

THE AGENT ORANGE LEGACY PROJECT

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SOA #404 G/L

A study of SOA & SF Viet Nam veterans and AO related conditions

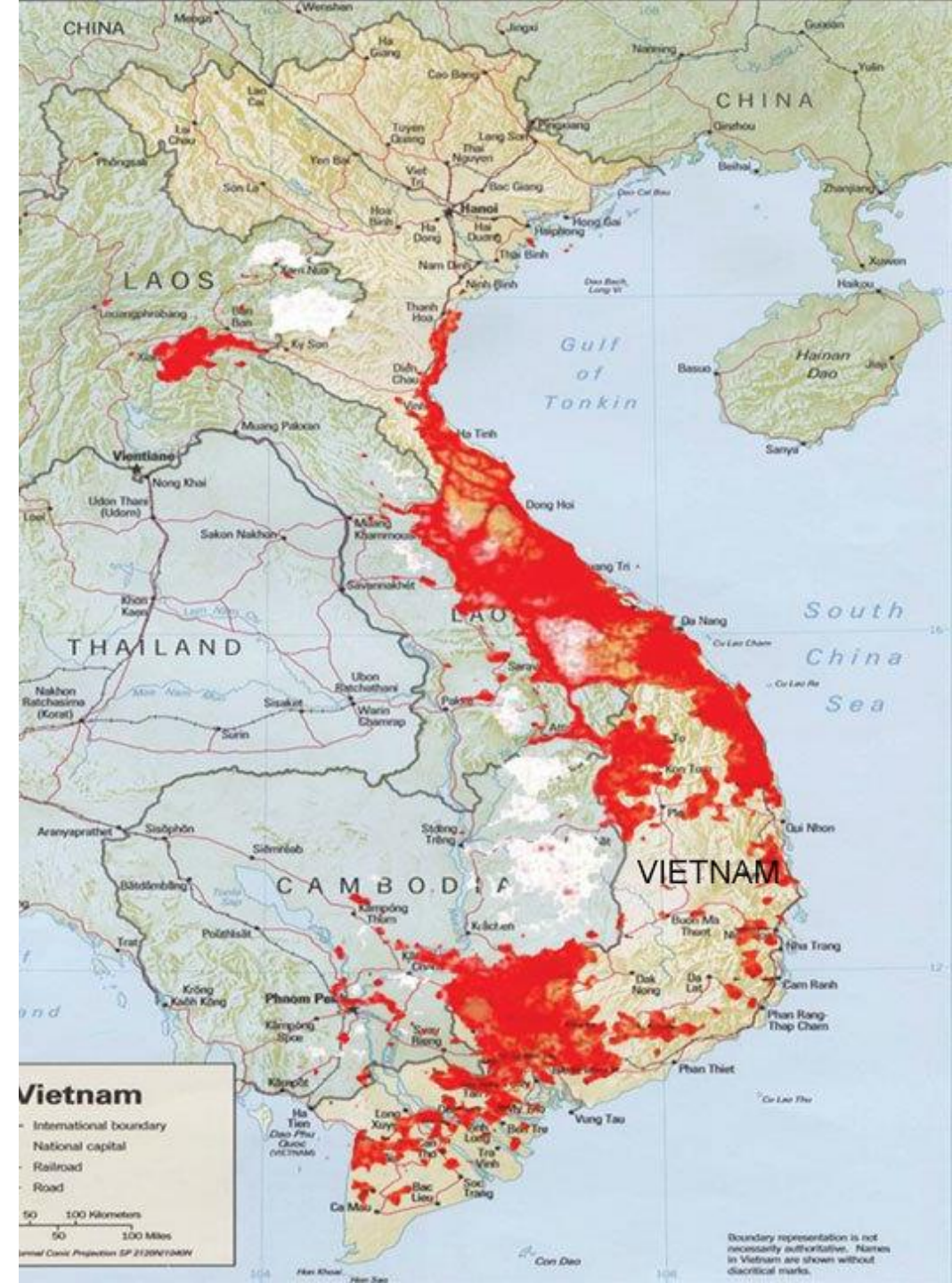


What is the study and why was it conducted?

- This study was conducted to assess the effects of AO on the SF/Spec ops VN veterans.
- No study has been done on our specific population.
- The study attempted to reach Spec ops & SF VN veterans, asking about AO exposure and subsequent health problems.
- The study was also concerned with potential pass-through of genetic damage to our children and grandchildren

Which personnel were included

- SF/Spec Ops personnel who served in the Republic of Viet Nam, to include cross-border Ops
- The study did not factor race, socio-economic status or cultural components into the data.



