

June 21, 2007
Base Gagetown and Area Fact-Finder's Project

Additional Report on CFB Gagetown Herbicide Testing and Use Made Public

Dr. Dennis Furlong, Fact-finding and Outreach Coordinator, today made public the report for fact-finding Task 3A-1 Tier 3, a human health risk assessment conducted as part of the CFB Gagetown Fact-Finding Initiative.

This report is part of an ongoing process of research aimed at providing a complete picture of the testing and use of herbicides at CFB Gagetown from 1952 to the present day. Additional reports, including an epidemiological study to determine whether the communities surrounding CFB Gagetown have a higher incidence of illness as compared to a similar population, will be released later this summer.

Task 3A-1, a toxicological human health risk assessment, was conducted in three tiers. The Tier 1 report was made public on Aug. 10, 2006, and the Tier 2 report was made public on Dec. 7, 2006.

The goal of the report released today was to determine if exposures to the active ingredients in the herbicides used at CFB Gagetown from 1952 to the present day may have posed any potential risks to human health.

The human health risk assessment conducted by Cantox Environmental, the independent contractor that prepared this report, is specific to CFB Gagetown and not necessarily applicable elsewhere as many of the contractor's assumptions are based on details of actual herbicide applications at CFB Gagetown.

Cantox Environmental concluded that people who lived near or worked at CFB Gagetown, including most soldiers, were not at risk for long-term health effects from the active ingredients in herbicide applications.

Potential, long-term health risks were identified only for individuals directly involved with applying some of the herbicides, or clearing treated brush soon after herbicide application. To ensure risks were not underestimated, the contractor made many assumptions that would overestimate exposure and, as a result, elevated risks do not necessarily indicate harm would have occurred. The contractors acknowledge this uncertainty and suggest that their report be considered as only part of the information that may help in identifying the groups of individuals who may have been affected by exposures, and to help guide any future studies.

Under certain circumstances, bystanders (including soldiers) who were directly downwind at the time of the aerial spraying could have experienced elevated short-term exposures to some herbicides, but the contractor concluded that this would not have put them at increased risk for long-term, irreversible health effects.

Most of the herbicides used at CFB Gagetown continue to be used in Canada and elsewhere in the world. The Government of Canada conducts detailed scientific reviews of these herbicides to ensure they meet modern health and safety standards. In some instances, such as with 2,4-D, the scientific review determined that the continued use of this herbicide in Canada is acceptable, when label directions are followed. Herbicides are removed from the market when important health and environmental concerns cannot be addressed.

Reports from the fact-finding tasks are peer-reviewed by independent scientific experts, ensuring the information is solid and credible, before they are distributed simultaneously to the Fact-finding and Outreach Coordinator, and the involved federal ministers.

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Note to editors:

To access and download copies of the task reports, please visit the Fact-finding and Outreach Coordinator's website at: <http://www.basegagetownandareafactfindersproject.ca>

For further information on the history of the testing and use of herbicides at CFB Gagetown, please visit: http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/Reports/defoliant/index_e.asp

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