



Persian Gulf Review

Vol. 3, NO. 3

Information for Veterans Who Served in Desert Shield/Storm

August 1995

President Clinton Activates White House Advisory Group on Persian Gulf Illnesses; Membership Appointed

On May 26, 1995, President Clinton signed an Executive Order establishing the Presidential Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses and announced the appointment of its chairperson and members. The twelve members include scientists, health care professionals, veterans, and policy experts.

(The President had announced on March 6, 1995, that such a committee would be established. It took several months to identify and clear potential members. The March 6 announcement is described in the April 1995 issue of the "Persian Gulf Review.")

"This independent advisory committee will help ensure that we are doing everything possible to determine the causes of the illness being reported by Gulf War veterans and to provide effective medical care to those who are ill," the President said. "Its members have real expertise in all of the areas relevant to Gulf War veterans' illnesses, including research, diagnosis and treatment."

The Committee will review and provide recommendations on the full range of government activities relating to Gulf War veterans' illnesses. It will report to the President through the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Defense, and Health and Human Services. According to the Executive Order, the Committee will submit an interim report within six months of its first meeting and a final report by December 31, 1996. The initial meeting is scheduled for August 14-15, 1995, in Washington, DC.

The Committee is specifically directed to provide advice and recommendations regarding (1) research, (2) coordination efforts, (3) medical treatment, (4) outreach, (5) external reviews, (6) risk factors (specifically including drugs and vaccines, infectious diseases, environmental chemicals, radiation and toxic substances, smoke from oil well fires, depleted uranium, physical and psychological stress, and other

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Secretary Brown Writes to Persian Gulf Veterans Concerning New Compensation Rule

Early this year Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jesse Brown sent the following letter to Persian Gulf veterans who had participated in the VA's Persian Gulf Registry examination program.

On November 2, 1994, the President signed the "Veterans' Benefits improvements Act of 1994," Public Law 103-446. This law authorized the Department of Veterans Affairs to pay service-connected compensation to Persian Gulf War veterans who are suffering from chronic disabilities resulting from undiagnosed illnesses. VA recently published the final regulation implementing the authority granted by the statute.



Secretary Jesse Brown

Since your name is listed on our Persian Gulf Veterans' Health Registry, you might be eligible for compensation under this law. To be entitled, you must have a disability from an undiagnosed illness that first appeared during your Persian Gulf service or became at least 10 percent disabling within 2 years after that service. If you have previously filed a claim based on exposure to an environmental hazard while serving in the Persian Gulf theater, we will review your records to determine whether you are eligible under Public Law 103-446. If you believe that you might be entitled to benefits but you have not filed a formal claim for compensation, or if you are unsure whether you have filed a claim, I encourage you to do so as quickly as possible.

To receive information and assistance about filing a claim or about your pending claim, you may contact our Persian Gulf Helpline, toll-free, by calling 1-800-PGW-VETS (1-800-749-8387).



About the "Review" ...

The "Persian Gulf Review" is prepared by VA's Environmental Agents Service (EAS). The "Review" is published to provide information about the concerns of Persian Gulf veterans, their families, and others interested in the possible long-term health implications of exposure to various potential environmental hazards during military service during the Persian Gulf War. The "Review" describes actions by VA and others to respond to these concerns.

The most recent issue of the newsletter was printed in April 1995. Additional issues will be prepared when warranted by significant developments. EAS anticipates publication approximately quarterly. This issue of the "Review" was written in early August 1995 and does not include developments that occurred after that time.

Comments or questions about the content of the "Review" are encouraged. Suggestions and ideas for future issues of the newsletter should be sent to Donald J. Rosenblum, Persian Gulf Review, Environmental Agents Service (103A), VA Central Office, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20420.

Requests for additional copies of this issue should also be sent to Mr. Rosenblum. A limited supply of the February 1993, September 1993, September 1994, January 1995, and April 1995 issues is also available. Please specify the quantity and issue dates requested. VA facilities should order additional copies from the VA Forms Depot.

Questions about the Persian Gulf Registry examination program should be directed to the Registry Physician or Registry Coordinator at the nearest VA medical center. Concerns or questions about VA benefit programs should be referred to a veterans benefits counselor at the nearest VA facility or office. The telephone numbers can be found in the telephone directory under the "U.S. Government" listings. Assistance is also available from the toll-free VA Persian Gulf Helpline: 1-800-749-8387.

