

QUESTION:

QUESTION 1 of 2: Does the VA acknowledge that K-2 personnel were exposed to very high levels of Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals? Are the K-2 Health Risk Assessments being looked at by any organizations? When I first read the newly declassified Department of Defense documents regarding the toxins found at Karshi-Khanabad (K-2), everything suddenly made sense. After talking to and reading about so many sick K-2 veterans, I knew radiation and chemical warfare agent exposures didn't begin to account for their many disparate signs, symptoms, and conditions. After reading the K-2 Health Risk Assessments (HRAs), there it was in black and white: Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals (EDCs).

Even short exposures to small amounts of EDCs can have significant effects on humans. EDCs can have various systemic effects throughout the body which would explain why K-2 veterans have so many different types of illnesses. Exposure to EDCs would also explain the signs and symptoms that many K-2 veterans have in common: low testosterone, low vitamin D (even with supplementation), osteoporosis, poor dental health, etc.

K-2 veterans were exposed to many EDCs, both in the air and the ground. The HRAs show exposure levels that are far beyond maximum safe guidelines. And those are just the ones that *could* be measured. For some of the compounds, once the equipment could detect it, the exposure was already far past the maximum exposure guideline [MEG]. The 2001 Health Risk Assessment states:

However, for over half the heavy metals sampled and many VOCs, the detection limit was greater than the long-term Air-MEGs. This is a significant uncertainty in the evaluation for long-term health effects from ambient air since it is not possible to know whether sampled concentrations warrant further evaluation. The results from soil gas sampling and personnel complaints (paragraph 4a) suggest that elevated concentrations of VOCs may be a concern if fuel contaminated soil is exposed through excavation.

Concerns from long-term exposure to VOCs cannot be confirmed since those chemicals in soil gas exceeding guidelines have Air-MEGs that are significantly less than the detection levels used for the ambient air sampling. This uncertainty needs to be considered in the overall assessment even though it cannot be evaluated in the same way as specific chemicals exceeding the Air-MEGs.

Amongst all the declassified documents, I'm sure the VA also saw two documents regarding toxic vapors accumulating inside shelters. The first is entitled "Former Soviet Union: Potential Environmental Health Threats at Airbases" and specifically mentions Karshi-Khanabad. The second document, which seems to be a condensed version of the first, appears to have been made to be placed in personnel medical files.

Both documents state, volatile organic compounds evaporating from soil and groundwater may accumulate in the air inside tents or buildings over contaminated areas. Individuals working in polluted, confined, and poorly ventilated areas, such as excavated trenches, may be exposed to high levels of volatile organic vapors. Deployed personnel probably face the greatest threat from breathing volatile organic compounds, particularly in confined, unventilated spaces.

K-2 personnel slept and worked in tents and other temporary structures which trapped the gases of the volatile and semi-volatile organic compounds as they rose from the soil. These gases are heavier than air so they displaced the oxygen near the ground in the enclosed spaces where K-2 personnel slept or worked. Instead of oxygen, they breathed toxic fumes all night long.

K-2 personnel were exposed to the following additional EDCs at K-2:

1. Bisphenol A (BPA)

The assessments state that the main drinking water source for K-2 personnel was bottled water flown from Tashkent, Uzbekistan. During the early 2000s, the plastic in water bottles contained bisphenol A (BPA), a very harmful endocrine disruptor even in small amounts. The longer the water sat in the bottles,

the more BPA was leached from the bottles to the water. This leaching process accelerated as the temperature of the bottled water increased. Personnel ingested huge amounts of this EDC every day. BPA is a particularly potent EDC, even in very small amounts.

2. Burn Pits and Burn Barrels

Burn barrels and pits were used the entire time K-2 was in operation. The 2004 Health Risk Assessment states that when the assessment team arrived, several fires were noted on the other side of the perimeter fence from the Ammunition Supply Point. The ambient winds were blowing the smoke from the fires over the [Ammunition Supply Point. Burn barrels were also used inside the base perimeter to burn sensitive documents that could not be taken under possession by foreign nationals or uncleared US personnel. According to K-2 veterans, these burn barrels were often used in very close proximity to work-spaces.

3. Arsenic (and Hexavalent Chromium)

Chromated copper arsenate (CCA)-impregnated plywood, a known carcinogen, was sent to K-2 where personnel built so many things with it. CCA-impregnated plywood releases arsenic and continues to do so for many years. Wet CCA-impregnated plywood emits approximately three times as much arsenic as dry plywood. The 2002 Environmental Assessment of the Hardened Aircraft Shelters shows a stack of CCA-impregnated plywood and the very high level of arsenic that it emitted.

4. Insecticides/Pesticides

Uniforms were soaked in Permethrin and personnel sprayed it on themselves continuously. Pesticides were sprayed onto the base of the canvas tents where personnel slept just inches away. Trucks drove around camp spraying a heavy fog of insecticide into the air. Canister-based pesticide foggers were sprayed in enclosed areas such as the airplanes that arrived at and departed from K-2.

5. Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)

Many military personnel ate Meals Ready-to-Eat (MREs) during their time at K-2. The plastic of the MRE packaging was manufactured with per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) which are known EDCs (use of this EDC in MREs was banned in 2021).

QUESTION 2 of 2: Does the VA assume safety assessments in the K-2 Health Risk Assessments (HRAs) are valid?

The safety assessments of the Health Risk Assessments (HRAs) should be considered questionable since the safety assessments of the HRAs are based on mitigation protocols that were implemented on a very limited basis or not at all:

1. K-2 veterans testify they were never warned of any health risks.
2. They also testify that no gear, to include masks, Tyvek suits, etc., was provided, nor did they know they should be using protective gear.
3. K-2 veterans testify the No Dig Order was not communicated nor enforced. They dug in the toxic soil to fill sandbags and create trenches around their work and living/sleeping spaces in an effort to mitigate flooding. They also state that they constructed and graded the area manually with no protective gear.
4. While the toxic soil of the berm (and other areas) was indeed covered by clean soil, this cap liner of clean soil was immediately eroded by wind and rain (as stated in one HRA) and as witnessed by K-2 personnel. This allowed strong winds to blow toxic soil throughout the base and allowed rain to wash toxic soil into the Stronghold.

