



Vietnam Veterans of America

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**VA Secretary Shinseki Does the Right Thing: Adds Parkinson's, Ischemic Heart Disease, and Hairy-Cell Leukemia to List of 'Presumptives'**

(Washington, D.C.) – “VA Secretary Shinseki deserves the thanks of all veterans who served in Vietnam for being true to his word in adding Parkinson’s disease, ischemic heart disease, and hairy-cell leukemia to the list of illnesses associated with exposure to the herbicide known as Agent Orange,” said John Rowan, National President of Vietnam Veterans of America, after the Secretary’s long-anticipated decision was announced this morning.

“VVA embraces the thinking of the Secretary, who said, ‘Veterans who endure health problems deserve timely decisions based on solid evidence,’” Rowan added. “For far too long, veterans experiencing these health conditions have believed that they may have derived them from their time in service in Vietnam. The Department of Veterans Affairs, finally, under General Shinseki, has agreed with their position, which is based on the conclusions of a panel of experts from the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences. The IOM, in its 2008 *Veterans and Agent Orange* update, cited ‘limited or suggestive evidence’ of an association between exposure to herbicides and the later development of Parkinson’s disease and ischemic heart disease in Vietnam veterans, and ‘sufficient evidence’ of an association between herbicide exposure and hairy-cell leukemia. The IOM also reiterated ‘limited or suggestive evidence’ of an association between hypertension and herbicide exposure, although this was not part of today’s announcement.

“This decision means that veterans will not have to prove an association between these illnesses and their military service,” Rowan said. “The decision by the Secretary, with the consent of the President, should make it far easier for Vietnam veterans afflicted with these maladies to receive healthcare services and disability compensation from the VA. “Secretary Shinseki, who served with distinction in Vietnam, has taken significant strides toward ‘doing the right thing’ by the veterans with whom he fought some 40 years ago,” Rowan concluded. For more information on service-connected disability compensation for exposure to Agent Orange, visit [www.veteranshealth.org](http://www.veteranshealth.org)