

Interview 1 - Vang Mai - (Age 22)

2.1 Interview - Vang Mai

Vang Mai, a 22 year old Hmong male claimed that a chemical attack took place in the vicinity of the town of Phu He (TF 9377) on 03 April 1982 at approximately 1800 hours. The day was partially cloudy. There was no wind. He, and a party of three other persons, collected samples of the chemical substance seven days after the attack. Vang Mai, accompanied by six other Hmong crossed the Mekong river on 25 April 1982 and reached Ban Vinai refugee camp on 30 April 1982 where he presented the sample to Vang Neng, the Hmong camp chief. Thai border authorities had confiscated approximately half of the sample upon the group's arrival into Thailand.

At the time of the 03 April attack, Vang Mai was in an area located approximately one hour's walk from the village of Phu He, population about 900 persons. Vang Mai was eating at the time when he heard, but did not actually see, a jet aircraft make one pass over or near the village. Shortly afterwards he saw a yellow gas descend nearby. The first thing that Vang Mai did was to cover up his food with a blanket. The yellow substance stuck in sticky spots to trees and plants in the area. Afterwards the substance dried in spots and remained yellow in colour. It could be found in most areas of the village and its environs. In some places the chemical had passed through the tree canopy and onto the roofs of houses. Vang Mai visited Phu He shortly after the attack and then returned home. He came back to the village seven days later in order to collect the samples. It did not rain in the interval.

Vang Mai claimed that he personally saw sixteen persons die in the village. Those who were covered in the gas died very quickly. They included a two-year-old and a three-year-old child. Both died having vomited blood and having had diarrhoea with blood. Other victims who only smelled the gas died more slowly. Among the dead were youths eight to eighteen years of age plus several old men who tried to counteract the effects of the gas by smoking opium. They died after five to seven days. They apparently had diarrhoea with blood, then later without. All had skin irritations and itchiness. Some vomited with blood. There were many other villagers who were sick but their numbers were not known to Vang Mai.