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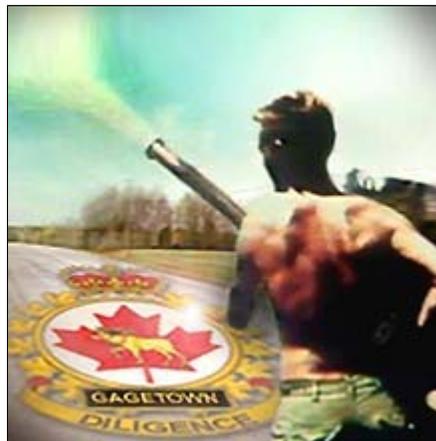
INDEPTH: AGENT ORANGE
Agent Purple and Agent Orange

CBC News Online | Updated June 24, 2005

From the National and CBC Radio World Report, June 13 and 14, 2005
Reporter: Louise Elliott

In the palette of deadly poisons, one of the most famous is Agent Orange a defoliant best known for its use during the war in Vietnam. Others are known by the names Green, Blue and Pink.

Far from Southeast Asia, dense forest was also a problem at CFB Gagetown. Military commanders said they needed to clear the brush in order to conduct training exercises. So the military struck an agreement with the Americans to test the defoliants.



Ottawa has acknowledged that Agent Orange defoliant was used in the 1960s to clear training areas at CFB Gagetown, but the government has only acknowledged the harm caused by Agent Orange when it was sprayed on Gagetown in 1966 and 1967.

Now CBC News has learned Agent Orange wasn't the only herbicide sprayed at the base. There was also Agent Purple, lesser known, but more toxic.

Wayne Cardinal takes 14 different medications every day for his heart and respiratory ailments. The 61-year-old retired soldier is now wondering if he and his fellow soldiers are sick from Agent Orange.

"I can remember guys coming in with ears all blistered up and being sent to the MIR and told there's nothing wrong with you, quiet about this, this is just probably a reaction to the chemical. It won't harm you.



Wayne Cardinal

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- [Video from meeting on Ag CFB Gagetown runs 1:10\)](#)

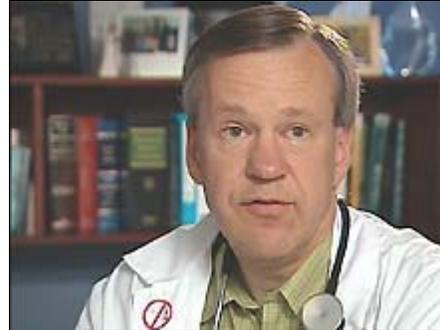
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And many guys can relate stories like that," Cardinal says.

Experts like cancer and leukemia specialist Richard van de Jagt of the University of Ottawa have long made a connection between Agent Orange and many health problems.

"Cancers including leukemia, prostate cancer, lung cancer, et cetera, and then we also know it to have endocrine effects and causing blindness, cataract formation," van de Jagt says.



Richard van de Jagt

Extensive spraying

CBC News has learned that the spraying at CFB Gagetown was more extensive than previously thought. Documents obtained by CBC News show that in the summer of 1966 the military used Agent Purple.

Agent Purple had more than three times the level of lethal dioxin as Agent Orange. It was also laced with arsenic. It was so bad that the Americans stopped using it in Vietnam the year before.

The CBC investigation shows that planes sprayed other herbicides containing dioxin from 1956 to 1967, herbicides that were later banned for their health effects.

A military briefing note to the New Brunswick cabinet obtained by CBC News shows that more than a thousand barrels of a now-banned herbicide was sprayed on CFB Gagetown.

It lists in part: "Overview of herbicides spray program. 1956: 3,687 acres, 2,4,-D and 2,4,5-T 1957: 3,879 acres."

Then they were legal, now some of them are banned. 2,4,5,-T was sprayed frequently to kill dense brush. The New Brunswick documents also show that substances mistakenly blew onto nearby farms.