In addition, safety assessments did not take into account unexpected circumstances (nor were they adequately addressed in subsequent HRAs):

1. Bowl Effect

The Bowl Effect was inadvertently created when the existing berm was extended around the entire camp. The Stronghold was flooded, for months, with several inches of water that smelled of fuel and sulfur and had an oily sheen. This allowed toxins from the soil in one area of the camp to be carried throughout the camp, and, as stated in one HRA, it washed away any protective layers of soil that had been previously put in place. Personnel dug trenches and placed sandbags around their work and sleeping spaces. These trenches exposed subsurface toxins that floodwaters were able to circulate into the living and sleeping spaces of K-2 personnel (K-2 veterans testify, and photographic evidence shows, that the sandbags stayed in place long after flood waters abated and that the coverings of the sandbags disintegrated, allowing toxic soil, which had been dug from contaminated subsurface layers, to blow freely about the base).

2. Intact Subsurface Clay Layer

In the HRAs, the U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine (USACHPPM) found evidence of a subsurface clay layer at various locations at K-2, and declared that, along with a layer of clean-fill on top of the soil, this subsurface clay layer would prevent any upward migration of subsurface gases. However, as USACHPPM noted in later Health Risk Assessments (and as K-2 veterans testify), that top layer of clean-fill quickly eroded with wind and rain, exposing toxic soil. As K-2 veterans testify, puddles of black goo migrated upward through the soil at random times and in random places (toxic gases from volatile and semi-volatile organic compounds also migrate upwards as well).

There is no evidence the clay soil was a solid layer or even present at all locations of Camp Stronghold Freedom. Particularly in dry, arid climates, clay soils can crack. With the continual construction, digging, and heavy equipment present at K-2, this clay soil layer was very likely disrupted or even destroyed in various locations (a portion of it was certainly destroyed when two missiles exploded in 1993). Because sub-surface liquids and gases migrate horizontally as well as vertically, toxic liquids and gases can travel quite far before finding a vertical outlet.

I'm assuming that the VA is simply not yet saying anything about the EDCs or the Health Risk Assessments because the VA is going to wait until studies have been done. That's a long time for sick and dying veterans to wait."

RESPONSE:

Defense Center for Public Health-Aberdeen's website provides several documents related to the conditions at K2. Additionally, all the declassified K2 reports can be found at the bottom of this page under the section titled "Where can I find more information" [[K2 Airbase Exposures- Defense Centers for Public Health - Aberdeen \(army.mil\)](#)]. The VA's K2 website provides information on the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's re-evaluation of the samples collected during the K2 occupation using current screening thresholds for health [[Karshi Khanabad \(K-2\) Air Base - Public Health \(va.gov\)](#)]. Thank you for your service. If you are not already enrolled for VA health care, we encourage you to do so. VA also encourages Veterans who believe their military service has negatively impacted their health to submit a claim to VBA.

QUESTION:

"I am a K2 vet. I do not feel good, this is every day." Why is the land desolate where Camp Stronghold Freedom once stood?

What chemicals are currently in the soil and drainage ponds surrounding K2?

What specific chemical agents were detected that are not listed on the Army environmental report on K2?

What is the current radiation level?

How many more K2 Veterans need to die before the list of presumptive conditions will expand to cover all common illnesses amongst K2 Veterans?

How come VA providers don't know anything about K2 when asked?"

RESPONSE:

Defense Center for Public Health-Aberdeen's website provides several documents related to the conditions at K2. Additionally, all the declassified K2 reports can be found at the bottom of this page under the section titled "Where can I find more information" [[K2 Airbase Exposures- Defense Centers for Public Health - Aberdeen \(army.mil\)](#)]. The VA's K2 website provides information on the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's re-evaluation of the samples collected during the K2 occupation using current screening thresholds for health [[Karshi Khanabad \(K-2\) Air Base - Public Health \(va.gov\)](#)]. The PACT Act includes the K2 Veterans, and these legislated presumptions include over 300 conditions. VA providers are able to consult about military environmental exposures with Environmental Health Clinicians for any questions that may arise. Thank you for your service. If you are not already enrolled for VA health care, we encourage you to do so. VA also encourages Veterans who believe their military service has negatively impacted their health to submit a claim to VBA.

QUESTION:

"I have tried to have an open and frank conversation with my primary care provider regarding the months I spent living in the most toxic Tent City ever: K2. I am not exaggerating when I tell you that his immediate response was there is no test for cancer, and I don't deal with C&P for an increase in your disability rating. Mind you I was blown up in Iraq and lost my stupid leg so I am already at 100% which he is well aware of, so why he assumed I was asking any questions about getting a VA rating in the first place is beyond me. So I will ask my questions here:

1. IF we already have a rating of 100%, and are already enrolled in the VA Healthcare System, do we need to submit a new claim for past cancer diagnosis or will those cancers now be automatically applied to our health records as Service Related Injuries? As an example, my cancer diagnosis led to a FULL HYSTERECTOMY at the age of 39. Service related for sure.

2. What happened to ALL the reports that were submitted from the individual NBC (Nuclear, Biological, Chemical) NCOICs from each Unit? I know a thorough testing, review and written report were completed and submitted by the 659th Maintenance Company, 189th CSB. The NCOIC had us take pictures of everything. Where are these reports?

3. Will be be provided with a FULL and NON-REDACTED Report of all individuals stationed at K2 who have received a diagnosis directly related to their time at K2? All cancers, illnesses, sicknesses, and diseases that service members, contractors and trusted agents have experienced?

