

SUFFIELD BACKGROUND MATERIAL

Merchant Law Group has issued a Class Action law suit for military and civilian victims of chemical and biological testing of CFB Suffield, CFB Wainwright, and Camp Sarcee in Alberta, CFB Petawawa and the Chemical Weapons Laboratory (Ottawa) in Ontario.

On February 19, 2004, a Military Ombudsman released his report titled “Complaints Concerning Chemical Agent Testing During World War II” (copy attached) revealing the previously undisclosed testing of chemical and biological warfare agents on Canadian and British soldiers during World War II at CFB Suffield and Chemical Warfare Laboratory in Ottawa.

The present Class Action deals with veterans and many other military and civilian personnel who were exposed to chemical and biological warfare agents at CFB Suffield, CFB Wainwright, Camp Sarcee in Alberta, and CFB Petawawa and the Chemical Weapons Laboratory in Ontario between 1940 and 1976.

As a result of the Ombudsman’s report, a compensation program was established for test victims at Suffield and the Chemical Weapons laboratory, but only for the years 1940 to 1945.

Chemical and biological warfare testing continued at those locations as well as at Wainwright, Camp Sarcee, and Petawawa into the 1970's. Victims who have applied for compensation for those other locations and other time periods have been denied compensation. Even veterans who were injured in Exercise Vacuum have been denied compensation.

Exercise Vacuum was largest chemical warfare exercise in Canadian history and occurred at CFB Suffield in September and October of 1968. It involved the participation of troops, umpires, observers and recorders in testing, training and exercising troops and personnel in chemical warfare related procedures and equipment.

In total more than 60,000 pounds of chemical warfare training compounds were used on participants in Exercise Vacuum.

Many of the chemicals used were deployed in a manner that resulted in them being heated significantly. This heating process caused changes to chemicals that increased their already hazardous nature.

During all or part of Exercise Vacuum the class members were required by the military command to undertake activities that exposed them directly to the hazardous chemicals. These activities include:

- i) crawling on their stomachs across soil and over vegetation that:
 - (a) had been recently sprayed with persistent toxic chemicals including Mustard Gas;

- (b) previously contaminated by hazardous and persistent chemicals;
- ii) Sleeping in circumstances where they were exposed directly and without any protection to toxic chemicals that had been recently dispersed and those that had accumulated over time;
- iii) Eating food that had been recently contaminated by toxic chemicals; and
- iv) Stoop in contaminated soil and vegetation in order to defecate and otherwise expose their unprotected bodies to toxic chemicals that had been recently dispersed are had accumulated.

While the Federal Government compensation program only compensates military veterans who were injured at Suffield or the Chemical Warfare Laboratory between 1940 and 1945, the Merchant Law Group Class Action seeks compensation for the following:

1. Not only military personnel, but civilian personnel who were exposed to chemical and biological weapons testing;
2. The families of any deceased military or civil personnel who were injured and have now passed away.
3. Anyone injured during the entire time period that Canada tested chemical and biological weapons from 1940 to approximately 1976.
4. The Government compensation program only deals with Suffield and Chemical Weapons Laboratory. The Class Action also makes a claim for persons exposed to chemical or biological weapons at CFB Wainwright, Camp Sarcee, or CFB Petawawa.

Merchant Law Group has nine offices across the provinces. Tony Merchant and his firm are well known for their involvement in Class Action cases in Canada, including silicone breast implant litigation, residential school litigation, and the Agent Orange Class Action relating to chemical spraying at the Canadian Forces Base in Gagetown.

If you wish to obtain more information about the chemical and biological warfare agent class action, call Merchant Law Group at 1-888-567-7777.