With the results...

- If AO has affected the Spec Ops community differently, measures can be taken to educate and advise our survivors and our progeny on prevention and detection strategy, using the commo means available
 - This forum and others like it
 - Publications: newsletters, The Drop, print media, etc.
 - Social media
 - Veteran to veteran
- There is still time for VN vets to take steps that will increase their survival & longevity

How was the information gathered?



A link to the survey was published in

SOA newsletter,
SFA newsletter,
Facebook



The survey itself was available in printed form so that those who do not use computers could fill it out and mail it back to the SOA



The survey was made available from mid-June to mid-August 2024



While the AO-related info will be shared, the respondents' identification has been kept confidential



It was not possible to acknowledge each submission, and direct comments to the respondents were not possible.

How was the information categorized?

- The VA presumptive diagnoses for AO exposure were used (the diagnoses the VA uses for compensation) without medical bias
- Cancer was separated out from other medical diagnoses
- All reported conditions are included in the graphs
- Percentages for the major diagnoses were determined and the study compared the findings to the larger population of US males in the same age group

Some general findings

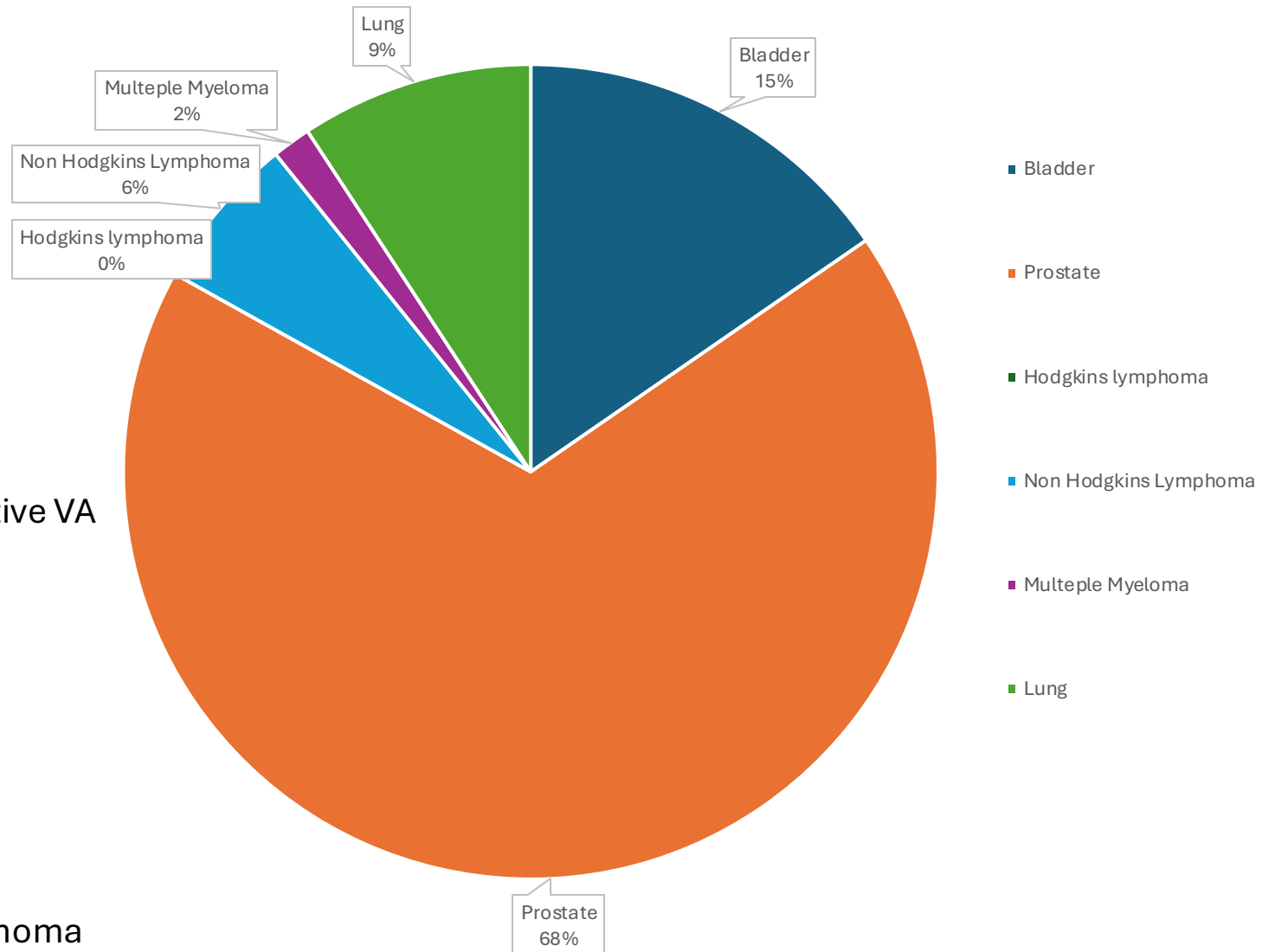
- 219 SOA & SF vets responded. Of these-
 - 209 reported exposure to AO
 - 185 have/had health problems that they relate to AO exposure
 - 59 (30%) reported children/grandchildren with problems they relate to AO
 - Some also reported children or grandchildren being stillborn
- Among our respondents, the major problems are/were
 - Cancer 68/185
 - Diabetes 44/185
 - Heart Disease 42/185
- Most respondents had more than one condition



