



## **VA Commits New Funding for Increased Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses Research**

To better understand and answer questions about the health problems and concerns of Gulf War veterans, VA recently announced funding for 12 new research initiatives.

The total cost of these dozen scientific investigations is estimated to be \$5.2 million over 3 years, including about \$1.7 million for Fiscal Year 2006, which began in October 2005. Each of the projects survived a rigorous scientific peer review before approval. The new programs bring projected Gulf War veterans research spending to \$11.3 million for the current year. The research focuses on understanding and treating the illnesses affecting these veterans, as well as understanding the potential long-term health effects of Gulf War-related exposures.

“VA will continue to address the unique health care needs of our Gulf War veterans,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs R. James Nicholson. “This research should lead to better health care for veterans suffering from a variety of conditions.”

Funding for these projects is expected to begin in January 2006. All research will be conducted at VA medical centers around the country. The new Gulf War veterans' illnesses research programs will be organized and administered through VA medical centers in Bedford, MA; Baltimore, MD; Washington, DC; Durham, NC; Miami, FL; Minneapolis, MN; Omaha, NE; Salt Lake City, UT; and San Francisco, CA.

## **New Legislation Allocates \$75 Million for Research on Veterans of the 1991 Gulf War**

Legislation approved by Congress in mid-November 2005 would establish a Gulf War illnesses research center at the University of Texas-Southwestern Medical Center and allocate \$75 million toward research.

The legislation requires VA to spend at least \$15 million a year for five years for Gulf War veterans' illnesses. It

consolidates ongoing research at facilities in New Jersey and Washington, DC, with a study at the Texas school.

VA administrators are uncertain as to how this legislation would be implemented.

## **VA Study: Gulf War Veterans Possibly Exposed to Nerve Agent May Be At Increased Risk for Brain Cancer**

A recent study by VA scientists reported an increased risk for brain cancer among U.S. Army veterans of the 1991 Gulf War who were identified as possibly exposed to low levels of chemical warfare agents.

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Apparently, low levels of the nerve gas agent sarin were released into the environment in March 1991 during routine weapons demolition in Khamisiyah, Iraq. Department of Defense (DoD) exposure models estimate that more than 100,000 veterans may have been exposed to sarin. DoD indicated that the sarin exposures were so small that they would have caused no immediate health effects. This is consistent with DoD's observation that throughout this period there were no reports of chemical warfare agent detections, or of any service members experiencing symptoms of immediate and clear chemical warfare agent poisoning exposure.

The recent study compares causes of death among 100,487 sarin-exposed veterans, according to the DoD model, to 224,980 non-exposed Army Gulf War veterans. Although researchers found no differences in overall death rates and death rates from cancer, the sarin-exposed veterans were about twice as likely to have died from brain cancer as the non-exposed veterans. Specifically, the researchers reported about 12 excess brain cancer deaths among the 100,487 exposed veterans over a 9-year period (this is a very rare type of cancer). The risk of brain cancer death was larger among those exposed 2 or more days than those exposed 1 day when both were compared separately to all unexposed veterans.

The new study, as with earlier studies, also found that the overall death rate, and death rates for all types of cancer, were only about half compared to similar U.S. civilians. However, there are several significant limitations with this new study.

### **Study Limitations**

First, both the U.S. Congressional Government Accountability Office (GAO) and the IOM have soundly criticized DoD Khamisiyah exposure modeling as unreliable. "Because of the uncertainty in the [Khamisiyah] exposure assessment models...studies [based on that model] do not provide strong evidence for or against the presence of neurologic effects," the IOM concluded.

Second, the researchers mention that sarin is not a known carcinogen so it may be that the demolitions at Khamisiyah released other hazardous agents that could have caused the apparent increased risk of brain cancer death.

Lastly, the multiple statistical comparisons used in this study could accidentally lead to false conclusions.

The study was authored by Tim A. Bullman, Clare M. Mahan, and Han K. Kang, all of VA, and William F. Page of the Institute of Medicine's Medical Follow-up Agency. It was published in the *American Journal of Public Health* in August 2005 (*Am J Public Health*. 2005, 95: 1382-1388. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2004.045799).

*Tiffany Anzalone, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities 2005 Summer Intern in VA's Environmental Agents Service, drafted this article. Ms. Anzalone is a graduate of Boston College. She is completing her graduate work at Louisiana State University.*

### **DoD Sending Letters to 100,000 Veterans to Inform Them of Study Results**

In late September 2005, the DoD began sending letters to the more than 100,000 veterans of the 1991 Gulf War who were thought to have been exposed to very low levels of sarin at Khamisiyah, Iraq in March 1991.

