



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Veterans Benefits Administration
Washington, D.C. 20420

JAN 27 2016

The Honorable Joe Kennedy III
Member, US House of Representatives
Attention: Rachael McNeill
29 Crafts Street, Suite 375
Newton, MA 02458

Dear Congressman Kennedy:

I am responding to the inquiry you submitted on behalf of your constituent, Mr. Joseph Moran, who served aboard the USS Kennebec (AO-36) during the Vietnam era. You ask what process is used to add ships to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) list of ships associated with potential Agent Orange exposure in the waters of Vietnam and whether the USS Kennebec can be added to this list.

VA regulations provide for a presumption of Agent Orange exposure for Veterans with duty or visitation within the Republic of Vietnam, or on its inland waterways, between January 9, 1962 and May 7, 1975. For Navy Veterans who served aboard large offshore "Blue Water" ships, VA extends the presumption of exposure to all Veterans aboard if evidence, such as official histories or deck logs, indicates that a ship entered Vietnam's inland rivers and waterways. Additionally, if evidence shows that a ship docked, or otherwise sent crew members ashore, the presumption is extended to those Veterans who state that they personally went ashore.

When VA regional offices receive disability claims based on Agent Orange exposure from Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans, they have been instructed to send a research request for information on the Veteran's ship to the Department of Defense's US Army and Joint Services Records Research Center (JSRRC). This office obtains official ship histories and deck logs for the time frame of claimed exposure and reports the results back to the VA regional office. If the ship evidence meets the exposure requirements outlined above, the presumption of exposure can be extended to the Veteran and the disability claim is processed accordingly. The VA regional office then sends the positive JSRRC response to the Compensation Service Central Office and the ship, for that time frame, is added to the internal VA Ships List for use by all VA regional offices. The ship is also added to the VA public Internet website list for general information purposes. Ships can also be added to the list when documentation is received from other sources showing that Vietnam operations of a specific ship meet the requirements.

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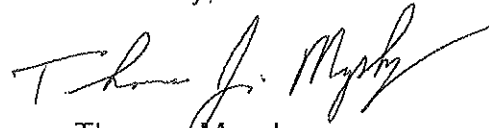
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Regarding the USS Kennebec, the deck logs received with your inquiry indicate that the ship entered the inland waterway of Ganh Rai Bay on August 24, 1969. As a result, it will be added to the VA Ships List as shown below:

USS Kennebec (AO-36) provided fuel to vessels while in Ganh Rai Bay during August 1969

I hope this information will assist you with responding to Mr. Moran. Thank you for your support of our nation's Veterans and their families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas J. Murphy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Thomas Murphy
Director
Compensation Service