



# Gulf War Review

Vol. 6, NO. 1

*Information for Veterans Who Served in Desert Shield/Storm*

March 1998

## Special Report of the Presidential Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans Illnesses

On November 8, 1997, President Clinton formally received the terminal report, called the Special Report, of the Presidential Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans Illnesses, that he established in May 1995.



President William Clinton

The following is the Summary of the Special Report in its entirety.

In our December 1996 Final Report, the Presidential Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses reported the government largely had acted in good faith in handling Gulf War veterans' health concerns in comparison to the post-Vietnam War era. We took strong exception, however, to the Department of Defense's inquiries related to chemical and biological warfare agent investigations. We found DoD's actions had produced an atmosphere of mistrust surrounding every aspect of Gulf War veterans' illnesses.

President Clinton extended the Committee's tenure in January 1997, with a new charge to review the government's implementation of our previous recommendations and to continue our assessment of the government's investigations into possible chemical and biological warfare agent exposures. This Special Report assesses these issues. Based on our oversight activities, it also reports our analysis of the broader issue of the public perception of the government's commitment to address Gulf War veterans' health concerns.

Ten months after the Committee concluded the government had a significant amount of ground to recover with the American public, we note the government's credibility on Gulf War veterans' illnesses continues to be challenged. The government's efforts have yielded and will continue to yield improved services and new knowledge. For example, we hope recently funded research on health effects of subclinical exposures to nerve agents and of interactions of multiple risk factors

can address uncertainties surrounding Gulf War veterans' illnesses. Progress, however, is gradual. Regrettably, it now appears incremental advances will not address the pervasive perception of government neglect in handling Gulf War veterans' illnesses.

To address this perception, the Committee recommends that the Executive Branch work with Congress to establish a permanent program for Gulf War veterans' illnesses. We envision legislation that directs the Department of Veterans Affairs to contract with an appropriate organization for a periodic review--for benefits and future research purposes--of the available scientific evidence regarding associations between illnesses and service in the Gulf War. The Committee hopes a partnership among all concerned parties can establish this program. The legacy of the Gulf War should be a recognition by all Americans that the government acknowledges and honors its obligation to care for Gulf War veterans, not the perception the government cannot be trusted to candidly address their health concerns.

## Statement by President Clinton on the Special Report of the Presidential Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans Illnesses--November 8, 1997

Our Administration has made it a priority to care for and compensate Gulf War veterans who have fallen ill. The First Lady and I were both troubled by the pain and frustration these veterans felt. We have been determined to find out why they are sick, to make public the facts as we learned them and to apply the lessons of the Gulf War for the future. In May 1995, I asked some of America's best doctors and scientists, as well as Gulf War veterans to undertake an independent and open review of the government's response to our veterans' health care concerns. Now, the Presidential Advisory Committee I established has delivered its Special Report. I thank its Chairman, Dr. Joyce Lashof, and the other members for their outstanding work and for extending their efforts ten months beyond their original mandate. Based on their recommendations, I am taking the following actions:

First, to better care for and compensate our veterans: We will work to establish a new benefits system that will



ensure that Gulf War veterans receive treatment and compensation for all illnesses linked to service in the Gulf even if we cannot identify the direct cause. We will ask the National Academy of Sciences to review the ongoing scientific research regarding the connections between all reported illnesses and Gulf War service so we have the fullest understanding of the health consequences of that service. In addition, we will work with the Congress on legislation to guarantee that the this system of benefits is maintained in all Administrations to come.

Second, to deepen our understanding of why Gulf War veterans might have gotten sick: We will dedicate \$13.2 million for new research on low-level exposure to chemical agents and other possible causes of illness.

Third, to make sure our veterans and the public know all the facts, and have full confidence in DoD's fact finders: Former Senator Warren Rudman has agreed to lead an oversight board to ensure that the Defense Department's ongoing investigations into events in the Gulf meet the highest standards.

Fourth, to apply the lessons we have learned for the future: I am directing the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs to create a new Force Health Protection Program. Every soldier, sailor, airman and marine will have a comprehensive, life-long medical record of all illnesses and injuries they suffer, the care and inoculations they receive and their exposure to different hazards. These records will help us prevent illness and identify and cure those that occur.

From the beginning, I vowed that we would not rest until we uncovered all the facts about Gulf War illnesses and used that knowledge to improve the health of our veterans, their families and all who serve our nation, now and in the future. As Veterans Day approaches, we are continuing our work to fulfill that pledge. The men and women of our Armed Forces put everything on the line for us. I am determined that we show the same resolve for them.

## **White House Issues Fact Sheet on Gulf War Illnesses**

On November 8, 1997, the White House Office of the Press Secretary issued a fact sheet on Gulf War illnesses to accompany the President's statement on the special report of the Presidential Advisory of Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses. The fact sheet text is printed below in its entirety.