4. Clearly the government and all person responsible for placing us in harms way KNOW these patterns, and they know we are getting sick. What is to be done about this?

If I sound mad, just know the anger is justified."

RESPONSE:

1. We recommend that you file a claim. Even though you cannot get more than 100%, there is the possibility of Special Monthly Compensation. Also, this is good practice as these additional conditions may confer additional benefits for your survivors should you pass from a service connected condition.

2. Defense Center for Public Health-Aberdeen's website provides several documents related to the conditions at K2. Additionally, all of the declassified K2 reports can be found at the bottom of this page

under the section titled "Where can I find more information" [[K2 Airbase Exposures- Defense Centers for Public Health - Aberdeen \(army.mil\)](#)]. The VA's K2 website provides information on the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's re-evaluation of the samples collected during the K2 occupation using current screening thresholds for health [[Karshi Khanabad \(K-2\) Air Base - Public Health \(va.gov\)](#)].

3. Individual-level health data will not be shared or provided as that is a violation of the Privacy Act and HIPAA.

4. The purpose of the K2 Community Forums is to inform the K2 community about what DoD and VA are doing to address the health concerns of K2 Veterans. Future K2 Community Forms will be held at least annually to share findings from the K2 Surveillance Program and/or DoD's Epidemiology Study.

Thank you for your service. If you are not already enrolled for VA health care, we encourage you to do so. VA also encourages Veterans who believe their military service has negatively impacted their health to submit a claim to VBA.

QUESTION:

"Why is DOD withholding the results of the most recent epidemiology study conducted in conjunction with the PACT act? Why are the Yale Law Clinic, the Camp Stronghold Freedom foundation and others currently in litigation with DOD with a FOIA request?"

RESPONSE:

Defense Center for Public Health-Aberdeen's website provides several documents related to the conditions at K2. Additionally, all the declassified K2 reports can be found at the bottom of this page under the section titled "Where can I find more information" [[K2 Airbase Exposures- Defense Centers for Public Health - Aberdeen \(army.mil\)](#)]. The VA's K2 website provides information on the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's re-evaluation of the samples collected during the K2 occupation using current screening thresholds for health [[Karshi Khanabad \(K-2\) Air Base - Public Health \(va.gov\)](#)]. Thank you for your service. If you are not already enrolled for VA health care, we encourage you to do so. VA also encourages Veterans who believe their military service has negatively impacted their health to submit a claim to VBA.

QUESTION:

"I was stationed at K-2 and would like to contribute to the body of information about potential hazards at that airbase. While I was deployed there during my time with the 66 Rescue Squadron, we saw radiation warning signs knocked over all around the perimeter of the base, black goo oozing up out of the ground near the fire department area, and our Hardened Aircraft Shelter which we operated out of had suspicious smells and fluids that we had tested by Bio-Environmental Engineers. They came back right away with indications of chemical weapons, then retracted that a few days later, telling us that they were false positives for "cleaning supplies". How can we get this information into the investigation?"

RESPONSE:

Defense Center for Public Health-Aberdeen's website provides several documents related to the conditions at K2. Additionally, all the declassified K2 reports can be found at the bottom of this page under the section titled "Where can I find more information" [[K2 Airbase Exposures- Defense Centers for Public Health - Aberdeen \(army.mil\)](#)]. The VA's K2 website provides information on the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's re-evaluation of the samples collected during the K2 occupation using current screening thresholds for health [[Karshi Khanabad \(K-2\) Air Base - Public Health \(va.gov\)](#)]. Thank you for your service. If you are not already enrolled for VA health care, we encourage you to do so. VA also encourages Veterans who believe their military service has negatively impacted their health to submit a claim to VBA.

QUESTION:

"I was stationed at K2 (USAF) in April of 2002. I remember vividly the ponds of liquid formed within the tent city area anytime it rained. Many puddles never really disappeared and gave that streaks of colors as if it was fuel in water. I ran many times on the track around the broken down MIG/MIGS. Every other day we were told UXO's were present to stay off the track and then the next day it was all set. Also in 2002 I remember we are all told that traces of nerve gas was found present. A few days later we were told the tests were wrong. I could go on and on. Finally I remember taking showers in puddles up to my ankles on a dirt floor. There was a rumor that a contractor from Brown and Root died after being electrified. I have had and still have multiple physical and mental issues. This place was just plain bad for all who were there."

RESPONSE:

Defense Center for Public Health-Aberdeen's website provides several documents related to the conditions at K2. Additionally, all the declassified K2 reports can be found at the bottom of this page under the section titled "Where can I find more information" [[K2 Airbase Exposures- Defense Centers for Public Health - Aberdeen \(army.mil\)](#)]. The VA's K2 website provides information on the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's re-evaluation of the samples collected during the K2 occupation using current screening thresholds for health [[Karshi Khanabad \(K-2\) Air Base - Public Health \(va.gov\)](#)]. Thank you for your service. If you are not already enrolled for VA health care, we encourage you to do so. VA also encourages Veterans who believe their military service has negatively impacted their health to submit a claim to VBA.

QUESTION:

"I was with the first group that landed in Uzbekistan in 2001. Instructed to setup sleeping areas in the three bunkers at the end of the main runway (tent city came later on). Bunkers immediately created concerns associated with respiratory issues. Lots of animal droppings and very dusty combined with strange odors. We joked about everything being discussed related to long term health issues, shrugged our shoulders, laughed and kept on with the mission. Completely not surprised that here we are now having exposure discussions. Not sure if my health issues are directly associated but we shall see I guess. I have yet to see any discussions about us living in those bunkers and results of the testing that was done that prompted us to move out of them in rapid fashion. What were the test results from inside these bunkers?"