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factors applicable to the Persian Gulf War), and (7) chemical and biological weapons. The Committee will not conduct scientific research. The Committee also will not provide advice or recommendations on any legal liability of the Federal Government for any claims or potential claims against the Federal Government.

The mission of the Committee is three-fold: It ensures that (1) the Federal Government is doing everything possible to provide effective medical care to those who are ill, (2) the Federal Government is effectively coordinating research and other efforts aimed at determining the causes of these illnesses, and (3) information about these issues is made publicly available.

The President appointed Joyce Lashof, M.D., as committee Chairperson. Dr. Lashof is a former Dean and Professor Emerita of the School of Public Health at the University of California at Berkeley. She was Assistant Director of the Office of Technology Assessment, 1978-81, and Deputy Assistant Secretary for Health Programs and Deputy Assistant Secretary for Population Affairs at the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1977-78. She served as President of the American Public Health Association, 1991-92.

The other members of the Committee are John Baleschwieler, Ph.D., Arthur Caplan, Ph.D., Adm. Donald Custis, M.D., Gen. Frederick M. Franks, Jr., David A. Hamburg, M.D., James A. Johnson, Capt. Marguerite Knox, Philip Landrigan, M.D., Elaine L. Larson, Ph.D., Rolando Rios, and Andrea Kidd Taylor, Dr.P.H. The background of each individual is provided below.

Dr. Baleschwieler is a Professor of Chemistry and former Chair of the Division of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering at the California Institute of Technology. He was Deputy Director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, 1971-73. Dr. Baleschwieler is an expert on national security issues, having served on numerous scholarly panels, commissions, and committees.

Dr. Caplan is Director of the Center for Bioethics at the University of Pennsylvania. He was Director of the Center for Biomedical Ethics and Professor of Philosophy and Professor of Surgery at the University of Minnesota, 1987-94. He is an authority on ethics and medicine, and serves as the first President of the American Association of Bioethics.

Dr. Custis is the Senior Medical Advisor to the Health Policy Department of the Paralyzed Veterans of America. He was Chief Medical Director for the Veterans Administration, 1980-84. He joined VA in 1976. During his naval career, Dr. Custis served as Commanding Officer of the Naval Combat Hospital in Danang, Vietnam, followed by command of the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland. He retired in 1976 as the U.S. Navy Surgeon General with the rank of Vice Admiral.

Gen. Franks is a Vietnam and Persian Gulf War veteran. He was Commander of the Training and Doctrine Command, 1991-94. He served as the Commanding General of VII Corps, U.S. Army Europe, 1989-91 and as VII Corps Commander during Operation Desert Shield/Storm, 1990-91. Gen. Franks was wounded in action during his service with the 2nd Squadron, 11th Army Cavalry in Vietnam. He retired in 1994.

Dr. Hamburg is President of the Carnegie Corporation. He was President of the Institute of Medicine, National Academy of Sciences, 1975-80. Dr. Hamburg was Director, Division of Health Policy Research and Education and John D. MacArthur Professor of Health Policy at Harvard University, 1980-82. He served as President, then Chairman of the Board, American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1984-86.

Mr. Johnson is Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the Federal National Mortgage Association in Washington, DC. He was a managing director at Lehman Brothers, 1985-90, and Executive Assistant to Vice President Walter Mondale, 1977-81. Mr. Johnson is Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Brookings Institution and serves on the Boards of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and the Carnegie Corporation.

Capt. Knox is a Clinical Assistant Professor at the College of Nursing of the University of South Carolina in Columbia. As a member of the U.S. Army Nurse Corps, Capt. Knox was stationed with the 251st evacuation hospital at King Khalid Military City during Operation Desert Shield/Storm. She was a Special Nurse, Peripheral Vascular Laboratory at the VA Medical Center, Columbia, SC, 1988-93. She is a member of the South Carolina Army National Guard.

Dr. Landrigan is Director, Division of Environmental and Occupational Medicine at Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York. He is an expert on toxic environmental and occupational exposures. Dr. Landrigan is Editor-in-Chief of the *American Journal of Industrial Medicine* and former Editor-in-Chief of *Environmental Research*. In 1988, he chaired a committee that reviewed the health effects of Agent Orange for the American Legion. Dr. Landrigan served as an Epidemic Intelligence Officer and then as an epidemiologist with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1970-85.