The letters explain the results of the recent study regarding brain cancer deaths (see above article), suggest that veterans with health concerns, problems, or questions can seek help from VA and provides VA's Gulf War Helpline (1-800-749-8387) as a reference.

Although VA has no special authority to provide treatment for veterans responding to DoD's letter, veterans of the 1991 Gulf War are eligible and are offered a Gulf War Registry health examination without charge, available at any VA medical center.

VA has posted on the Internet at [www.VA.gov/EnvironAgents](http://www.VA.gov/EnvironAgents) an Under Secretary for Health Information Letter that provides information about the study, along with a copy of DoD's letter and fact sheet regarding Khamisiyah.

### **Khamisiyah -- The Facts**

After the 1991 Gulf War cease-fire, U.S. service members destroyed a large munitions depot in southern Iraq at a place called Khamisiyah. In 1996, the Department of Defense learned that some of the rockets destroyed at the depot had contained the chemical warfare agents sarin and cyclosarin. The Department estimated the possible hazard areas resulting from the spread of the nerve agents released by the demolition and identified military units located in those areas in Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia from March 10 to 13, 1991.

Exposure levels to sarin and cyclosarin were very low and medical personnel in the area saw no evidence of health problems related to nerve agent exposure at the time. Current medical evidence as reviewed for VA in 2000 and 2004 by the prestigious and independent National Academy of Sciences indicates that such low levels of exposure are not likely to produce long-term health problems. The results of this initial analysis were first published in 1997 with additional results published in 2000.

In both 1997 and in 2000, the Department sent letters to individual veterans notifying them that their units had been located in areas where trace exposure could have occurred. The letters summarized the results of DoD investigations, and described sources of additional information and medical evaluations.

### Recent Research

In the August 2005 issue of the *American Journal of Public Health*, the Institute of Medicine reported on the causes of death among Army veterans who served in the 1991 Gulf War. The study compared the causes of death for veterans in two different groups. One group was made up of 100,487 veterans from units that were located in the possible exposure area related to Khamisiyah from March 10 to March 13, 1991. The comparison group was made up of 224,980 veterans from units that were located outside the possible exposure area.

**Total death rates were the same for the two groups during 1991-2000.** Soldiers from units in the possible exposure area had the same overall death rate as soldiers from units located outside the exposure area. For both groups of soldiers, the overall death rate during the period 1991-2000 was 60 percent lower (less than half) than the overall death rate among Americans of the same age, gender, and race.

**The two groups had equal rates of death from disease,** such as heart, lung or kidney disease. The two groups also had equal death rates from external causes, such as accidents and suicides.

**The overall rates of death from cancer were the same in both groups.** However, the rate of death from one specific type of cancer – brain cancer – was two times higher among the 100,487 veterans (25 deaths) whose units had been located in the possible exposure area than in the 224,980 veterans (27 deaths) who had been outside the exposure area. In other words, instead of observing only 12 brain cancer deaths, there were 25 brain cancer deaths reported among the 100,487 veterans.

The IOM report notes that neither sarin nor cyclosarin are known to cause cancer. The Department of Veterans Affairs continues to conduct mortality studies of 1991 Gulf War veterans. The results of these studies will clarify the long-term health outcomes of these veterans, including those linked to the demolitions at Khamisiyah.

*The above fact sheet and the following Questions-and-Answers information were adapted from material provided by the Department of Defense.*

## Questions and Answers About Brain Cancers and Khamisiyah

**Q:** Should I ask my doctor for a test to see if I have brain cancer?

**A.** According to the American Cancer Society, there is no blood test or other screening examination currently available to detect brain tumors or cancer in the brain. For this reason, veterans who are healthy do not need to ask for any special testing. However, we encourage you to discuss any medical concerns you may have with your physician.

**Q:** Did sarin or cyclosarin cause the brain cancer in those veterans who were exposed?

**A.** In previous scientific research studies, sarin and cyclosarin have not been shown to cause cancer in humans or in animals. The causes of most cases of brain cancer are unknown. The reasons remain unknown for the higher rate of brain cancer among the possibly exposed soldiers.

**Q:** What are my chances of getting brain cancer?

**A.** For both groups of veterans and for Americans in general, the risk is about one case in 25,000 persons per year. The chance of developing brain cancer increases slightly as people get older, so the rate for people in their 50's is about one case in 10,000 persons per year.