RESPONSE:

Defense Center for Public Health-Aberdeen's website provides several documents related to the conditions at K2. Additionally, all the declassified K2 reports can be found at the bottom of this page under the section titled "Where can I find more information" [[K2 Airbase Exposures- Defense Centers for Public Health - Aberdeen \(army.mil\)](#)]. The VA's K2 website provides information on the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's re-evaluation of the samples collected during the K2 occupation using current screening thresholds for health [[Karshi Khanabad \(K-2\) Air Base - Public Health \(va.gov\)](#)]. Thank you for your service. If you are not already enrolled for VA health care, we encourage you to do so. VA also encourages Veterans who believe their military service has negatively impacted their health to submit a claim to VBA.

QUESTION:

"I have also been able to verify using open-source documents recently declassified that state that there was a Soviet tactical nuclear weapons storage site at Karshi-Khanabad until 1992. So we know that there were indeed nukes kept there before US forces arrived."

RESPONSE:

Defense Center for Public Health-Aberdeen's website provides several documents related to the conditions at K2. Additionally, all the declassified K2 reports can be found at the bottom of this page

under the section titled "Where can I find more information" [[K2 Airbase Exposures- Defense Centers for Public Health - Aberdeen \(army.mil\)](#)]. The VA's K2 website provides information on the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's re-evaluation of the samples collected during the K2 occupation using current screening thresholds for health [[Karshi Khanabad \(K-2\) Air Base - Public Health \(va.gov\)](#)]. Thank you for your service. If you are not already enrolled for VA health care, we encourage you to do so. VA also encourages Veterans who believe their military service has negatively impacted their health to submit a claim to VBA.

QUESTION:

"I was stationed at K2 from November 2001 - February 2002, lived in Tent City within the "berm." I remember that when it rained, the water usually rose to ankle depth, soaking your boots wherever you went. I remember that when this happened, an oil slick always covered the water, which smelled strongly of diesel fuel/JP-4. Some Uzbek soldiers I routinely dealt with said the Soviet Air Force used to dump used POL products at the end of the runway where tent city lay. That was only half of it. The other story I heard from Uzbeks (and repeated by one of the officers on the staff) was that after removing all of the nuclear weapons stored at the base following the dissolution of the USSR (and the Red Air Force), that the Soviets blew up most of the nuclear weapons storage bunkers on site (this would have been between 1991 - 1996). I observed these demolished bunkers with my own eyes when I went out jogging around the air base perimeter. So my question is, aside from the ever-present oil slick in the troop living area, when the nuclear ordnance bunkers were blown up, could they have possibly spread degraded or decayed nuclear material in the soil around the entire air base? Thank you. (for more interesting reading, view the attachment). Read the whole things at https://phc.amedd.army.mil/PHC%20Resource%20Library/U_UZB_Karshi-Khanabad%20POEMS%202001-2005_Public%20Release%20Review.pdf"

RESPONSE:

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QUESTION:

"Exposure to two or more chemicals at one time can result in health effects that are greater than the sum of the effects of the individual chemicals, this is referred to as synergism. Has research been conducted on the potential synergistic effects of the 392 unique chemicals found at K2 on the health of K2 veterans? Have all the chemicals found at K2 and their exposure levels been declassified?"

RESPONSE:

You are correct that exposure to multiple contaminants can have synergistic effects. The exposure assessments conducted at K2 were based on area sampling of air, water, soil, and soil gases, and we have no way to determine to which or how many contaminants an individual may have been exposed. To try an offset this dilemma, we defined two comparison groups (deployed but not to K2 and not deployed within SW Asia) in the K2 Surveillance Program with differing levels of exposure so that we could compare disease risk in K2 to these comparison groups. Ideally, exposure assessments at the individual level would have been preferable, but the technology to achieve this in the battlefield was not available in 2001-2005 and is a primary area of research and development by DoD and VA. Defense Center for Public Health-Aberdeen's website provides several documents related to the conditions at K2.

Additionally, all the declassified K2 reports can be found at the bottom of this page under the section titled "Where can I find more information" [[K2 Airbase Exposures- Defense Centers for Public Health - Aberdeen \(army.mil\)](#)]. The VA's K2 website provides information on the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's re-evaluation of the samples collected during the K2 occupation using current screening thresholds for health [[Karshi Khanabad \(K-2\) Air Base - Public Health \(va.gov\)](#)]. Thank you for your service. If you are not already enrolled for VA health care, we encourage you to do so. VA also encourages Veterans who believe their military service has negatively impacted their health to submit a claim to VBA.

QUESTION:

"I arrived at K2 on 8 Oct 01 and departed right after we ended Anaconda. CHPPM came and rested the glowing water area we called the spooge pit. Recently saw a positive g of toxic agents found in that testing. I would like to Know what all toxins were found at K2 and if the VA is going to include effects of those toxins as presumptive conditions."

RESPONSE:

Defense Center for Public Health-Aberdeen's website provides several documents related to the conditions at K2. Additionally, all the declassified K2 reports can be found at the bottom of this page under the section titled "Where can I find more information" [[K2 Airbase Exposures- Defense Centers for Public Health - Aberdeen \(army.mil\)](#)]. The VA's K2 website provides information on the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's re-evaluation of the samples collected during the K2 occupation using current screening thresholds for health [[Karshi Khanabad \(K-2\) Air Base - Public Health \(va.gov\)](#)]. Thank you for your service. If you are not already enrolled for VA health care, we encourage you to do so. VA also encourages Veterans who believe their military service has negatively impacted their health to submit a claim to VBA.