In 1964 there was a spray application accident. Increased winds carried the spray to the Upper Gagetown and Sheffield area. The Crown paid approximately \$250,000 to several market gardens in the area as reparation for the damage to their crops.



Now, many residents are wondering if their illnesses are linked to the spraying at Gagetown.

Strenuous efforts On June 13, 2005, in the House of Commons, Defence Minister Bill Graham was asked about Agent Purple and replied. "We are making strenuous efforts to obtain the appropriate records, work with those who have been exposed, work with anybody in the community who knows

anything about this.”

CBC News also obtained a draft fact sheet from Graham's department. It says the department does not have a list of people who served at CFB Gagetown who may have been exposed, and it says the number who may have come into contact with the chemical is thought to be minimal.



Spraying in Vietnam

“What upsets me so much is that my government, who I faithfully served for 40 years, has covered this up and lied about it for 40 years. What a shame. What a shame for the troops who have served them so well,” Cardinal says.

Dr. Richard van de Jagt says like Agent Orange, the chemical 2,4,5,-T can cause cancer: “Agent Orange and 2,4,5,-T have been banned because of their known toxic effects and they've actually been off. They've been banned for many years.”

As a young soldier in the 1950s and '60s, Earl Graves didn't know the area where he trained contained toxins.

“It was out in the field, we did our exercise, we were on the ground, especially the infantry. Laying on the ground, eating the blueberries, eating the strawberries, drinking the water, swimming in the lakes. You name it,” Graves says.

Graves is now president of the Black Watch Association in New Brunswick. He says 170 soldiers in his regiment died of cancer, many of them died young.



On June 14, 2005, Veterans Affairs Minister Albina Guarnieri said a committee will review disability applications. CBC News has learned 22 of those applications were previously denied.

The Defence department has said nothing about civilians, civilians who they say too were affected by the spraying.

Civilian exposure

Forty years ago after planes took off from the Gagetown airstrip, nearby communities had no idea what chemicals were being sprayed. People say they were kept in the dark and they doubt the chemicals that were sprayed stayed put.

Ken Dobbie has been sick for more than 30 years. It began with liver problems when he was a young man. The 57-year-old has been sick for more than 30 years. He never understood why until a few years ago.

It escalated to cirrhosis, pancreatitis, diabetes and brain atrophy. “I have

type II diabetes; I have micro nodular sclerosis of the liver; idiopathic chronic pancreatitis; I'm in constant pain;" Dobbie says. "One of the questionnaires I remember had said 'Have you ever worked with a chemical in your past?' That's when it hit me."



Ken Dobbie

Dobbie remembered a summer job on the military base near his home in Oromocto, N.B. He was hired to clear brush that had been sprayed with a herbicide.

That summer, 1966, the Canadian military sprayed Agent Orange at Gagetown.

Dobbie worked that summer with other local teenagers clearing and burning the contaminated brush. He says they had no protective gear.

"I know that I was there with several hundred other kids, I know what I did. It was an incredible experience because we were outdoors in the summertime working, and to us, it was a great job, but we didn't know that it was going to be killing us in the years later," Dobbie says. "There's no other reason on this earth why I would be having about 15 different diseases and ailments that are going to eventually turn into cancer."

His family doctor says his symptoms likely point to some kind of chemical exposure. Dr. Robert West says, "He doesn't have a history of drug use or alcoholism, and it was a relatively acute illness with some changes in liver function on the blood, so that would suggest an immediate exposure to something."

Jody Carr is the MLA representing Oromocto and Gagetown. He says there are many civilians like Dobbie who should be compensated.

"I think the federal minister has the obligation to extend that compensation to firstly, any civilian that worked at base Gagetown at the time of spraying of Agent Orange. If any of those civilians have an illness as a result of that, they should be compensated as well as the veterans," Carr says.

Dobbie recently phoned the Defence Department in Ottawa to tell them about his job and see if they had any records. They said they would look into it.

The documents obtained by CBC News suggest the department believes no civilians were exposed to Agent Orange on the base. A draft fact sheet says there is no indication there were any civilians involved in or exposed to the testing.

