

Debate about the use of defoliant in vietnam war

[War](#), [Vietnam War](#)



The use of defoliant (Agent Orange) during the Vietnam War was marked with much controversy among the political, social, military, and professional fronts of the community. According to the congress, executive, and military arms of the American government, Agent Orange was the most viable tool for mitigating chance of the communist allies from invading south Vietnam (Olson 15). The use of defoliant as a war strategy was aimed at hampering the movement of North Vietnam troops through the borders of Laos and Cambodia.

Since the Agent Orange could clear the thick forest cover used as hiding places by the NVT, it could also enhance the effectiveness of offensives by the anti-communist allies (Olson 16). Another common reason cited by supporters of defoliant use in the war is that it served to compromise the availability of food for the Viet Cong after Mekong delta; one of their strongholds was defoliated. However, the use of Agent Orange received many critics for its negative effects on both the environment and to the communities in the defoliated regions.

According to available information, the herbicide did not only clear forest cover in the region but led to health complications both to the civilians and the soldiers (Oatsvall). This paper is written as a discussion of the proponents and opponents of the use of Agent Orange in the Vietnam War. Available information indicates that civilians living in the affected regions are marked with diseases like cancer as well as high rates of birth defects (Oatsvall). The operation is also blamed for compromising the food security and sustainable ecosystem in Vietnam (Oatsvall).

The author also gives a discussion on the scientifically proved health implications such had on the civilians and soldiers. Effects of defoliant on civilians and soldiers Numerous scientific researches have been conducted to qualify the actual health effects of the Agent Orange used during the Vietnam War. Available information indicates that, both the families of the soldiers involved in the spraying of the defoliant and the civilians in the sprayed regions have witnessed various types of health complications. According to reliable research findings from the U. S.

Veterans Administration, it is quite clear that Agent Orange had its impact in enhancing chances of sustaining cancer, particularly prostate and respiratory cancer on the victims (Olson 16). Indeed, widespread infection of cancer and diabetes has been reported by both members of the civilian and military communities exposed to the chemical. The findings have also indicated a high prevalence of health infections such as multiple myeloma, type II diabetes, B-cell lymphomas, soft tissue sarcoma, and chloracne on the children of both civilians and soldiers (Oatsvall).

In addition, extensive research by Vietnam scientists has closely associated the high incidences of porphyria cutanea tarda, peripheral neuropathy, and spina bifida in children born in regions impacted badly by the Agent Orange defoliation to the herbicide (Oatsvall). Just to be appreciated is the fact that according to some scientists, some regions in southern Vietnam have proved to be harboring dioxin poison more than 100 times the recommended levels of the international law (Griffiths 57).

Another commonly cited effect of the Agent Orange defoliant used during the Vietnam War is its implication of the environment of the southern

<https://assignbuster.com/debate-about-the-use-of-defoliant-in-vietnam-war/>

Vietnam region. Historical information has proved that the herbicide led to the withering of forest cover in the region (Nass). Due to its high levels of toxicity, the chemical found much impact in killing organisms in the areas affected including aquatic life following water contamination (Nass). In addition to all these, the united states of American used Agent Orange to destroy crop farms in the region.

Just to be underscored here is the fact that the agent orange spraying is claimed to had covered about 10 percent of what was called south Vietnam; destroying an estimated over 14 percent of its forest cover (Tran). Such had the implication of compromising the realization of sustainable food sufficiency by the civilians in the areas affected by the defoliation offensive. Psychological problems among the victims of the defoliation offensive have remained for long after the Vietnam War end in 1971 (Reuters).

According to available findings by psychologists, most civilians and veterans have shown eminent signs of posttraumatic stress disorder (Fox 51). In appreciation of this claim is the move by the United States President Jimmy Carter to request for pardon from all victims of the defoliation operation. On the other hand, the government of Vietnam has moved on to create government sponsored villages in the nation to accommodate and address the psychological problems of the war victims and their families (Reuters).

In addition, due to the posttraumatic stress disorders reported in most nations which participated in the war, numerous cases for compensating the victims have been heard. According to available information, the government of America paid its military personnel involved in the Agent Orange spraying operation and estimated \$300 million as compensation for

damages incurred (Oatsvall). Available evidence of the effects of the defoliant also indicate that such found the reasoning behind the US congress authorization of the U. S. Veterans Administration to strive in providing health cover to the Vietnam veteran on any disease that is linked with the herbicide by American scientists (Reuters).

South Korea on the other side authorized payment of compensation for its veterans. Still, the fight for justice and compensation by the people of Vietnam has continued for many years. In 2004, a civil lawsuit was file in America seeking compensation from the American companies responsible for making the defoliant.

According to available information, the case sort for billions of dollars as remedy for the damages incurred as well as for aiding in the environmental cleanup process. All these are indicative of the negative effects Agent Orange had and is still having to-date on both soldiers and civilians. Proponents of the use of defoliant in Vietnam War The use of Agent Orange defoliant during the Vietnam War received substantial support by Americans based on a number of reasons.