QUESTION:

"Was at K2 October 2004- January 2005 I have not seen a list of toxic substances that were there. I was going to get the urine test but after reading I'll pass when mine comes back negative it will be used against me WE ALL know that. Thank you for the information keep fighting! EVERYONE"

RESPONSE:

You're welcome for the information, and we are fully committed to better understanding the health risks associated with service at K2 and to ensuring all Veterans receive the health care and benefits they deserve. Defense Center for Public Health-Aberdeen's website provides several documents related to the conditions at K2. Additionally, all the declassified K2 reports can be found at the bottom of this page under the section titled "Where can I find more information" [[K2 Airbase Exposures- Defense Centers for Public Health - Aberdeen \(army.mil\)](#)]. The VA's K2 website provides information on the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's re-evaluation of the samples collected during the K2 occupation using current screening thresholds for health [[Karshi Khanabad \(K-2\) Air Base - Public Health \(va.gov\)](#)]. Thank you for your service. If you are not already enrolled for VA health care, we encourage you to do so. VA also encourages Veterans who believe their military service has negatively impacted their health to submit a claim to VBA.

QUESTION:

"What was in the mud when it rained, it was slick and oily. I was there from 2002 to 2003. And what made " Skittle" pond change colors?"

RESPONSE:

The leaking fuel tanks contained petroleum products, the colors of the water can change due to reflection from different light or different angles. Defense Center for Public Health-Aberdeen's website provides

several documents related to the conditions at K2. Additionally, all the declassified K2 reports can be found at the bottom of this page under the section titled "Where can I find more information" [[K2 Airbase Exposures- Defense Centers for Public Health - Aberdeen \(army.mil\)](#)]. The VA's K2 website provides information on the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's re-evaluation of the samples collected during the K2 occupation using current screening thresholds for health [[Karshi Khanabad \(K-2\) Air Base - Public Health \(va.gov\)](#)]. Thank you for your service. If you are not already enrolled for VA health care, we encourage you to do so. VA also encourages Veterans who believe their military service has negatively impacted their health to submit a claim to VBA.

QUESTION:

"How long would Depleted Uranium / exposure to radioactive material still show up in urine after exposure?"

RESPONSE:

It depends on the dose of the original depleted uranium (DU) exposure, DU accumulates in the bones, and the half-life is about approximately 6 months. Even at 20 years, there would be some remnants of exposure. As of 1 July 2023, VA has completed approximately 135 urine assays for the isotopic signature of DU and all are negative. The VA DU testing program was extended to K2 Veterans at no charge to give Veterans the peace of mind that DU does not pose a health risk for them. VA has done over 7,000 urine assays for the isotopic signature of DU and the only positive DU Veterans are those with retained shrapnel from incidents in the first Gulf War. VA has followed these 85 Veterans for almost 30 years; all the published research notes they are doing well.

QUESTION:

"I'm failing to understand how a letter dated May 12th from the VA detailing the above Q&A is just reaching me on June 6th. With your choice of snail mail to list 4 hyperlinks, you've chosen to further misdirect the hundreds of fellow men & women who served at this base. We all have emails, and you chose not to email us this information, which would have been the fastest method, and allowed the member to click on the hyperlinks if they were entered correctly. Which your RallyPoint was not, it only brings you to the main page, not to this specific page here. I'm not going to repeat the questions already stated below but await your replies on June 29th. Do better VA."

RESPONSE:

The letter was mailed on June 2nd, and we apologize for the date listed on the letter not being updated. On June 13th, we sent an email version of the letter to all those K2 Veterans for whom we had a valid email address. We are pleased that you received notification of this event. With regard to RallyPoint, if you already had a RallyPoint account, you would have been taken directly to the K2 page. If no account existed, then RallyPoint directs you to create an account before taking you to the requested page. We apologize for any inconvenience but are glad that you were able to navigate to the K2 page at RallyPoint and please that you attended the K2 Community Forum. We have reached out to all K2 Veterans for whom we have a valid address or email. If a K2 Veteran has not enrolled in VHA health care or has not submitted a claim with VBA, then VA has no means to collect their contact information. We know that there are Veterans that do not use the VA, and thus, we asked that you share the letter with your fellow K2 Veterans to extend our reach. VA worked with several Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) to assist with the distribution of information.

QUESTION:

"Many of us are still of working age and will not be able to attend the forum. Will it be recorded and placed where we can find it to listen to later?"

RESPONSE:

The community forum held on June 29th is not being recorded. However, slides from each of the presentations will be provided on the VA's K2 website [<https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/karshi-khanabad.asp>]. VA will ensure that all the regulatory requirements and reviews are addressed so that all upcoming community forums can be recorded and made available for viewing by those unable to attend in person.

QUESTION:

Why are you sending out letters to affected service members offering to test Uranium isotopes in Urine when you know that there won't be a trace in either the urine or the serum? Why not do a bone aspiration, or spinal tap if you truly care about our health, as the only place that Uranium would still be found in us is in our livers, kidneys and (most concentrated) in our bones. Seems like you are trying to find new ways to deny us benefits for being poisoned by DOD. Also, why is Fort McClellan not even on your radar?"

RESPONSE:

Additional information is available at [[Depleted Uranium - Public Health \(va.gov\)](https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/karshi-khanabad.asp)] DU levels depend on the dose of the original depleted uranium (DU) exposure, DU accumulates in the bones, and the half-life is about approximately 6 months. Even at 20 years, there would be some remnants of exposure. As of 1 July 2023, VA has completed approximately 135 urine assays for the isotopic signature of DU and all are negative. The VA DU testing program was extended to K2 Veterans at no charge to give Veterans the peace of mind that DU does not pose a health risk for them. VA has done over 7,000 urine assays for the isotopic signature of DU and the only positive DU Veterans are those with retained shrapnel from incidents in the first Gulf War. VA has followed these 85 Veterans for almost 30 years; all the published research notes they are doing well. Other methods to assess uranium exposure have been evaluated, including whole body radiation counting and x-ray fluorescence (to assess uranium in bone). However, measurement of urine uranium concentrations has been found to be the most sensitive method for detecting very low concentrations of uranium. For example, elevations in urine uranium concentrations were found to be superior to whole body radiation counting in the Gulf War I "Friendly-Fire" Cohort, even among those with depleted uranium embedded fragments in soft tissues. An x-ray fluorescence technique was found by health physics experts who perform these tests not to be feasible for uranium due to the method's technical limitations. Measuring urine uranium concentrations is also a non-invasive method for detecting very low levels of uranium; therefore, it poses no additional risks to the individual--unlike a bone aspiration or spinal tap.

