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August 11, 2003

Honorable Donald H. Rumsfeld
Secretary of Defense
Department of Defense
The Pentagon, Room 3E880
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Rumsfeld:

As you know, I am very concerned that the extent of Agent Orange use, testing and exposure by the military be made public, so that those who served our Nation may properly be evaluated, treated and compensated for any ill effects which resulted from their military service. In January of 2001, I was advised by the Department of the Army that there "is no documentation that Agent Orange was used in Panama." A copy of that correspondence is enclosed.

I have recently received several inquiries from veterans who believe that they were exposed to Agent Orange in Panama. I am also informed that a document exists dated June 7, 1997, entitled "Use of Chemical Defoliants in Panama, 1970-1974." I believe that this document is in the possession of the U.S. Army Environmental Center and the Armed Forces Pest Management Board.

Given the importance of this issue to veterans who served in Panama during the Vietnam era, I am requesting that you provide me with a copy of the above document. In the event that this document remains classified, I am requesting that you provide me with information as to the procedures which may be employed in order for the Department of Defense to provide adequate information to the Department of Veterans Affairs in order to properly address the claims of veterans who served in Panama.

Honorable Donald H. Rumsfeld

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I would appreciate a response to this letter by September 30, 2003. If you have any questions about this request, please have your staff contact Mary Ellen Mc Carthy, Democratic Staff Director, Subcommittee on Benefits, at (202) 225-9756. Thank you for your efforts to improve services to our Nation's veterans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lane Evans". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

LANE EVANS

Ranking Democratic Member

cc: The Honorable Anthony J. Principi

The Honorable Daniel L. Cooper