

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION
COMPENSATION AND PENSION SERVICE

FACSIMILE TRANSMITTAL SHEET

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PHONE NUMBER: SENDER'S REFERENCE NUMBER:

RE: UNITS ON KOREAN DMZ 1968-69 YOUR REFERENCE NUMBER:

- URGENT FOR REVIEW PLEASE COMMENT PLEASE REPLY PLEASE RECYCLE

NOTES/COMMENTS:

What military units should be listed in the M-21-1MR (Part VI, Chapter 2, Section B) as active at or near the Korean DMZ from April 1968 to July 1969, where service in any of those units would allow conceding herbicide exposure to veterans claiming benefits under Chapter 18

Title 38, Chapter 18 of the USC, authorized VA benefits to the children of "certain Korea service veterans" born with spinal bifida. It has been determined that these "certain" veterans include those who served in military units that were active at or near the Korean DMZ (demilitarized zone) between April 1968 and July 1969. This determination has been made by VA, in conjunction with the DOD, based on the acknowledged use of herbicides along the Korean DMZ during this time period. If evidence shows that a veteran was assigned to one of these units during the designated time period, then exposure to herbicides is conceded. A list of these units has been placed in M-21-1MR (Part VI, Chapter 2, Section B) for use by VA personnel who evaluate claims made by veterans under the Chapter 18 provisions.

However, it appears that the current list, as presented in M-21-1MR, is incomplete and may need revision because authoritative "official" sources indicate that it would be appropriate to include additional units.

For classification purposes, the US Army command hierarchy, from largest to smallest unit, is generally represented as: Division (eg. 2nd Infantry Division) – Brigade (eg. 3rd Brigade) – Regiment (eg. 31st Infantry, 72nd Armor, or 10th Cavalry) – Battalion (eg. 1st Battalion) – Company (eg. A [Alpha] Company)

Military units currently listed in M21-1MR are Brigades, Regiments (Inf, Armor, or Cavalry) and Battalions (Bn) of the 2nd and 7th Infantry Divisions (ID) and a Reaction Force. These include:

- 2nd Bn 38th Inf (2nd ID)
- 1st Bn 23rd Inf (2nd ID)
- 2nd Bn 23rd Inf (2nd ID)
- 3rd Bn 23rd Inf (2nd ID)
- 2nd Bn 31st Inf (2nd or 7th ID)
- 3rd Bn 32nd Inf (2nd or 7th ID)
- 1st Bn 9th Inf (2nd ID)
- 2nd Bn 9th Inf (2nd ID)
- 1st Bn 72nd Armor (2nd ID)
- 2nd Bn 72nd Armor (2nd ID)
- 4th Sq 7th Cavalry (Reaction Force)
- Counter Agent Company (Reaction Force)
- 1st Bn 17th Inf (7th ID)
- 2nd Bn 17th Inf (7th ID)
- 1st Bn 73rd Armor (7th ID)
- 2nd Sq 10th Cavalry (7th ID)

Consideration should be given to adding additional units based on the following evidence. An unclassified US Army document titled "Operational Report – Lessons Learned, Headquarters, 2nd Infantry Division Artillery [Korea], Period Ending 31 October 1969", shows the activity of five artillery units attached to the 2nd Infantry Division near the DMZ for the period from August through October 1969. This is a period following the last documented use of herbicides during July 1969. However, the report does not indicate that any of these units are newly assigned and therefore it is likely that these units had similar activity before the date of this report. This would place them near the DMZ during the acknowledged period of herbicide use. The units include:

1st Bn 12th Arty
 1st Bn 15th Arty
 7th Bn 17th Arty
 5th Bn 38th Arty
 6th Bn 37th Arty

Consideration should also be given to adding additional infantry units based on the information provided in an "official" documentary narrative of the Korean DMZ military activity from 1966 to 1969, used by the Combat Studies Institute, US Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. This historical narrative is titled Scenes from an Unfinished War: Low-Intensity Conflict in Korea, 1966-1969 and is authored by Major Daniel P. Bolger. The work chronicles the activity of infantry units along the DMZ. Most of these units are currently listed in M21-1MR, while several others are not listed but appear to meet the same criteria for inclusion as those that are listed.