Carr says he has heard from lots of civilians who say they've been affected by the spraying. He says they, too, should be compensated.

"To try to determine how many civilians, a particular number, it's very difficult, but the fact is that regardless of the costs, the federal government has the moral and ethical responsibility," Carr says.

In the House of Commons, on June 14, Defence Minister Bill Graham replied to a question by saying, "Let's get the facts first, Mr. Speaker. Let's work with the facts instead of a lot of rumours that the Honourable Member wants to operate."

Conservative MP Greg Thompson responded: "This is code language for

doing nothing. The same thing they did on the hepatitis C file.

Someone should be held accountable

Russell Smith also worked at Gagetown as a teenager in 1966.

He was a flag boy showing the planes where to dump their chemicals. He says he often came home drenched. A few years ago, he had both his kidneys removed. Now he spends hundreds of dollars a year for insurance covering the drugs for his kidney transplant.



Russell Smith

"I think someone should be held accountable for it, should explain themselves, and if they knew back then, why didn't they have, we should have had maybe a little more protection, face masks, the proper clothes or anything like that. But there was nothing," Smith says.

Graham has said he wants to hear from any veterans who may have been exposed to chemicals here, but the government has not promised any money to study health problems on the base or in the surrounding communities, nor has it promised to compensate any civilians.

Last year Ken Dobbie was hospitalized six times.

Now, he's tested for liver cancer every three months. Along with cirrhosis, he has pancreatitis, diabetes and atrophy of the frontal lobes of his brain.

Neil Munn was 17 in the summer of 1964. He worked at CFB Gagetown as a flag boy, showing the planes where to spray herbicide.

"We were sprayed, It was like rainwater falling on you," Munn says. "That's exactly how it was. Even your eyelids at night would be stuck together like pitch from balsam and fir trees. And take your pants off and you could stand them up by themselves. I can smell that stuff today." Munn says.

Simon de Jong is a former New Democrat member of Parliament. In the early 1980s he helped reveal the fact that Agent Orange was sprayed at Gagetown.

"I mean, we don't have the science yet to prove that there is an absolute cause and effect here. But the probability is so high that you've got to accept the probability," De Jong says. "And that's the logical thing, that's the reasonable thing, that's the humane thing to do."

For people like Ken Dobbie it's a tremendous challenge to try to prove his illnesses were caused by the spraying.

Years afterwards, doctors are often unable to confirm exposure.

Dobbie may not have the time to prove it.

"I guess the way I can sum it up is it's too soon. I don't deserve to be dying at 57 I don't deserve this and no one who worked there deserves any kind of illnesses they have," he says.

Persistent dioxins

A Canadian expert on Agent Orange says there is likely still dioxin in the soil at Gagetown.

Dr. Wayne Dwernychuk is an environmental consultant who spent several years testing dioxin levels in the countryside of Vietnam. He's an expert on the rainbow of toxic chemicals used by the U.S. military to kill jungle leaves so they could better see their enemy.



He says soil tests in that country show Agent Purple contained about four times the level of dioxin found in Agent Orange. And he says dioxin is likely still sitting in the soil at Gagetown.

"If you went back to the areas today where Agent Purple was sprayed and undertook some sampling, there's a high probability that you will find some dioxin, given the analytical techniques of today," Dwernychuk says.

That means dioxin may still be leeching into the water system ... and eventually into people's bodies.

Through the process of biomagnification," he says, "it could eventually end up in humans and develop some form of high levels in livers and fatty tissues."

Dwernychuk also says the spraying of the chemical 2,4,5,-T throughout the 1950s and '60s undoubtedly drove up dioxin levels.

It's a key ingredient found in both Agent Orange and Agent Purple. It was banned in Canada in 1985.

The CBC's government documents refer to environmental assessments at Gagetown in the mid-1980s.

They show no evidence of dioxin.

But Dwernychuk says new studies are needed because dramatic changes in technology have improved the detection of toxins.

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