Dr. Larson is Dean of the Georgetown University School of Nursing. She was Professor and Nutting Chair in Clinical Nursing at the Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing and Director of the School's Center for Nursing Research, 1985-92. She is a member of the Health Sciences Policy Board of the Institute of Medicine, National Academy of Sciences, and is a Trustee of the Research Foundation of the Association of Practitioners in Infection Control. Dr. Larson has been a consultant in infection prevention in the U.S., Kuwait, Singapore, South America, Australia, Ghana, and Europe.

Mr. Rios is a public interest attorney in private practice in San Antonio, Texas. He served in the U.S. Army, 1969-72. Mr. Rios earned the rank of First Lieutenant and was disabled while serving at Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam.

Dr. Taylor is an industrial hygienist and occupational health policy consultant for the International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America in Detroit, Michigan. Dr. Taylor is a health representative on the National Advisory Committee on Occupational Safety and Health. She served as an industrial hygiene consultant for the Maryland Committee on Occupational Safety and Health.

DoD Clinical Evaluation Program Finds No Evidence of Unique Gulf War Disease

On August 1, 1995, the Department of Defense (DOD) released the results of 10,020 systematic clinical evaluations of

active duty military personnel who served in the Persian Gulf War and their families accomplished through the Comprehensive Clinical Evaluation Program (CCEP).

Dr. Stephen Joseph, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, reported that the data gathered to date show "no clinical evidence of new or unique illnesses or syndromes among Persian Gulf veterans." According to Dr. Joseph, the large number of participants and the thoroughness of the CCEP examinations provide considerable clinical insight for understanding the nature of illnesses and health complaints being experienced by a group of veterans whose illnesses may be related to military service in the Persian Gulf.

The results of the CCEP are consistent with conclusions of a National Institutes of Health (NIH) Technology Assessment Workshop held in April 1994 that indicated that "no single disease or syndrome is apparent, but rather multiple illnesses with overlapping symptoms and causes" characterize the problems experienced by some Persian Gulf veterans.

(An article about the workshop was published in the August 3, 1994 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. The September 1994 issue of the "Persian Gulf Review" describes the NIH panel's findings. The January 1995 "Persian Gulf Review" includes an article that explains what actions have been taken to respond to the workshop recommendations.)

Dr. Joseph noted that "severe disability is not a major characteristic of the clinical profile of CCEP participants." He explained that only seven percent reported missing more than one week due to illness during the 90 days prior to their initial evaluation. Most, 81 percent, of the participants had not missed work because of illness during the three month period.

The CCEP report revealed that the pattern of symptoms in CCEP participants is similar to that seen in studies of the general U.S. population and patients seeking primary care. Also, the pattern of diagnostic categories for CCEP patients parallels that seen in general medical practice. However, mental/psychological: musculoskeletal and connective tissue: and signs, symptoms, and ill-defined conditions appear to occur more frequently in CCEP patients.

The most common psychological conditions among CCEP patients include tension headache, mild or stress-related anxiety or depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and alcohol-related disorders. Musculoskeletal problems include joint pain, osteoarthritis and back ache. CCEP participants with generalized symptoms and conditions have problems such as joint pain, headache, sleep disturbances and fatigue. As with similar patients in the general population, these conditions or problems frequently lack a clear-cut or discrete physical explanation or cause.

The CCEP report includes findings specific to 136 spouses and 81 children of Persian Gulf War participants who were involved in the evaluation program. The diagnostic range of illnesses among these patients also is quite broad.

Dr. Joseph indicated that DoD will issue periodic reports regarding CCEP results. He explained that this information will be supplemented through on-going and planned research efforts. Dr. Joseph indicated that the body of information gathered through the CCEP will eventually be made available to independent researchers to conduct further scientific research.

VA to Conduct National Health Survey of Persian Gulf Veterans and Families; Chosen Encouraged to Participate

The Department of Veterans Affairs will soon begin its "National Health Survey of Persian Gulf Veterans and Their Family Members." This large-scale study has been designed to accurately estimate how often various symptoms and illnesses affect Persian Gulf veterans and their families.

