

Air Force Health Study Mortality Update - 1986

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

The purpose of the Air Force Health Study is to determine whether those individuals involved in the aerial spraying of herbicides in Vietnam during the Ranch Hand operation have experienced any adverse health effects as a result of their participation in that program. The study is designed to evaluate both the mortality (death) and morbidity (disease) in these individuals over a 20 year period beginning in 1982.

The Baseline Mortality Report was released in June 1983, the Baseline Morbidity Report in February 1984. Follow-up mortality reports were released in 1984 and 1985. This study has so far failed to demonstrate health effects which can be conclusively attributed to herbicide or dioxin exposure. The reader is referred to the study reports for further details (1, 2, 3, 4).

RESULTS

This report contains summary statistics only for cumulative deaths occurring up to 31 December 1985. These data were not statistically analyzed since the 4 Ranch Hand and 27 Comparison deaths since the last report would not alter the results of the last analysis. Current percent dead by group, rank and occupation are shown below.

Percent Dead

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Ranch Hand</u>	<u>Comparison</u>
Officer	3.6	4.7
Enlisted	5.3	5.3
<u>Occupation</u>		
Flying	4.0	5.5
Ground	5.4	4.6
<u>Total</u>	4.7	5.1

The small number of deaths since the last analysis suggests that the findings of the last report are still valid: there are no overall statistically significant differences between the Ranch Handers and their matched comparisons as regards mortality. These data will be subjected to extensive statistical analysis in the next report, planned for 1987.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Continued mortality surveillance is recommended, since these study groups are still relatively young and healthy. While sufficient time may have elapsed for some clinically significant conditions to occur, additional time is necessary for other conditions, which may possibly be attributable to herbicide exposure, to develop.