The Cancer Diagnoses

- Prostate- 44
- Bladder- 10
- Lung- 6
- Skin – 20
- Non-Hodgkin lymphoma- 4
- Thyroid- 4
- Kidney- 4
- Colon-v3
- Larynx- 3
- Unspecified- 4 - responded mentioning “Cancer”, no specification

Cancer



Reported cancer diagnosis not on presumptive VA list:

Thyroid (4)

Kidney (4)

Colon (3)

Larynx (3)

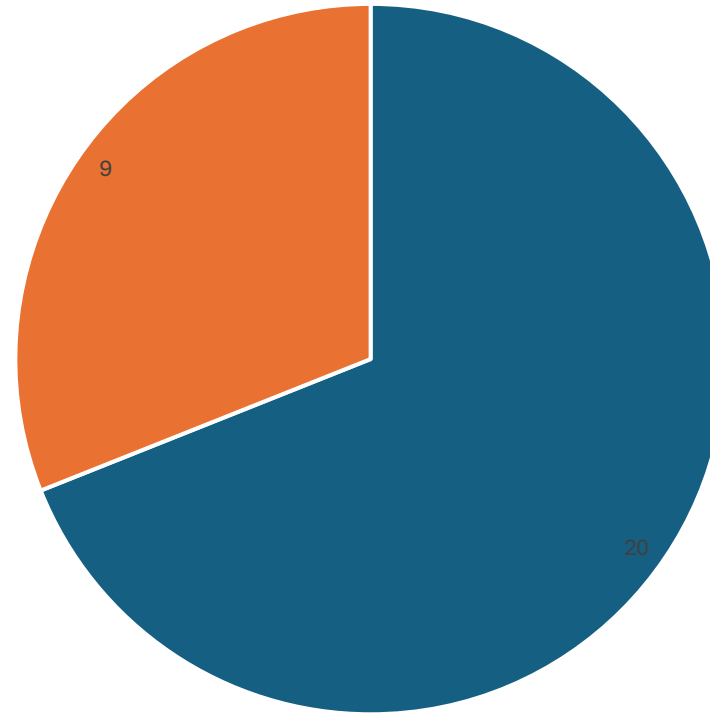
Unspecified (3)

Skin – 3 Squamous cell, 1 Basal cell, 1 Melanoma

Survey response vs adult males > 70 with cancer (all types)

- SF/Spec Ops VN vets – 20%
- US men > 70 – 9%

Prostate cancer Foundation 9/24



■ Prostate CA VN vets
■ Prostate CA general

Did exposure to AO increase cancer risk?

- Survey response to development of cancer (any type) 30%
- Percentage of adult males who develop cancer 20%

