ABOUT VIETNAM VETERANS

- According to Congress, the United States’ military involvement in the Vietnam War began in February 1961 and lasted until May 1975. Some 2.7 million American men and women served in Vietnam. During the war, more than 58,000 servicemen and women lost their lives.

- During the Vietnam War, the U.S. military used more than 19 million gallons of various herbicides for defoliation and crop destruction in the Republic of Vietnam. Veterans who served in Vietnam anytime during the period beginning Jan. 9, 1962, and ending May 7, 1975, are presumed to have been exposed to herbicides.

- VA established an Agent Orange Registry to study the health effects associated with exposure to herbicides such as Agent Orange. Veterans who served in Vietnam, or in other areas throughout the world where herbicide was sprayed, who are interested in participating in an Agent Orange Registry health exam should speak to the environmental health coordinator or patient care advocate at their local VA medical center.

- Congress established VA’s Vet Center program in 1979, after recognizing that a significant number of Vietnam veterans were still experiencing readjustment problems. Today, the Vet Center program provides a broad range of counseling, outreach, and referral services to Vietnam Veterans, and to Veterans of other periods of armed hostilities after the Vietnam era.

VA RESEARCH ON VIETNAM VETERANS: OVERVIEW

- VA researchers have long recognized the importance of gathering reliable and generalizable information on Vietnam Veterans and those who served during the Vietnam era, in order to inform health care policies and practices. Investigators have carried out many studies of this kind, focusing on Vietnam Veterans’ health and well-being. These studies include mental and physical health outcomes among both women and men.

- In 1983, VA collaborated with an external entity, the Research Triangle Institute, to conduct the National Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Study (NVVRS). Study researchers concluded that, across more than 100 indexes, the majority of Vietnam Veterans appeared to have successfully readjusted to postwar life, and the majority at the time of the study were experiencing few symptoms of psychological disorders.

- The NVVRS also revealed that a substantial minority of Vietnam-era Veterans were suffering from a variety of psychological problems such as PTSD, and were experiencing a wide range of life-adjustment problems, such as marital trouble and work difficulties.

SELECTED MILESTONES AND MAJOR EVENTS

1986 – Launched the Vietnam Era Twin Registry

1988 – Completed the National Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Study

1991 – Established that, in Vietnam Veterans, there does not appear to be a causal relation between homelessness and military service, including exposure to combat

2009 – Initiated the largest health study ever of Vietnam-era women Veterans (CSP #579)

2014 – Found that Vietnam Veterans with PTSD have diminished health functioning and increased disability today, compared with those who did not develop PTSD

2016 – Launched the Vietnam Era Health Retrospective Observational Study (VE-HERoE5), a large-scale nationwide study to assess the health and well-being of Vietnam-era Veterans, and compare their health to that of their counterparts who did not serve in the military.

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