such as the supply of nuclear submarines.

Japan also went into action, dispatching key economic ministers to Vietnam in a bid to export nuclear power generation technology. After only two months of negotiations, the two countries reached a basic agreement on a nuclear cooperation pact which is necessary for the export of nuclear power-related materials and equipment as well as for nuclear technology transfer in an effort to help Vietnam promote its nuclear power generation.

===== **ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL SHOW**

On a cold November evening Vietnamese students put on their annual money-raising event at the London School of Economics University. As in previous years the Old Theatre was

packed by students who had come from all part of the country to support the show and the charities that included Agent Orange victims.

Entitled "Crossroads", the show was a rich mixture of songs, dances, music, comedy turns, including video sketches of the students that drew roars of laughter from the audience.

The young man who sang "Cry me a river" received a great reception, as did all the acts. The whole evening had been, as in previous years, devised by the students themselves.

After the show it was time to meet up with friends last seen at the previous event. Last years show raised £11,500 for the charities.



HELLO ALL, WE ARE NOW ONE.

The above photograph shows Nguyen Duc and his wife Thanh Tuyen with their twin boy & girl celebrating their first birthday.

We wish them all a Happy Tet.

===== **PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS**

The government has adopted regulations for the above PPP investments, focusing first of all, on transport infrastructure development projects.

Two projects selected include the construction of Dau Giay-Phan Thiet highway and Lach Huyen port in the northern city of Hai Phong.

Opportunities for PPP are opening up for the construction of airports, roads, bridges, tunnels, ferries, railways, urban transport and river ports and other public services.

The regulations have been welcomed by local and foreign investors as they will provide both investors and authorised agencies with guidance on how a PPP-invested project will be carried out.

CHRISTINA NOBLE RECEIVES ORDER OF FRIENDSHIP MEDAL

Mention the name Christine Noble in Vietnam and you will see big smiles from the people who know of the work that Christina has carried out over the years.



Having heard the name so many times over the years, but never met, it was a great pleasure for me to meet Christina for the first time at the Vietnam Embassy on 7th December with her colleagues from the Noble Foundation and to be asked to say a few words of congratulations after seeing His Excellency the Ambassador, present, on behalf of the Vietnamese Government the highest award they can make to a foreigner "The Order of Friendship."

The warmth and love that Christina has for the children of Vietnam shows very clearly when you meet and hear her speak, and if you are lucky, hear her sing, with that lovely Irish voice.

The wonderful work of the Noble Foundation and its team of workers has spread to other countries but it is clear that Christina's first love remains for the children of Vietnam.

Congratulations Christina.

AID FOR MISSING IN ACTION

The United States is providing \$1 million to help authorities in Vietnam locate and identify the remains of Vietnamese soldiers missing in action during the war.

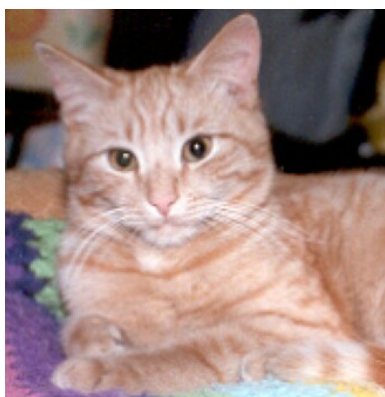
The statement issued by the U.S. Embassy in Hanoi stated that the money will assist Vietnamese officials searching for, identifying, and documenting its troops who went missing.

An estimated 300,000 Vietnamese soldiers are still unaccounted for since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975.

The agreement was reached in Hanoi between Vietnam's Ministry of Labour and USAID.

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**To all our friends and supporters
We send our best wishes for a
HAPPY TET.**



The year of the Cat
CHUC MUNG NAM MOI

JAPAN FUNDS CENTRE FOR DISABLED CHILDREN

The Japanese Government towards the end of November donated US\$95,476 to the central province of Quang Binh for the project.

H.E. Mr. Yasuaki Tanizaki, Ambassador and Mr. Nguyen Xuan Trien, Director of Dong Hoi Center for Disabled Children, signed the grant contract for "The Project for Constructing a Dormitory at Dong Hoi Center for Disabled Children".

Quang Binh was severely damaged during the war from bombing and Agent Orange; resulting in the number of disabled children being very high. The Duc Ninh Center for Disabled Children (former Dong Hoi Center for Disabled Children) was set up in 1990 to provide primary education and vocational training for children with hearing or speaking disabilities or those who are metal deficient.

The Dong Hoi Center for Disabled Children with ten rooms was built in 2003. However, they are now too small to meet the needs of rehabilitation activities. Furthermore, there are 36 pupils staying at the center, but there are only three rooms; therefore, these children have to share very crowded rooms. In 2009, the center could only receive 20 out of 90 applicants because of the shortage in classrooms and facilities for boarding.

Under this new project, the People's Committee of Quang Binh province will provide financial aid to build a two-floor building to be used as classrooms while the Government of Japan has decided to grant an aid to purchase materials to build a two-floor six room building to be used as a dormitory for Dong Hoi Center for Disabled Children.

The Ambassador hopes that this new project will go towards helping and encouraging the students in the their studies.

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