**Q:** What are the long-term effects of a brief, very low-level exposure to nerve agents?

**A.** Current medical evidence shows that long-term health effects are unlikely. This is especially true if the level was so low that it did not cause any symptoms at the time of exposure.

**Q:** I feel healthy now. What should I do?

**A.** If you feel healthy, there is no need for you to seek medical attention now. If you have health concerns or

symptoms, you are encouraged to request a medical examination. Both the DoD and VA offer medical evaluation programs for Gulf War veterans. To schedule an appointment, call **1-800-796-9699** for the DoD program or **1-800-749-8387** for the VA program.

**Q.** Why did I get this letter?

**A.** Our investigations and records show that, if you were with your unit from March 10 to March 13, 1991, you might have been exposed to a very low level of chemical warfare agents sarin or cyclosarin released during demolitions at Khamisiyah.

**Q:** How can I get more information about the events at Khamisiyah, my possible exposure, and the results of the research?

**A.** If you want more information about the demolition at Khamisiyah, you can find an abstract of this most recent report at [http://www.gulfink.osd.mil/khamisiyah\\_iii/](http://www.gulfink.osd.mil/khamisiyah_iii/). If you don't have access to the Internet, or you would like more information, please call **1-800-497-6261** or write to us at:

Deployment Health Support Directorate  
5113 Leesburg Pike, Suite 901  
Falls Church, VA 22041-3226

**Q:** How can I get a copy of the new report?

**A.** The article can be located via local librarian (Ask for the *American Journal of Public Health*, August 2005, pages 1382-1388, or on the internet at [www.ajph.org/cgi/content/full/95/8/1382](http://www.ajph.org/cgi/content/full/95/8/1382)). In addition, very limited quantities of the reprint are available from Tim Bullman, Department of Veterans Affairs (135), Environmental Epidemiology Service, 810 Vermont Ave, N.W., Washington, DC 20420 (*e-mail: tim.bullman@hq.med.va.gov*).

## **British and Canadian Gulf War Veterans Health Studies Encouraging**

Recently released scientific studies by researchers in Great Britain and Canada report findings that may be good news for Americans deployed in the 1991 Gulf War.

British researchers conducted a study with follow up from April 1, 1991 to June 30, 2004. Participants were 53,462 Gulf War veterans and a group of military personnel matched for similar characteristics (age, rank, service, and level of fitness). Researchers reported finding no differences, 13 years after the end of Gulf War, in the overall mortality (death) rates of British Gulf War veterans.

Higher rates of non-disease related deaths in Gulf War veterans was not evident in the period of follow up since 1997.

Neither the excess morbidity (illness) nor experiences during deployment significantly influenced death rates of British Gulf war veterans.

The British study was published in October in the *International Journal of Epidemiology*. The abstract for this publication is available online at <http://ije.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/dyi205v1?ct>.

A newly published Canadian study of Gulf War veterans also appears to be good news for U.S. veterans of this war. The Canadian Persian Gulf War Cohort Study, released in early November, began in 2001 by the Department of National Defense to find out if Canadian veterans of the war had a higher risk of death or cancer when compared to non-deployed veterans of the same era, or to members of the general population.

Researchers found no significant difference between either group or the general population in terms of the rate of suicide, developing heart disease, or cancer between 1991 and 1999.

Specific inquiries about this study and related matters should be directed to: Client Services, Health Statistics Division, Statistic Canada, Ottawa, Ontario K14 0T6.

## **Latest IOM Report Available in Hardback**

Hardback copies of Volume 3 of a series of reports entitled *Gulf War and Health* were recently made available for purchase from the National Academies Press in Washington, DC. This extensive document, prepared by the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies under contract with VA, focuses on the possible long-term health consequences of exposure to fuel, combustion products, and propellants. The address is the National Academies Press, 500 Fifth Street, N.W., Lockbox 285, Washington, DC 20055. The telephone numbers are **800-6324-6242** and **202-334-3313**. The Internet address is [www.nap.edu](http://www.nap.edu). For purchase information, contact the National Academies Press directly.

The text can also be downloaded free from this site. The document is nearly 500 pages. The earlier reports in this series are also available. Volume 1 covered depleted uranium, pyridostigmine bromide, sarin, and vaccines. Volume 2 discussed the implications of exposures to insecticides and solvents. IOM also issued an updated literature review of sarin.