Figure 9 in this historical narrative shows a chart listing "American maneuver battalion deployment as of 30 April 1969 (typical after 21 March 1968)." This covers the period during which herbicide use has been acknowledged. The chart classifies units as: (a) on the DMZ, (b) South of the Imjin River, and (c) Chorwon Valley. All these locations can be and have been construed as on or near the DMZ, based on Korean maps. Most of the units listed on this chart, including all three locations, have already been incorporated into the list of qualifying units in M-21-1MR. However, three of the Chorwon Valley units have been omitted, even though five other Chorwon Valley units have been included. The omitted units are:

1st Bn 31st Inf (7th ID)
 1st Bn 32nd Inf (7th ID)
 2nd Bn 32nd Inf (7th ID)

Evidence that two of these units, the 1st/31st and 1st/32nd, were involved in combat operations at or near the DMZ is presented in Major Bolger's historical narrative. Appendix 4 of this narrative lists significant US – KPA (Korean People's Army) combat firefights. It shows that the 1st/31st engaged the KPA south of the DMZ on October 3, 1968. It also shows that the 1st/32nd was ambushed in the DMZ on July 20, 1968, and ambushed south of the DMZ on August 18, 1968. This shows unit activity at or near the

DMZ during the period of acknowledged herbicide use and indicates that these units should be added to the list of units in M21-1MR. Although specific activity of the 2nd/32nd is not shown in Appendix 4, it is listed as being in the same location as the other units and presumably was involved in similar infantry missions. Additionally, all other infantry units listed in Major Bolger's historical account have been incorporated into the M-21-1MR list. This indicates that the 2nd/32nd should also be included in the M-21-1MR list.

The units described above are artillery and infantry units. However, M21-1MR also refers to unnamed signal and engineer units attached to the 2nd and 7th Infantry Divisions which could merit inclusion in the list of units where herbicide exposure is conceded. An Internet search for such military units has not produced significant information. There is evidence that the 127th Signal Battalion was stationed at Camp Casey, near the DMZ, during 1968 and 1969 (stationed from 1957 to 1971). However, details of unit activity are not readily available. Internet information regarding engineer units at or near the DMZ during 1968 and 1969 is likewise limited. However, Major Bolger's account does document that the 13th Engineers were ambushed south of the DMZ on August 10, 1967, and that the 76th Engineers were ambushed in the Joint Security Area south of the DMZ on August 28, 1967. These dates are before the period of acknowledged herbicide use. It is not known whether these units were involved in similar activity during 1968 and 1969.

An additional group of veterans that merit inclusion in M21-1MR, based on proximity to the DMZ, is the crew of the USS Pueblo. This Navy ship was captured by the North Koreans in January 1968 and the crew was held hostage until December 1968. Upon their release, the crew was transported through the DMZ and spent time there as part of their repatriation process. Official US Navy photographs, available from the Naval Historical Center Internet website, show the crew members walking through and dining at the United Nations Advance Camp, on the Korean DMZ, during December 23, 1968. This evidence shows that the crew was physically on the grounds of the DMZ during the period of acknowledged herbicide use and indicates that they experienced some level of herbicide exposure as a result. Therefore, it appears appropriate to include them in the M21-1MR list.

A separate issue related to the units listed in M-21-1MR is the difference between the new rewrite presentation and the earlier M-21-1 (Part VI, Chapter 7) listing. The earlier version included among the listed units a United Nations Command Security Battalion-Joint Security Area (UNCSB-JSA). This unit is missing from M21-1MR. Evidence showing that this unit should be included in M21-1MR comes from a Stars and Stripes (military newspaper) article dated April 17, 1968. This article reports and offers photographic evidence that the KPA ambushed and killed four members of the United Nations Command along the DMZ on this date. This date falls at the beginning of the acknowledged herbicide use and the ambush reportedly occurred along the DMZ. This indicates that the UNCSB-JSA unit should be included on the list in M21-1MR.

An additional discrepancy between the earlier and the new rewrite manual can be seen in the treatment of the 2nd/31st and the 3rd/32nd units. In the earlier M21-1, both units are

followed by a "note" stating that "service records may show assignment to either the 2nd or 7th Infantry Division." In the M21-1MR, this note is attached only to the 2nd/31st and has been eliminated from the 3rd/32nd. However, it appears that this notation should be carried over in M21-1MR to the 3rd/32nd also because a notation in Major Bolger's historical narrative states that this unit was from the 7th Infantry Division but under operational control of the 2nd Infantry Division. This situation could lead to a veteran's military records showing assignment to either the 2nd or 7th Infantry Division.

As indicated in the above discussion, I recommend that the following military units be included in the M21-1MR listing:

1st Bn 12th Arty
1st Bn 15th Arty
7th Bn 17th Arty
5th Bn 38th Arty
6th Bn 37th Arty

1st Bn 31st Inf (7th ID)
1st Bn 32nd Inf (7th ID)
2nd Bn 32nd Inf (7th ID)

Crew of USS Pueblo

United Nations Command Security Battalion-Joint Security Area (UNCSB-JSA).

3rd Bn 32nd Inf (2nd or 7th ID) with phrase "service records may show assignment to either the 2nd or 7th Infantry Division"

Prepared by:

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