

## **Navy and Coast Guard Ships Associated with Service in Vietnam and Exposure to Herbicide Agent**

### **Ship Categories :**

USS Ponchatoula is listed on the VA's Agent Orange Ships list for two dates:

- Ponchatoula (AO-148) Sent crew members ashore to visit the An Thoi Naval Base on April 27, 1969
- Operated on Mekong River Delta during July 1971

See: <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/shiplist/list.asp#P>

The list contains five categories of ships that operated on the waters of Vietnam. A Ship is placed on this list when documentary evidence shows that it fits into a particular category. The required evidence can come from an official ship history, deck logs, cruise books, Captain's letters, or similar documents. A specific ship may be listed in more than one category, based on its activities. Evidence requirements for the presumption of Agent Orange exposure may vary depending on what dates the Veteran was aboard and what ship activity occurred on those dates. Ship categories include:

### ***II. Ships operating temporarily on Vietnam's inland waterways***

This category includes large ocean-going ships that operated primarily on Vietnam's offshore waters for gunfire support of ground operations and interdiction of enemy vessels travelling along coastal waters. It also includes ships supplying and supporting these operations. Examples of such vessels include destroyers, cruisers, and cargo ships. The deep offshore waters

### ***IV. Ships operating on Vietnam's close coastal waters for extended periods with evidence that crew members went ashore***

This category includes large ocean-going ships of the Blue Water Navy that conducted a variety of missions along the close coastal waters of Vietnam for extended periods of time. Documentary evidence has been obtained for all ships in this category showing that some crewmembers actually went ashore. Examples of such vessels include hospital ships, harbor repair ships, mine sweepers, and seaplane tenders. Also included are combat ships, such as destroyers, when evidence shows that crewmembers went ashore. Because shore activity of some crewmembers has been documented, any Veteran aboard the ship at the time of documented shore activity will be eligible for the presumption of exposure if that Veteran provides a lay statement of personally going ashore.

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An Thoi 1969:

Regarding boots on ground..... the "Rules" for the VA accepting "sworn statements" from sailors who disembarked their ship in or near ports should apply to ANY situation when you had boots on

ground, such as going ashore in An Thoi in April 1969, either as part of a work party that delivered supplies, or as part of a liberty party for a visit. You only had to step on the dock to qualify for boots on the ground (i.e. boat crewmember tying off the bow or stern line at the dock, even if you didn't go any further). You can state these "rules" and submit a sworn statement that you had boots on ground, and describe the circumstances of your boots on ground (how you got there, what you did, how you got back, etc.). A buddy letter or two wouldn't you're your case either.

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Mekong River Delta 1971:

You only need to submit your sworn statement that you were aboard when the Ponchatoula operated within the delta, plus official evidence showing that you were assigned to Ponchatoula any time during those dates (DD-214 and/or History of Assignments - NAVPERS 601-5).