## About the “Review” – Now an Internet Only Publication/Email Notification of Availability

The “Gulf War Review” is produced by VA’s Environmental Agents Service (EAS) to provide information on long-term health and other concerns of Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm their families, and others. The “Review” describes actions by VA and other Federal departments and agencies to respond to these concerns and gives updates on a wide range of VA programs for veterans. For other issues of this newsletter, and related information regarding the current conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan, please see our Web site at [www.VA.gov/GulfWar](http://www.VA.gov/GulfWar).

EAS anticipates publication once or twice a year, depending on the amount of news on this subject. This issue was completed in mid-November 2005, and does not include developments that occurred after then. It is available at the web page cited at the end of the first paragraph.

Comments, questions, and suggestions for future issues are encouraged and can be sent to the Gulf War Review, Environmental Agents Service (131), VA Central Office, 810 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20420.

Requests for copies of this and/or future issues should also be sent to Mr. Donald J. Rosenblum at the address above. Supplies are limited. Please specify the issue date requested.

### Email Notification of Availability

You can sign up to receive electronic notification of future issues of the Gulf War Review online by logging on to our web page, [www.VA.gov/EnvironAgents](http://www.VA.gov/EnvironAgents), and following the easy instructions.

## How to Get VA Disability Compensation

Like all veterans, Gulf War veterans may be eligible for monthly payments, called disability compensation, from VA if they are suffering from service-connected illnesses or injuries. The disability must have happened or made worse during active military service. Furthermore, the veteran must left military service through separation or discharge under conditions that were other than dishonorable.

Disability compensation varies according to the degree of disability and the number of dependents. Benefits are not subject to Federal or state income tax.

The receipt of military retirement pay, disability severance pay, and separation incentive payments known as SSB and VSI (Special Separation Benefits and Voluntary Separation Incentives) also affects the amount of VA compensation paid.

The disability ratings range from 0 to 100 percent (in increments of 10 percent). For example, in 2005, an OIF or OEF veteran with a disability rating of 10 percent receives \$108; a veteran with disability rating of 50 percent gets \$663; and a veteran who is totally disabled and evaluated at 100 percent receives \$2,299 monthly. The amounts paid are set by Congress each year.

Veterans with disability ratings between 30 and 100 percent are also eligible for monthly allowances for a spouse ranging from \$39 to \$130, and for each child, \$19 to \$66. (The amount depends on the disability rating.)

A veteran who is in need of regular aid and attendance of another person, or who is permanently housebound may be entitled to additional benefits. VA must make that determination before the veteran can get these benefits. Additional information including online applications can be seen at [www.VA.gov](http://www.VA.gov).

### Must Apply to Be Considered

Compensation is not automatically provided to Gulf War or other veterans—you must apply to VA, and VA will adjudicate (approved or disapprove) your claim. VA veterans service representatives (VSR) can provide the necessary application and assist veterans who need help in completing it. VSR’s are located at all VA Regional Offices, in VA medical centers, and at many VA clinics. For help in locating a VSR near you, call the following toll-free telephone number: **1-800-827-1000** or go online at [www.VA.gov](http://www.VA.gov).

### Other Benefits

In addition to the compensation program described above, individual Gulf War veterans may be eligible for the full range of other benefits offered by VA, including education and training, vocational rehabilitation, home loan guarantees, life insurance, pension, burial benefits, and more.

To learn more about VA’s programs, OIF veterans and other interested parties can visit the VA home page [www.VA.gov](http://www.VA.gov) or call **1-800-827-1000**.

*This information was provided by benefit experts in the Veterans Benefits Administration in VA Central Office.*

## Current Disability Compensation Rates

No Dependents		Veteran With Spouse Only	
10%	\$108	--	--
20%	\$210	--	--
30%	\$324	30%	\$364
40%	\$466	40%	\$518
50%	\$663	50%	\$728
60%	\$839	60%	\$917
70%	\$1,056	70%	\$1,147
80%	\$1,227	80%	\$1,311
90%	\$1,380	90%	\$1,497
100%	\$2,299	100%	\$2,429

For additional rate information, see compensation rate tables online at [www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/Rates/comp01.htm](http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/Rates/comp01.htm).

## Conditions Presumptively Recognized for Service-Connection

Three health conditions suffered by some Gulf War veterans are presumptively (nearly automatic; veterans still need to apply to get benefits) recognized by VA for service-connection.