The study will use a mailed questionnaire to collect health information from a representative sample of 15,000 Persian Gulf veterans and a similar number of Gulf-era veterans who did not serve in the Southwest Asia theater of operations during the Persian Gulf War.

The survey is an important tool to better understand how often the illnesses occur, and how many different types of illnesses that Gulf War veterans are experiencing. The survey will provide a base for future studies.

The VA's Environmental Epidemiology Service (EES) is conducting the survey. Hah K. Kang, Dr.P.H., Director, EES, strongly encourages those individuals who are chosen to be part of the representative study groups to fully participate in the survey. Dr. Kang noted that full participation will enhance the value of the study results.

Persian Gulf Health Days Enhance Outreach Efforts

In May 13, 1995, VA Medical Center, Seattle, Washington, hosted the first in a series of "town meetings" with local Persian Gulf veterans and their families. These meetings are designed to promote direct communication between VA officials (including researchers, policy-makers, and key administrative personnel) and the people they serve. Approximately 100 individuals were in attendance at this initial meeting.

Dr. Kenneth W. Kizer, Under Secretary for Health, opened the meeting. Dr. Frances M. Murphy, Director, Environmental Agents Service, VA Central Office, Washington, DC, provided an overview of the national program within VA (and other Federal departments) to help Persian Gulf veterans. She described the various research efforts that have been approved and are underway. Dr. Kizer, Dr. Murphy, and local VA officials responded to numerous questions from the audience.

A subsequent meeting was held in Baltimore, Maryland, on July 26, 1995. Participants seemed to be pleased with the

"Persian Gulf Health Days" programs presented to date. VA officials plan to hold additional "Persian Gulf Health Days" this year, including one in Phoenix, Arizona, on August 29, 1995 and several in the Fall. Persian Gulf veterans interested in attending these events can contact the VA medical centers for additional information.

VA Persian Gulf Brochure and Research Report Published

The Environmental Agents Service in VA Central Office in conjunction with the National Media Development Center at the VA Medical Center in St. Louis, MO, recently developed a Persian Gulf brochure and a research fact sheet for mass distribution to Persian Gulf veterans and other interested individuals.

The brochure, designed in a question-and-answer format, provides current answers to such questions as "Is there a Persian Gulf syndrome?" "What symptoms or illnesses are Persian Gulf veterans having.?" "What is the Department of Veterans Affairs doing to help Persian Gulf veterans with these problems?"

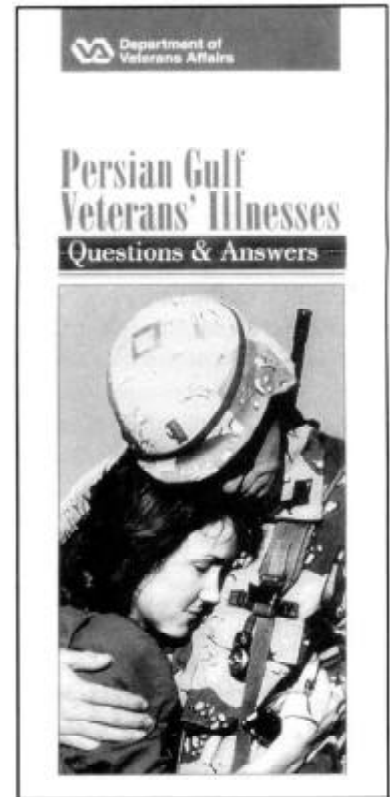
The research fact sheet briefly describes the environmental hazards research center activities, two VA epidemiology studies, and several review or oversight committees.

The brochure is entitled "Persian Gulf Veterans' Illnesses - Questions & Answers." The form number is IB - 10-41. The two-page fact sheet is entitled "A Report to Veterans - Department of Veterans Affairs - Persian Gulf Research." The form number is IB - 10-42. Both publications carry a "June 1995" date.

Both publications were distributed to all VA medical centers and regional offices in late June or early July 1995. Copies are available from these sources and from the Environmental Agents Service (103A), VA Central Office, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20420.

Q's and A's

Future issues of the "Persian Gulf Review" will feature a question-and-answer section in which VA officials will respond



to readers' inquiries regarding various concerns of Persian Gulf veterans. Questions should be sent to Donald J. Rosenblum, Environmental Agents Service (103A), VA Central Office, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20420. We cannot guarantee that all questions received will be printed in the "Review."

