



THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON

July 6, 2004

The Honorable Lane Evans
Ranking Democratic Member
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
U. S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Evans:

I am pleased to respond to your inquiry concerning the storage of Agent Orange on Johnston Island.

The National Agricultural Library maintains the Alvin L. Young Collection on Agent Orange. This Collection includes many documents concerning the storage of Agent Orange on Johnston Island, including "Land Based Environmental Monitoring of Johnston Island – Disposal of Herbicide Orange" by Battelle Columbus Laboratories. The Collection can be found at the following website:

<http://www.nal.usda.gov/speccoll/findaids/agentorange/scope.htm>

This extensive collection of studies and reports describes the storage and disposal efforts of Agent Orange on Johnston Island during the 1970s, as well as efforts undertaken by the Department of Defense to remediate soil contaminated by leaking drums.

The statutory presumption of service-connection in 38 U.S.C. §1116 for diseases associated with herbicide exposure applies only to veterans who were exposed to herbicide agents during service in the Republic of Vietnam during the period beginning January 9, 1962, and ending May 7, 1975. However, Department of Veterans Affairs' regulations at 38 C.F.R. §3.309(e) extend the same presumptions of service-connection to any veteran who is shown to have been exposed to a specified herbicide agent during active military, naval, or air service. Service members who were involved in the handling or storage of Agent Orange on Johnston Island would likely be found to have been exposed to an herbicide agent during service and would, therefore, be entitled to a presumption of service-connection for qualifying diseases. However, we are not currently aware of evidence sufficient to suggest that every veteran stationed on Johnston

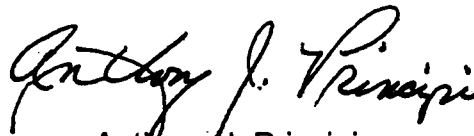
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Island between April 1972 and August 1977, regardless of their duties, was likely exposed to an herbicide agent. The facts and evidence must be examined on a case-by-case basis to determine the likelihood of a veteran's exposure.

I appreciate your interest in this important issue.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Anthony J. Principi". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Anthony J. Principi