Under the PACT Act, VA was tasked to investigate possible adverse health effects among Veterans that were stationed at Ft. McClellan. This effort is in planning and slated to begin in the fall of 2023.

QUESTION:

"I was at K2 in 2004. My friend was at K2 a year before me and just passed from kidney cancer, it was very fast from diagnosis to death. I would like the VA to figure out what we should be tested for and how often."

RESPONSE:

VA is evaluating numerous cancers as part of the K2 Surveillance Program. Should these assessments indicate that K2 Veterans have a higher risk of a certain type of cancer, these findings would inform policy decisions that may include modified practice guidelines for screening in K2 Veterans and Service members. At present, VA recommends age-appropriate screening according to current clinical guidelines. There are currently no diagnostic tests that can confirm exposures related to K2 or link them to certain diseases. All Veterans should work with their PCPs to ensure they receive usual cancer and health screening such as colorectal cancer.

QUESTION:

"How long would Toxic Exposures still be detectable by any test?"

RESPONSE:

VA recommends age-appropriate routine health maintenance screening. There are very few specific tests for toxic exposures. DU is an exception. DU levels depend on the dose of the original depleted uranium (DU) exposure, DU accumulates in the bones, and the half-life is about approximately 6 months. Even at 20 years, there would be some remnants of exposure. As of 1 July 2023, VA has completed approximately 135 urine assays for the isotopic signature of DU and all are negative. The VA DU testing program was extended to K2 Veterans at no charge to give Veterans the peace of mind that DU does not pose a health risk for them. VA has done over 7,000 urine assays for the isotopic signature of DU and the only positive DU Veterans are those with retained shrapnel from incidents in the first Gulf War. VA has followed these 85 Veterans for almost 30 years; all the published research notes they are doing well.

QUESTION:

"Did anyone encounter problems accessing Coordinators? I tried to connect with two listed coordinators via email, one email address was wrong and the other coordinator is out of the country. Can anyone point to a DU/Toxic Exposure lab in the Northern Virginia area? Thanks."

RESPONSE:

There is no central point of contact for obtaining depleted uranium testing. VA maintains an accurate list of Environmental Health Coordinators on its website, but there are gaps from time to time. We will continue to monitor and look for a solution to environmental exposure questions. Please review [Depleted Uranium - Public Health \(va.gov\)](#)

QUESTION:

"Just through SFF, we have 6 documented cases of Multiple Myeloma. Why is this not being covered as a presumptive cancer? Out of 15,777 veterans, this number alone is way too high for a rare cancer. The stats are 5 out of 100,000 in the nation."

RESPONSE:

Cancers of the lymphatic and hemopoietic system are included in the outcomes currently being assessed as part of the K2 Surveillance Program. The outcomes to be analyzed were those that have been identified in previous research, may be related to the types of exposures documented at K2, and/or were reasons for submitting a claim with VBA. The analyses currently underway will allow a rigorous assessment for those illnesses that exhibit a higher risk in the K2 population. We will have more to say once the analyses have been completed and been through peer review.

QUESTION:

"What we need to see added as presumptives are: 1. Neurological Disorders to include ALS, MS, Essential Tremors, ataxia
2. Immune Dysregulation Disorders to include Autoimmune, Immune Suppression, Allergic Diseases, Inflammatory Diseases
3. Hematological Disorders to include Multiple Myeloma, MGUS(monoclonal gammopathy), polycythemia vera, thrombocytosis
These are the holes in the PACT Act that we are seeing with our veterans."

RESPONSE:

The majority of these conditions are included in the outcomes currently being assessed as part of K2 Surveillance Program. The outcomes to be analyzed were those that have been identified in previous research, may be related to the types of exposures documented at K2, and/or were reasons for

submitting a claim with VBA. Thank you for your service. If you are not already enrolled for VA health care, we encourage you to do so. VA also encourages Veterans who believe their military service has negatively impacted their health to submit a claim to VBA.

QUESTION:

"I am a surviving spouse of a K2 AF veteran who passed away 3 years ago due to pancreatic, liver, lung and brain cancer which was recognized as related to Toxic Exposure. I was an AF Reserve Flight Nurse and am currently volunteering with the Stronghold Freedom Foundation (SFF) who are fighting for all K2 veterans and their families to be taken care and to be heard."

RESPONSE:

We are sorry for your loss and appreciate your spouse's service; we appreciate your involvement in helping other Veterans. K2 efforts in our respective agencies are but one example of DoD's and VA's commitment to better understand the impacts of military environmental exposures on the health of Service members and Veterans. Results from these efforts will inform and shape health care policy and benefits for K2 Veterans.

QUESTION:

"Second round of questions: 5. Since the VA clearly has a list of names of the veterans who served at K2, why haven't the Primary Care Providers of those who are already enrolled in the VA been sent letters describing the exposure events, testing results, and reports about K2? We go to our doctors to discuss our exposure concerns about K2, most have ZERO CLUE what we are talking about. Shouldn't these individuals be briefed at least?"

6. Will there be files released during the June 29th briefing that we, or more specifically the SFF, have NOT been given access to previously?

7. Will we be provided with any files, documents, reports, test results, and/or pictures prior to the June 29th briefing?

8. Going forward, what plans are in place to bring the ENTIRE VA POPULATION up to date on EVERYTHING that has happened to K2 Veterans?