VA Officials Meet with Coalition Forces to Share Information and Learn More About Health Problems of Persian Gulf War Veterans

VA officials have held a number of meetings with physicians, scientists, and policy-makers from the Coalition nations to share information gathered to date regarding the health difficulties of U.S. Persian Gulf veterans and to learn more about the problems experienced by other Coalition forces who served in the Persian Gulf.

Thus far, most of these contacts have been with the British. Because their health care system is very different from that in the U.S. with no large department specifically administering to the medical needs of veterans, the British have been unable to compile information comparable to that gathered in the U.S. Nevertheless, it seems that some British troops who served in the Persian Gulf War have health complaints similar to those reported by some U.S. veterans. Additional meetings with the British representatives are planned.

VA personnel have also met with Canadian officials to share information about the experiences of U.S. and Canadian Persian Gulf veterans.

DoD Opens Additional Persian Gulf Hotline

On May 30, 1995, the Department of Defense (DOD) activated a new toll-free telephone number which allows Persian Gulf War veterans an opportunity to report firsthand details of war-related "incidents" they feel may have contributed to their health problems. DoD officials indicated that health care providers treating Gulf War veterans are also encouraged to report to this hotline any theories they may have regarding the cause of the illnesses. The number is 1-800-472-6719.

In conjunction with the telephone line, an investigation team was created to pursue all leads and theories to explain the causes of the illnesses. The investigation team, with members from the medical, intelligence, operational, research, and investigation fields, is integrating information from each discipline in an effort to leave "no stone unturned" to find an explanation.

In addition, a major effort is underway to declassify all DoD records which could have a bearing on the Gulf War illnesses. According to DoD officials, the declassified data will appear on the Internet in the very near future. DoD will make an announcement about this soon.

The "incidents" telephone line supplements the Persian Gulf Hotline established by the DoD in June 1994. That program is primarily a referral service designed to help military personnel and veterans with health conditions. That telephone number is 1-800-796-9699.

These DoD hotlines are separate from the VA national Persian Gulf Information Center and Helpline which opened at the VA Regional Office in St. Louis in February 1995. The VA Helpline provides a series of pre-recorded informational messages covering a wide range of topics 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Persian Gulf operators are available weekdays, 7:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. Central Time, to discuss specific situations and make referrals, primarily to the nearest VA medical facility. Approximately 50,000 calls were received during the first four months of operation. The telephone number is 1-800-PGW VETS (1-800 749-8387).

Where to Get Help

Active duty military personnel with questions or concerns about their service in the Persian Gulf region - contact your commanding officer or call the Department of Defense (DOD) Persian Gulf Veterans' Hotline - 1-800-796-9699.

Persian Gulf veterans with concerns about their health - contact the nearest VA medical center. The telephone number can be found in the local telephone directory under Department of Veterans Affairs in the "U.S. Government" listings. A Persian Gulf Registry examination will be offered. Treatment will be provided to eligible veterans. The VA Persian Gulf Information Helpline can also provide assistance. The toll-free telephone number is 1-800-PGW-VETS (1-800-749-8387).

Persian Gulf veterans in need of marital/family counseling - contact the nearest VA medical center or VA vet center. For additional information, call the Persian Gulf Information Helpline at 1-800-PGW-VETS (1-800-749-8387).

Persian Gulf veterans seeking disability compensation for illnesses incurred in or aggravated by military service - contact a Veterans Benefits Counselor at the nearest VA regional office or health care facility or call the VA Persian Gulf Information Helpline at 1-800-PGW-VETS (1-800-749-8387).

Persian Gulf veterans interested in learning about the wide range of benefit programs administered by VA - contact a Veterans Benefits Counselor at the nearest VA regional office or health care facility, or call the VA Persian Gulf Information Helpline at 1-800-PGW-VETS (1-800-749-8387).

Individual with first-hand information about "incidents" that occurred in the Southwest Asia theater of operations during the Persian Gulf War that may be related to health problems experienced by individuals who served in the War - call the DoD "Incidents" Hotline at 1-800-472-6719.

Note: Representatives of veterans service organizations, including the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, Disabled American Veterans, etc., may also be very helpful to Persian Gulf veterans.

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Who Served in Desert Shield/Storm
August 1995*



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