In 1994, Congress enacted Public Law 103-446, allowing VA to pay compensation to Gulf War veterans with certain chronic disabilities resulting from illnesses that VA could not diagnose that appeared during active duty in the Gulf War or within a presumptive period after Gulf War service, which led to a degree of disability of ten percent or more.

In 2001, Public Law 107-103, expanded the definition of “qualifying chronic disability.” That legislation classified **fibromyalgia**, **chronic fatigue syndrome**, and **irritable bowel syndrome** as disabilities for which compensation can be paid on a presumptive basis.

VA encourages veterans with any of these conditions—including those previously denied service connection before enactment of this legislation—to apply for disability compensation.

## Gulf War Registry Statistics (Including Operation Iraqi Freedom\*) As of October 3, 2005

Initial Examinations – **93,214**

Initial Examinations in 2003 – **2,117**

Initial Examinations in 2004 -- **3,062**

Initial Examinations in 2005 – **1,662**

Initial Examinations 2003-2005 – **6,841**

Initial Examinations 1993-1995 – **55,011**

Total Examinations, including follow-ups – **98,813**

Initial Examinations for Female veterans – **9,546**

Total Examinations for Female veterans – **10,112**

For Comparison Purposes:

Total Agent Orange Registry Examinations – **433,544**

Total Ionizing Radiation Registry Examinations – **23,289**

*\*Operation Enduring Freedom veterans are not eligible for the Gulf War Registry health examination.*

## Q's and A's

The “Review” occasionally includes a questions-and-answers feature in which VA officials respond to inquiries from readers regarding the Gulf War experiences, problems encountered by Gulf War veterans and their families, and VA and other programs designed to help these veterans.

Questions can be sent to Mr. Donald J. Rosenblum (131), Attn: GWR – Q's&A's, 810 Vermont Ave., N.W., Washington 20420. Our questions today concern eligibility for a Registry examination.

**Q.** Is a veteran who served in the Gulf War who has an “other than honorable” discharge from military service eligible for a Gulf War Registry medical examination?

**A.** This is decided on a case-by-case basis. The VA Regional Office should be contacted to determine whether his or her discharge is of a nature that not allow benefits. If the discharge is not a bar to benefits, the veteran would be eligible on the same basis as any other eligible veteran.

**Q.** Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) veterans are not eligible for Gulf War Registry veterans. What about an OEF veteran who land in Kuwait coming or going to his service in Afghanistan. Would he be eligible for the examination?

**A.** Yes. If he was in the Theater of Operations (which includes Kuwait) even briefly, he would be eligible.

## New Members for Research Advisory Panel on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses

VA Secretary R. James Nicholson recently appointed six members to the Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

"The unique health care needs of our Gulf War veterans have not been forgotten," Nicholson said. "VA has an ongoing commitment to ensure they benefit from the best research this country can offer."

As directed by Congress, VA established this public advisory committee to provide advice and make recommendations to the VA Secretary on research into the causes and treatments of illnesses and potential health problems of veterans who served in Southwest Asia during the Gulf War.

Committee members are appointed for a two- or three-year term, renewable by the Secretary.

The new committee members are Dr. Carolee Barlow from San Diego, CA; Dr. Floyd E. Bloom from La Jolla, CA; Dr. Daniel J. Clauw from Ann Arbor, MI; Dr. Mary D. Nettleman from East Lansing, MI; James P. O'Callaghan, Ph.D., from Morgantown, WV; and Dr. Hugh H. Tilson from Chapel Hill, NC.

A complete list of committee members follows.

### Membership

- James H. Binns, Jr., chairman. Former Chairman of Parallel Design, Inc., Phoenix, Ariz. and former Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense.

- Lea Steele, Ph.D., committee scientific director. Research associate professor in the College of Human Ecology at Kansas State University in Manhattan, KS. Previously, principal investigator of the Kansas Gulf Veterans Health Study.

- Dr. Carolee Barlow. Vice President of Biology Research and Development for Brain Cells, Inc., San Diego, CA, and previously director of molecular neuroscience for Merck Research Laboratories.

- Dr. Floyd E. Bloom. Professor Emeritus at The Scripps Research Institute, La Jolla, CA, where he formerly served as chairman of the Department of Neuropharmacology. Former chief of the laboratory of

neuropharmacology at the National Institute of Mental Health and Editor-in-Chief of Science.

- Dr. Daniel J. Clauw. Assistant dean for clinical and translational research and professor of internal medicine at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI. He also is director of the Chronic Pain and Fatigue Research Center and the Center for the Advancement of Clinical Research.