9. How many K2 Veterans lost their sexual reproductive health and at what percentage? (Partial hysterectomy, full hysterectomy, erectile dysfunction, prostate cancer, testicular cancer, ovarian cancer, uterine cancer, and any other complications I have not listed)"

RESPONSE:

5) Environmental Health Coordinator and Clinicians have been provided a copy of the letter that was mailed to K2 Veterans, and we continue to work with health care providers across VHA to inform them of unique cohorts and the needs and benefits available to these cohorts.

6) Sharing such files like those noted that contain personal health information are protected by the Privacy Act and HIPAA regulations.

7) These data are protected by Privacy Act and HIPAA.

8) The K2 Community Forum plus other K2-related outreach efforts are designed to keep the entire K2 community informed.

9) These and many other conditions are currently being assessed, and results will be shared publicly when peer-reviewed journal manuscripts are accepted for publication.

QUESTION:

"Served at k2 3 different times between 2001 and 2003. I am currently rated at 100% through the VA. After my deployments to k2 I developed small bumps on my hands and feet. I have seen a dermatologist but they wrote it off as generic skin condition. I am concerned that they showed up only after my k2 deployments. I have also started the process for evaluating tremors that I have developed and that are getting worse. While at k2 when I was 30 I came down with shingles which at that age is very unusual. My question is what do I do to connect these issues I am having to my time at k2 and what tests should I be asking for to help diagnose any issues? I was with AFSOC when deployed to k2 and know about one of our pilots that passed due to cancer that became fatal very quickly."

RESPONSE:

Your Primary Care Provider (PCP) is able to evaluate and diagnose your health conditions. All Veterans should work with their PCPs to ensure they receive usual cancer and health screening such as colorectal cancer. You have seen a dermatologist and he said it was a genetic condition. At this time we know of no chronic dermatology conditions from K2. After a consultation with your PCP, you may choose to request another dermatological evaluation.

QUESTION:

"Have there been any confirmed cases of illness directly related to toxic exposure at K2"

RESPONSE:

To date, there has been no illness or disease that have been conclusively linked with deployment to K2. A DoD study in 2015 that was limited to active-duty Service members suggested that there was an elevated risk for melanoma and cancer of the lymphatic and hemopoietic system (e.g., Hodgkin's Lymphoma). However, there were only a few cases of each type of cancer with less than 10 years of follow-up. The K2 Surveillance Program was designed to address this study's limitations, and it will provide a more robust assessment of illnesses and diseases that may be associated with deployment at K2. Results from the K2 Surveillance Program analyses will be shared with the K2 community as they become available. Findings will be submitted for publication in peer-reviewed scientific journals.

QUESTION:

"Will these forums be recorded? I am still working full time as a civilian and will probably not be available at the time listed for the forum. I would like to be able to hear what was said and respond later if possible. Thanks"

RESPONSE:

The community forum scheduled on June 29th was not recorded. However, slides from each of the presentations will be provided on the VA's K2 website [[Karshi Khanabad \(K-2\) Air Base - Public Health \(va.gov\)](#)]. We will ensure that all the regulatory requirements and reviews are addressed so that all upcoming community forums can be recorded and made available for viewing by those unable to attend in person.

QUESTION:

"I have seen articles on cancer diagnosis, but have there been any studies done on people diagnosed with Auto-immune diseases?"

RESPONSE:

Autoimmune disorders are included in the outcomes being assessed in the K2 Surveillance Program.

QUESTION:

"Hello, I served at K2 in 2002-2003. Years after I started to develop serious sinusitis and headaches. Are we covered under the most recent congressional legislation?"

RESPONSE:

K2 Veterans are included in the recent presumption status for asthma, sinusitis, and rhinitis that were instituted prior to PACT Act. These conditions are also included in the PACT Act.

QUESTION:

"Served at K-2 2003-2004. Retired in 2010. Had colon cancer in 2013. Had surgery and 12 rounds of chemotherapy which left me with multiple medical issues as a result. Absolutely no history of any cancer anywhere in my entire family. Applied twice to VA for disability compensation. Twice turned down. I am told that any GI cancers are now on the listing. Can I apply again and use the PACT act for justification or will the VA stretch this out for decades like the Agent Orange debacle and hope we all pass on before justice is served?"

RESPONSE:

Please apply again. Gastrointestinal cancers are included as a new category of presumptive conditions under the PACT Act. VA encourages all eligible Veterans and survivors to file a claim (or submit their intent to file a claim) for PACT Act-related benefits. Veterans who do so by August 9, 2023, may have their benefits, if granted, backdated to August 10, 2022, the day President Biden signed the bill into law. Please follow these instructions: Apply for VA Disability Benefits

- File a claim online using an eBenefits account at [Home - VA/DoD eBenefits](#). This is the fastest way to proceed.
- Complete and mail the VA Form 21-526EZ (Application for Disability Compensation and Related Compensation Benefits) with a copy of your service treatment records to the following address:

Department of Veterans Affairs
Claims Intake Center
P.O. Box 4444
Janesville, WI 53547-4444.

- Contact the VA Regional Office at 1-800-827-1000 for assistance.
-

QUESTION:

"When will the VA and the DOD stop playing games with our lives and our health? I,Ãve been tested for depleted uranium and nothing seemed abnormal. When will they test out bones, kidneys and liver for these trace elements?" I have a Law Judge hearing in July, can I bring up other conditions that were not filed for this hearing or must I refile for these special conditions particularly high blood pressure, sleep apnea, emphysema and others that are listed on the PACT documents that are considered presumptive? Will we be able to view and listen to the virtual meeting communicating regarding K2? If so please post the link for all Veterans to participate!

Thanks,
James L Bilberry, SGM Ret. US Army"

RESPONSE:

"Additional information is available at [Depleted Uranium - Public Health \(va.gov\)](#) DU levels depend on the dose of the original depleted uranium (DU) exposure, DU accumulates in the bones, and the half-life is about approximately 6 months. Even at 20 years, there would be some remnants of exposure. As of 1 July 2023, VA has completed approximately 135 urine assays for the isotopic signature of DU and all are negative. The VA DU testing program was extended to K2 Veterans at no charge to give Veterans the

peace of mind that DU does not pose a health risk for them. VA has done over 7,000 urine assays for the isotopic signature of DU and the only positive DU Veterans are those with retained shrapnel from incidents in the first Gulf War. VA has followed these 85 Veterans for almost 30 years; all the published research notes they are doing well.