The most profound reason is the fact that the American nation was out to ensure a standing win against the communists practicing and supporting nations during the cold war (Dwernchuk 117). According to President John F. Kennedy who authorized the use of Agent Orange during 1961 and 1962, the power superiority of the United States of America was at stake and they had to engage in any form of operation to safeguard its place in the world. Another reason given by proponents of using the defoliant in the Vietnam

War is that it served the agency the time deserved against the NVT and its allies (Knight 78).

Prior to 1961, the policy of America on the Vietnam War was to allow South Vietnam and North Vietnam to resolve their military conflicts independently. This was mainly triggered by the conviction that South Vietnam had a stronger military compared to the NVT, a factor that forced American to only provide military aid rather than military personnel. However, the defeat against South Vietnam in 1961 forced the Americans to opt for emergence intervention. According to one of the architects of the Vietnam War, General Maxwell Taylor, the American military had less, or limited knowledge of both sides of the war.

Therefore, given the urgency of the operation, the US army had to engage in clear cut operation, a move which dictated for mitigating any possible coverage or sustenance of the North Vietnamese troops in the South Vietnam territory. Since the southern region was the stronghold and hiding joints for the NVT, the herbicide served much in clearing its forest cover, thus exposing the troops to US military attacks (Knight 83). Still, engaging in Agent Orange spraying on the Mekong delta, the United States military compromised the reliable availability of food to the North Vietnam troops.

It has also been claimed that the move to use Agent Orange defoliant in the southern region was crucial in forcing South Vietnam civilians into the RVN controlled regions (Knight 84). Though marked with controversy, such helped to reduce the number of civilian killing during the numerous offensives lounged by the anti-communist allies. Opponents of the use of defoliant in Vietnam War Despite the military superiority advantage that was brought by

<https://assignbuster.com/debate-about-the-use-of-defoliant-in-vietnam-war/>

using Agent Orange defoliant during the Vietnam War, the act was marked with many critics.

According to available information, it is quite clear that the operation prompted numerous human rights movements and demonstrations in the United States of America during the 1960s. Such were triggered by reports by media of the potential negative health implications brought by the chemical to the Vietnam. According to critics from prominent human rights activists like Martin Luther King Jr. of the time, the American approach on the Vietnam War amounted to a gross violation of human rights as it threatened the health and thus the lives of the civilians (Brunnstrom).

Another critic of the use of Agent Orange defoliant during the Vietnam is that perception that the American nation was interfering with the sovereignty of other nations (Dwernchuk 127). All through the cold war, the American nation received many critics for its inhuman and unfair competition against communist proponents. Just to be noted is the fact that during this time, the nation was fighting advocates of communist form of government in the US. Based on this reasoning, most opponents believed that the government was out to punish communist nations as a way of compromising the strength of the communist party in the nation.

Still on interfering with sovereignty of independent nations is the move by the American nation to use Agent Orange defoliant along the borders of Cambodia and Laos to South Vietnam (Dwernchuk 121). According to evidence on the impact of the Agent Orange spraying on the southern region, it affected almost all aspects of the region's ecosystem. It is worth noting that the spraying operation could not be conducted with precise

<https://assignbuster.com/debate-about-the-use-of-defoliant-in-vietnam-war/>

consideration of specific areas. This had the implication of contaminating both the soil and the water resources in the region, a factor that also impacted negatively on the neighboring nations (Dwernchuk 131).

This reasoning prompted many Americans in critiquing the use of defoliant in the war. The abuse of power superiority is another source of critic to the use of Agent Orange defoliant during the Vietnam War. Prior to the military involvement of the United States in the Vietnam War, not much research had been conducted to qualify the environmental and health effects of defoliants such as the Agent Orange (Schuck 56). Therefore, many opponents of its use during the war perceived it as an experimental exercise by the American nation.

Such were taken to question the respect of human rights, life, and dignity by the US. As an emphasis to this claim, it was not long after that disastrous striking of the Japan by America using atomic bombs before the use of the defoliant (Shuck 56). Therefore, with initial reports on negative health impacts caused by the Agent Orange, opponents found it a potential disaster to the life, economy and environment of the Vietnam people. Another concern on misuse of military power by the American nation was founded on the fact that the nation boasted of superior and otherwise precise military attack technologies.

According to available information, the winning of the Vietnam War by the anti-communist allies led by US was basically due to air superiority (Sutton). This made that the use of Agent Orange served much in compromising the long term sustainable recovery of the Vietnam nation rather than giving competitive military advantage to the allies. Conclusion It is established that

<https://assignbuster.com/debate-about-the-use-of-defoliant-in-vietnam-war/>

the using of Agent Orange defoliant during the Vietnam War remains a controversial issue in the community.

The herbicide led to damaging of over 14 percent of Vietnam forest cover (Brunnstrom). It is also blamed found increased incidences of diseases like cancer, obesity, and serious child birth defects among those civilians and soldiers who were exposed to the chemical and their families. Despite this, the American nation has failed its inhuman offensive in South Vietnam. This is evident from the dismissal of a civil lawsuit seeking billions of dollars as compensation for damages as well as for cleaning affected Vietnam environment in 2005.