• National Institute of Health,
10/24

Other reported problems

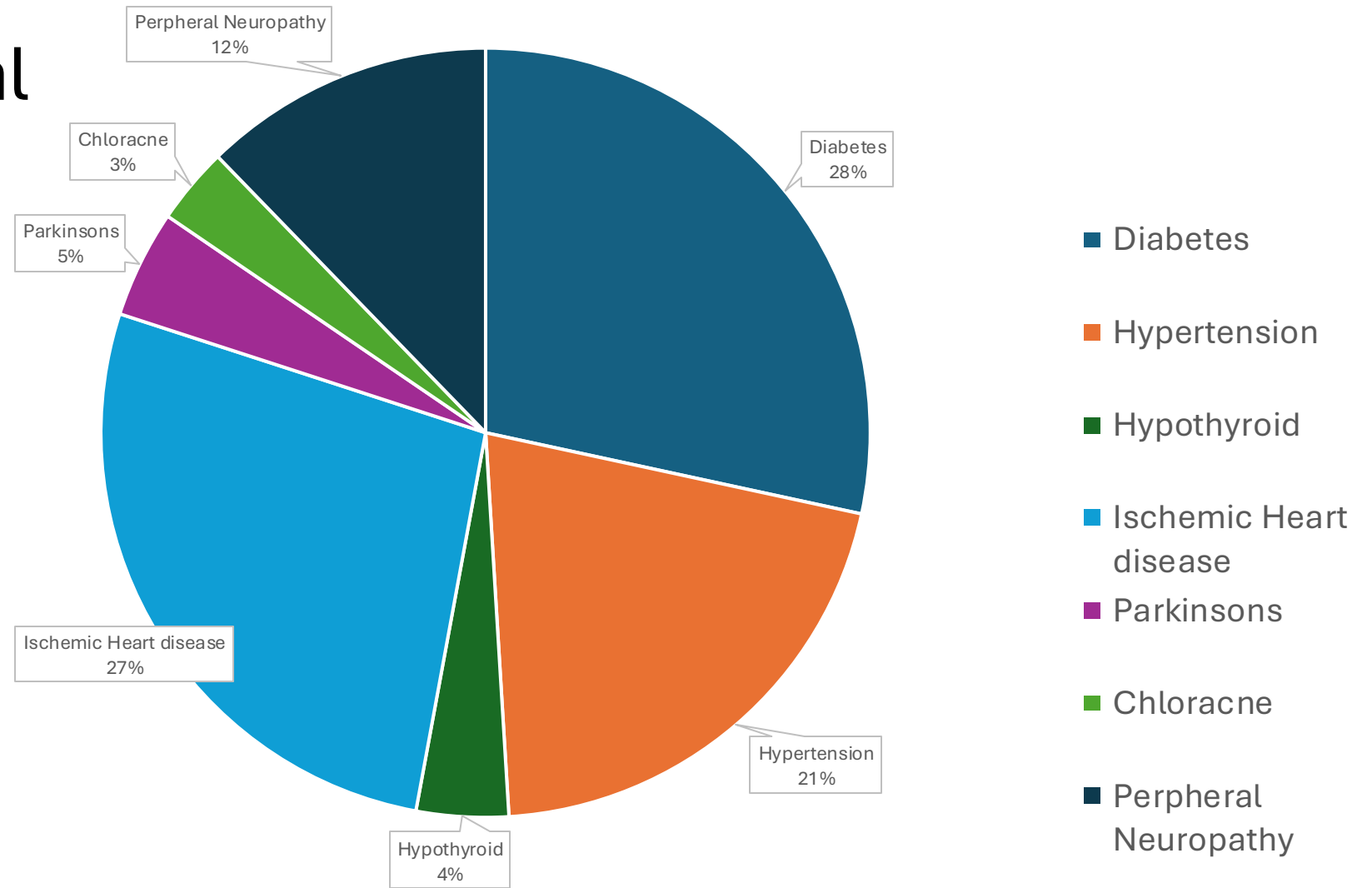
On VA presumptive list or possible

- Diabetes (Type 2)- 44
- Heart Disease (ISHD)- 42
- Hypertension high B/P)- 32
- Parkinson's- 7
- Unspecified skin problems – 8
- Chloracne- 5
- High or low thyroid- 6
- Peripheral neuropathy - 19

Not presumptive problems

- Pneumonia
- Bronchitis
- COPD
- Fungal infections
- PTSD & other psych
- Upper respiratory infections
- Sinusitis
- Covid

Reported Medical non-cancer



Peripheral neuropathy-

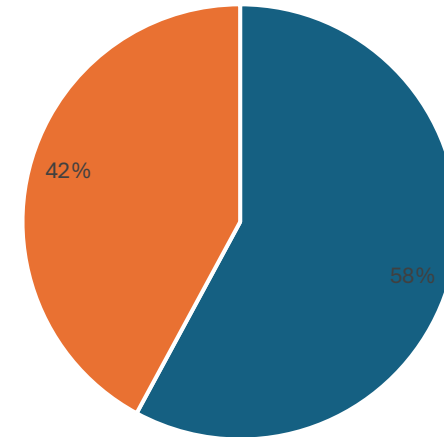
11 with diabetes, 8 without diabetes

Hypertension-

22 with heart disease, 7 without heart disease

Peripheral neuropathy as a function of Diabetes?

