

Request for Information from Vietnam Era Seaplane Veterans

Operation Market Time was the U.S. Navy's effort to stop troops and supplies from flowing by sea from North Vietnam to South Vietnam during the Vietnam War. From 1964 to 1967, the Navy's four remaining seaplane squadrons, VP-40, VP-47, VP-48, and VP-50, provided continuous operational support flying around the clock missions over the South China Sea and from seaplane tenders based at Cam Ranh Bay, Da Nang, and Con Son Islands, Republic of South Vietnam. Now, nearly fifty years later many of the squadron's flight crews and support personnel assigned to these missions are being denied VA disability claims for Vietnam service.

There is an increasing number of Vietnam era seaplane veterans with serious medical conditions filing claims with the VA for disability related to exposure to Agent Orange. Each of the three seaplane tenders that operated in Vietnam, *USS Pine Island*, *USS Salisbury Sound*, and *USS Currituck*, are on the VA approved presumptive list for exposure to Agent Orange. Unlike the ships, however, the VA is requiring seaplane squadron personnel assigned to work with the tenders to provide physical proof of boots on the ground in Vietnam or assignment to operate with or aboard the seaplane tenders when submitting a claim for disability benefits associated with exposure to Agent Orange. To further compound the problem, what the VA constitutes as acceptable proof of boots on the ground differs randomly from state-to-state and claim to claim. The VA adamantly denies this, but there is more than adequate proof to defend the allegation.

Each of the four seaplane squadrons administered their tender assignments differently during the years they operated in Vietnam. In each case, documentation such as deployment orders, temporary assigned duty (TAD) for flight crews or ground personnel to the tender, and personal flight records were often not retained by the squadron indefinitely or made a permanent part of an individual's service file. In most cases, the service file lists only the deployment itself. Few people kept copies of squadron documentation from that era and much of what is needed now to support a claim for VA benefits cannot be replaced. Here is where we need your help.

If we can locate examples of the different types of documentation issued to officers and enlisted personnel for each squadron and deployment, we just may find an acceptable segue to helping veterans prove their association with the seaplane tenders and or boots on the ground in Vietnam. Of particular importance are copies of squadron deployment orders for years 1964, 1965, 1966 and 1967 (including front, back, and attachments), as well as any other squadron issued documentation that applies to tender assignments for flight crews or support personnel. If Liberty Cards were issued by the tender(s) while in Vietnam, examples of those would also be helpful. Once a database of all available documentation and information is established, it can be shared with other individuals in support of their claims.

Should you have any squadron documentation for VP-40, 47, 48, or 50 from the Vietnam era that you feel would help our cause please contact Bruce Barth (bbarth2boi@gmail.com). All that is needed right now is a quality Xerox copy (front & back) or a .jpg or PDF file. If you do not have the ability to copy the documents let me know and I will make arrangements to make copies for you.

This is a collective effort on behalf of the four Navy seaplane squadrons that served in Vietnam between 1964 and 1967. We need to make this happen for those who need our help now and to benefit others in the future. I will be happy to answer any questions.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Bruce Barth
VP-40 1965-1967
Meridian, ID
512-897-9395 / www.vpmma.org