The community forum held on June 29th was not recorded. However, slides from each of the presentations will be provided on the VA's K2 website [[Karshi Khanabad \(K-2\) Air Base - Public Health \(va.gov\)](#)]. We will ensure that all the regulatory requirements and reviews are addressed so that all upcoming community forums can be recorded and made available for viewing by those unable to attend in person. Refiling will be the most expedient method to have the new conditions evaluated. The Law Judge hearing the case will only be focused on the condition at hand. Please follow these instructions:
Apply for VA Disability Benefits

- File a claim online using an eBenefits account at [Home - VA/DoD eBenefits](#). This is the fastest way to proceed.
- Complete and mail the VA Form 21-526EZ (Application for Disability Compensation and Related Compensation Benefits) with a copy of your service treatment records to the following address:

Department of Veterans Affairs
Claims Intake Center
P.O. Box 4444
Janesville, WI 53547-4444.

- Contact the VA Regional Office at 1-800-827-1000 for assistance.
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QUESTION:

"My question is what presumptives do we expect to come out of this? I suffer from Parkinson's that I will truly believe, manifested from exposures at K2. The Simpsons just didn't get bad or show for years after. The effects of these types of things are having on us later in life is truly difficult to live with"

RESPONSE:

In accordance with PACT Act's new standards of determining presumptions, VA must consider a variety of clinical information and other data from various sources, to include VBA claims data. Any conditions that appear to have a higher risk associated with service at K2 will be further investigated by VHA and VBA using the new and more rigorous presumption decision making process. Thank you for your service. If you are not already enrolled for VA health care, we encourage you to do so. VA also encourages Veterans who believe their military service has negatively impacted their health to submit a claim to VBA.

QUESTION:

"Due to the numerous concerns about many 'one off' type cancers showing up in our compatriots, will the VA be increasing the scans/tests/etc for detectable cancers and conditions for all military service folks who registered for the toxic exposure risks and the burn pit registry? Or will it continue to fall to the service member to have to make such requests at the woefully inadequate primary care appointments (if we can even get scheduled for one)"

RESPONSE:

VA is evaluating cancers as part of the K2 Surveillance Program. Should these assessments indicate that K2 Veterans have a higher risk of a certain type of cancer, these findings would inform policy decisions that may include modified practice guidelines for screening in K2 Veterans and Service members. At present, VA recommends age-appropriate screening according to current clinical guidelines. There are currently no diagnostic tests that can confirm exposures related to K2, other than depleted uranium testing, or link them to specific diseases. All Veterans should work with their Primary Care Providers to ensure they receive usual cancer and health screenings such as colorectal cancer.

QUESTION:

"1.Can evaluations at the war related Illness and Injury Study Center be made available for all K2 vets with chronic, undiagnosed illnesses?
2.How would these chemicals affect our kids genetics and could these chemicals play a part in mental health/personality disorders? What kind of testing would determine this could be a root cause to these issues? Could any of these chemicals play a part in testosterone, hormone and testicular issues in Men?
3.Is there a timeline for neurological issues to be added to the list and covered?"

RESPONSE:

(1) All K2 Veterans are eligible for evaluation at one of the War Related Injury and Illness Study Centers (WRIISCs). A referral from a VA clinician is required in order to schedule an appointment.
(2) At present, there is no evidence to suggest that deployment to K2 is associated with adverse health effects in the children of K2 Veterans.
(3) Specific conditions do not fall in any timelines per se. If any condition appears to have a higher risk in K2 veterans, it will be appropriately investigated, and formal recommendations will be made to the Secretary for his consideration consistent with the PACT Act's guidance on the presumption decision making process.

QUESTION:

"I did the NBC duties at K2 in 2003. 20 years later I have had two TIAs, an ischemic stroke which led to the discovery of widespread atrophy which is now vascular dementia at age 59. How many others are dealing with neurocognitive disorders that are labeled PTSD? I know what showed up in the testing at K2. My two boys have multiple issues. One has ADHD and dyspraxia the other AdHD, autism and dyslexia. Will there be a study into issues our children have due to exposure?"

RESPONSE:

VA is evaluating neurologic conditions as part of the K2 Surveillance Program. Morbidity analysis results will be shared once accepted for publication and copies of the manuscript posted on the K2 website. (2) At present, there is no evidence to suggest that deployment to K2 is associated with adverse health effects in the children of K2 Veterans.

QUESTION:

"I would like to know if there are any links between service at K2 and insomnia."

RESPONSE:

At this time there are no known links. Insomnia can be multi-factorial and should be addressed with your Primary Care Provider.

QUESTION:

"Served at K2 2002-2003. I currently have severe osteoporosis, reproductive problems, and a rare autoimmune called uticular vasculitis among other things. Where can I get help to get rated for these things?"

RESPONSE:

If you have not already filed a claim for compensation with VBA - the Veterans Benefits Administration, please consider doing so as soon as possible. There are many ways to do this: Visit [How To File A VA Disability Claim | Veterans Affairs](#) or call 1-800-MyVA411 (TTY: 711). Applications can be submitted online, in person at any VBA Regional Office, or by mail. There's no cost for the forms and no fees to apply for VA benefits. If you choose to use a Veterans Service Organization, known as a VSO, such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars or the American Legion, contact one of those offices nearest you and they

will be happy to help. A list of accredited VSOs is here: [OGC - Accreditation Search \(va.gov\)](#). Some lawyers help Veterans file claims but that is usually at some expense to the Veteran.