Today, President Clinton announced a comprehensive program addressing the broad range of issues surrounding Gulf War Illnesses. The President's program focuses on improving the health care and compensation of America's veterans while strengthening the outreach and

coordination of the government's investigation into potential causes. In addition, the President has received the Special Report of (the) Presidential Advisory Committee (PAC) on Gulf War Veterans' (Illnesses) and has ordered the relevant federal agencies to review all of the PAC's recommendations and provide an action plan within 45 days. The President's program will do the following:

### **Health Care and Compensation**

To better care for and compensate America's veterans for their duty in service:

- Establish a new benefits system for Gulf War veterans that will ensure appropriate health care and benefits are provided for Gulf War veterans.
- We will ask the National Academy of Sciences to review the ongoing scientific research regarding the connections between all reported illnesses and Gulf War service so we have the fullest understanding of the health consequences of that service.
- In addition, we will work with Congress on legislation to guarantee that this system of benefits is maintained in all Administrations to come.
- Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs will create a new, comprehensive "Force Health Protection" Program to monitor and protect our troops in future conflicts or peacekeeping missions. Every service member will have a comprehensive, life-long medical record to help prevent illness, and identify and cure those that occur.

### **Research**

To deepen our understanding of why Gulf War veterans might have gotten sick and to prevent similar situations from occurring in the future:

- Increase research funding by more than \$13 million on low-level exposure to chemical agents and other possible causes of illness.

### **Investigations**

To make sure our veterans and the public know all the facts and have full confidence in the fact finders:

- Former Senator Warren Rudman will lead a Special Oversight Board to ensure the Defense Department's ongoing investigations into events in the Gulf meet the highest standards.

- Will complete all remaining Chemical/Biological warfare agent investigations by September 1998.
- Continue improving Outreach/Risk Communications by reaching out to the veterans through the internet Web site GulfLINK, publishing newsletters, and visiting veterans groups in their local communities.

## Special Report Available for Purchase

The 69-page Special Report of the Presidential Advisory Committee can be purchased from the U.S. Government Printing Office. The mailing address is P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250-7954. The stock number is 040-000-00694-0. The document title is *Presidential Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses: Special Report*. The purchase price of \$7.00 includes regular shipping and handling and is subject to change. International customers must add 25 percent. The fax number is (202) 512-2250. The telephone number is (202) 512-1800. Checks should be made payable to the Superintendent of Documents. Customers can also charge their purchase on VISA, MasterCard, Discover/NOVUS, or to their GPO Deposit Account.

## Independent Oversight Panel Activated

On February 19, 1998, President Clinton signed Executive Order 13075, formally establishing the Special Oversight Board for Department of Defense (DOD) Investigations of Gulf War Chemical and Biological Incidents. The Board is responsible for providing advice and recommendations based on its review of DoD investigations into possible detections of, and exposures to, chemical or biological weapons agents, and environmental and other factors that may have contributed to Gulf War illnesses.

The seven-member Board is required to submit an interim report within nine months of its first meeting and a final report within eighteen months of its first meeting, unless otherwise directed by the President.

The President appointed Warren B. Rudman, a former two-term Republican Senator from New Hampshire, as Chair of the Board. Former Senator Rudman is also the Chair of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, and is a partner at an international law firm. Before serving in the Senate, he was Attorney General of New Hampshire.

He was a combat platoon leader and company commander in the U.S. Army during the Korean Conflict.

## About the "Review"

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

The most recent, prior to this, issue of the newsletter is dated September 1997. Additional issues will be prepared when warranted by significant developments. EAS anticipates publication of the "Review" three or four times annually. Four issues were published in 1995 (January, April, August, and December), three in 1996 (March, September, and December), and three in 1997 (March, June, and September). This issue was written in late February/early March 1998 and does not include developments that occurred after that time.

Comments or questions concerning the content of the "Review" are encouraged. Suggestions and ideas for future issues of the newsletter should be sent to Donald J. Rosenblum, Deputy Director, Environmental Agents Service (131), VA Central Office, 810 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20420.

Requests for additional copies of this and/or future issues should also be sent to Mr. Rosenblum. A limited supply of issues released in 1995-97 is available. Please specify the quantity and issue date requested. VA facilities should order additional copies from the VA Forms Depot.

Questions about the Registry examination should be directed to the Registry Coordinator or Registry Physician at the nearest VA medical facility. The telephone number can be found in the local telephone directory under the "U.S. Government" listings. Assistance is also available from the toll-free VA Gulf War Helpline: **1-800-749-8387**.

Last year, the name of this publication changed from "Persian Gulf Review" to "Gulf War Review" to be sensitive to individuals of Persian ethnicity. The September 1997 was the first issue to carry the new name. Veterans who participated in Operation Desert Shield/Storm are now referred to as Gulf War veterans rather than Persian Gulf War veterans. The benefits and services that these veterans are eligible for are unaffected by the name change.

## 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) Gulf War Veterans' Hotline **(1-800-796-9699)** for an examination.