- Dr. Beatrice A. Golomb. Associate professor of medicine at the University of California, San Diego, CA.

- Joel C. Graves. Retired Army captain and a Gulf War veteran from Lacey, WA.

- Dr. Robert W. Haley. Professor of internal medicine and chief of epidemiology at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, Dallas, TX.

- Marguerite L. Knox. Senior sales representative for the neuroscience division of Eli Lilly & Company, Columbia, SC, and a 1990-91 Gulf War veteran. Currently a lieutenant colonel in the South Carolina Army National Guard.

- Dr. William J. Meggs. Chief of toxicology at The Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University, Greenville, NC.

- Dr. Mary D. Nettleman. Chairperson of the Department of Medicine at Michigan State University College of Human Medicine, East Lansing, MI. Former associate dean for primary care of the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine.

- James P. O'Callaghan, Ph.D. Distinguished consultant for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and head of the molecular neurotoxicology laboratory for the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health in Morgantown, WV.

- Stephen L. Robinson. Executive director of the National Gulf War Resource Center in Silver Spring, MD, and a 1990-91 Gulf War veteran.

- Steve Smithson. Deputy director for veterans affairs and rehabilitation for the American Legion in Washington, DC, and a 1990-91 Gulf War veteran.

- Dr. Hugh H. Tilson. Clinical professor in the department of epidemiology and health policy, and senior advisor to the dean of the School of Public Health at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC.

## Where to Get Help

Active duty military personnel with questions or concerns about service in Southwest Asia (including Operations Desert Storm, Desert Shield, Iraqi Freedom, and Enduring Freedom) - contact your commanding officer or call the Department of Defense (DoD) Gulf War Veterans' Hotline (**1-800-796-9699**) for information. DoD also offers the "Direct Veterans Hotline," with the toll-free number **1-800-497-6261**.

ODS, OIF and OEF veterans with concerns about their health should contact their nearest VA medical center. The telephone number can be found in your local telephone directory under Department of Veterans Affairs in the "U.S. Government" listings. Medical care is available, and a Gulf War Registry examination for ODS and OIF veterans is also available on request.

The VA Gulf War Information Helpline can also provide information and assistance. The toll-free telephone number is **1-800-PGW-VETS (1-800-749-8387)**.

Check our Web sites for more Gulf War information on health care and other benefits at [www.va.gov/GulfWar](http://www.va.gov/GulfWar), and [www.VA.gov/EnvironAgents](http://www.VA.gov/EnvironAgents).

Gulf War veterans in need of marital/family counseling should contact the nearest VA medical center or VA Vet Center, also listed in your phonebook under Department of Veterans Affairs in the "U.S. Government" listings. For additional information about these programs call the Gulf War Information Helpline at **1-800-PGWVETS (1-800-749-8387)**.

Gulf War veterans seeking disability compensation for illnesses incurred in or aggravated by military service can contact a Veterans Benefits Counselor at the nearest VA regional office or health care facility at **1-800-827-1000**, or call the VA Gulf War Information Helpline at **1-800-PGW-VETS (1-800-749-8387)**. You can also start a claim online at [www.VA.gov](http://www.VA.gov).

Gulf War veterans interested in learning about the wide range of benefit programs administered by VA should contact a Veterans Benefits Counselor at the nearest VA regional office or health care facility at **1-800-827-1000**, or call the VA Gulf War Information Helpline at **1-800-PGW-VETS (1-800-749-8387)**.

Representatives of veterans service organizations, including the American Legion (**1-800-433-3318**), Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (**1-800-VFW-1899**), Disabled American Veterans (**1-877-426-2838**), etc., have been very helpful to Gulf War veterans, especially veterans who are seeking disability compensation. (These organizations are cited as examples. There are many other excellent organizations. VA does not endorse or recommend any one group over another.)

County Veterans Service Officers also have been of great help to many military veterans, including those who served in the Gulf War, who are seeking benefits they earned through their service to the Nation.

For additional Federal benefit information, see VA's Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents booklet. It is updated annually to reflect changes in law and policies. It is available for purchase from the U.S. Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents, Washington, DC 20402, Web site: [www.bookstore.gpo.gov](http://www.bookstore.gpo.gov). VA's World Wide Web pages are updated throughout the year to present the most current information. The VA home page ([www.VA.gov](http://www.VA.gov)) contains links to selections on compensation and pension benefits, health care benefits and services, burial and memorial benefits, etc.