- In our study, cases reported:
- With a diagnoses of DM -11
- W/O DM – 8 – some causes:
 - Trauma
 - Some cancers
 - Alcoholism
 - Malnutrition/vitamin deficiency
 - Kidney or thyroid disease
 - Infections

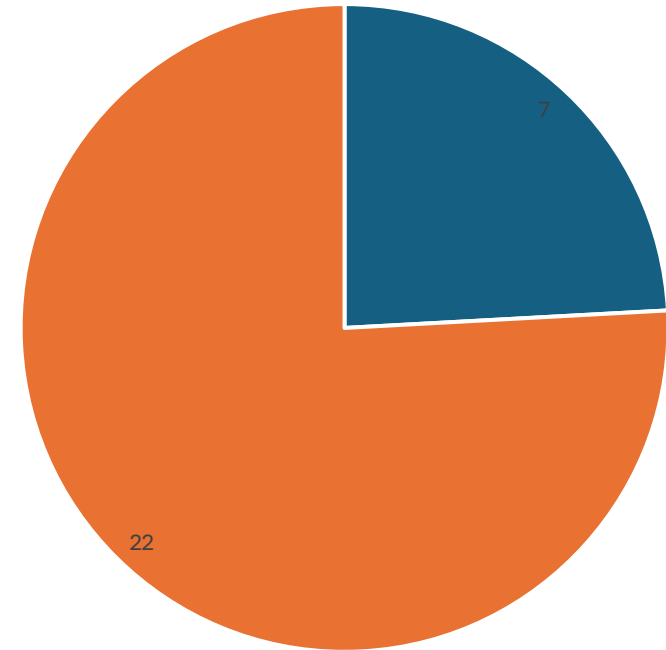


■ with DM ■ without DM

- Peripheral neuropathy is rated by VA based on the specific nerves affected since there's no distinct diagnostic code for it.
- VA has removed requirement for neuropathy to have been resolved in 2 years after exposure

Heart Disease because of hypertension?

- In our study -
- Hypertension with heart disease – 7
- Hypertension w/o ISHD - 22



■ HTN with IHD ■ HTN without IHD

The Legacy Effect

- The 30% of respondents to our study matches data from research done by ProPublica which found that all VN vets exposed to AO had a 33% chance of having children with birth defects
 - ProPublica/Virginia Pilot, Dec 2016
- Our study did not collect specifics on the pass-through illness, but wanted to know the incidence of problems in our community
- Following this presentation and publication, more research will be done, contacting the respondents who gave permission
 - What are the illnesses?
 - Children, grandchildren, or both
 - Circumstances of parent/grandparent service, etc

How has the VA responded to compensating our progeny?

- From 2001 to 2012, the VA received claims for benefits from more than 8,100 people citing spina bifida and other birth defects
- Of those, 1,325 claimants received benefits
- The VA's position is that further research needs to be done
- Tissue, blood, and semen samples from AO spray crews are still in frozen storage, awaiting further study

Some problems with the study

- Research shows approx. 2,168,703 VN in-country vets alive today
 - What % were SF and /or Spec Ops?
 - Statista, 9/24
 - There are 1550 records in the active roster of SOA the database. 1084 Member records show Vietnam as their location served
 - Thank you, Ray Frovarp
- Small sample - out of an unknown # of SF/Spec Ops VN vets, 219 (or their survivors) responded
- VN vets are an aging population, many are gone
- The study's distribution was limited
- Survey specifies VN veterans – info from those serving in other SE Asia locations was not included
- The demographics were generalized

Conclusions

- Our Special Forces and Special Operations Community was adversely affected by Agent Orange
- SF/Spec Ops personnel had a higher rate of developing health problems
 - 10% greater risk of cancer
- Cancer, Heart Disease and Diabetes are high on our list of problems
- A significant percent of respondents reported probable pass-through problems (genetic damage) – essentially equal to the overall VN vet population

Our mission



Publicize the medical and cancer threats because of AO exposure to our SOA/SF communities



Educate on the risk of specific cancers and the need for surveillance and follow up



Network among each other and establish a data base of our children and grandchildren who may have “pass-through” illnesses or problem births



Work with the VA and appropriate agencies to further determine the legacy effects of AO