Gulf War 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 Gulf War Registry examination will be offered. Treatment will be provided to eligible veterans. The VA Gulf War Information Helpline can also provide the latest information and assistance. The toll-free telephone number is **1-800-PGW-VETS (1-800-749-8387)**.

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

Gulf War 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 at **1-800-827-1000**, or call the VA Gulf War Information Helpline at **1-800-PGW-VETS (1-800-749-8387)**.

Gulf War veterans seeking participation for their spouses and/or children in the VA-funded health examination program for spouses and children - call the VA Gulf War Information Helpline at **1-800-PGW-VETS (1-800-749-8387)**. Veterans interested in the alternative self-funded examination for spouses and children - contact the Gulf War Registry Coordinator at the nearest VA medical center for forms and information.

Gulf War 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 at **1-800-827-1000**, or call the VA Gulf War Information Helpline at **1-800-PGW-VETS (1-800-749-8387)**.

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

For additional information about VA's program initiatives, see VA's Gulf War veterans' illnesses home page at <http://www.va.gov/guif.htm>

*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 Gulf War veterans.

## President Clinton Signs Veteran's Benefits Act of 1997; Modifies Health Care Eligibility, Provides for Treatment Demonstration Projects

On November 21, 1997, President Clinton signed into law the "Veterans' Benefits Act of 1997," which among other things, clarified the special treatment eligibility provisions for Gulf War veterans in Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facilities, and required VA to implement a program of demonstration projects to "test new approaches to treating, and improving the satisfaction with such treatment of" Gulf War veterans who suffer from undiagnosed and ill-defined disabilities.

The legislation, Public Law 105-114, modified the special eligibility criteria established by Public Law 103-210 enacted in December 1993 for the hospital care and nursing home care for Gulf War veterans exposed to a toxic substance or environmental hazard while serving on active duty in the Southwest Asia theater of operations during the Gulf War. The new legislation eliminated the requirement concerning the toxic substance/environmental hazard exposure. The legislation requires VA to carry out a program, not later than July 1, 1998, of demonstration projects to evaluate new approaches to treating, and improving the satisfaction with such treatment of Gulf War veterans with undiagnosed and ill-defined disabilities. The law authorizes the establishment of these projects at up to ten geographically dispersed VA medical centers.

Under the law, at least one of the following models must be used at no less than two of the demonstration projects:

- A specialized clinic which serves Gulf War veterans;
- Multidisciplinary treatment aimed at managing symptoms; and
- Use of case managers.

VA has made \$5 million available from appropriated funds (which have been retained for contingent funding) to implement the projects.

### Peer Review Required

VA may not approve a medical center as a location for a demonstration project under this law unless a peer review panel has determined that a proposal submitted by that center is among those proposals that have met the highest competitive standards of clinical merit and has the ability to –

- Attract the participation of clinicians of outstanding caliber and innovation to the project; and
- Effectively evaluate the activities of the project.

In determining which medical centers to select as locations for the demonstration projects, VA must give special priority to medical centers that have demonstrated a capability to compete successfully for extramural funding support for research into the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of the care provided under the demonstration project.

## VA to Issue Gulf War Fact Sheet Series

The Environmental Agents Service (EAS) in VA headquarters in Washington, DC, has drafted and will soon issue a series of fact sheets, called Gulf War Briefs, that describe a wide range of Gulf War-related matters.

EAS officials anticipate that the twenty-two "Briefs," modeled on the "Agent Orange Brief" fact sheet series, will be finalized later this year. The following "Gulf War Briefs" are being prepared and will be available, without charge, from the EAS and from the Gulf War Coordinators at VA medical centers:

### A. General Information

#### BI. Research Activities

#### B2. Registry Health Examination Program

#### B3. Medical Care Eligibility for Gulf War Veterans

#### B4. Referral Center Program

#### B5. Examinations for the Spouses/Children of Gulf War Veterans

#### B6. Disability Compensation, Including for Undiagnosed Chronic Illnesses

#### B7. Information Resources

### C. Gulf War Veterans in Coalition Countries

#### D. Are Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses Contagious?

#### E1. Chemical/Biological Warfare Agents

#### E2. Stress - Psychological and Physiological

#### E3. Vaccinations

#### E4. Pyridostigmine Bromide

#### E5. Depleted Uranium

#### E6. Infectious Diseases

#### E7. Oil Well Fire Smoke and Petroleum Products

#### E8. Pesticides

#### F1. Adverse Reproductive Health Outcomes and Birth Defects

#### F2. Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

#### F3. Multiple Chemical Sensitivity

#### F4. Gulf War Veterans' Mortality

For additional information or a copy of some or all of these fact sheets, write to Gulf War Briefs, Environmental Agents Service (131), VA Central Office, 810 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20420.

## Has Your Address Recently Changed?

If yes, please use this form to update our mailing list. Send completed form to the Gulf War Review, Environmental Agents Service (131), VA Central Office, 810 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20420. Thank you.

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_

Social Security Number \_\_\_\_\_

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New Address \_\_\_\_\_

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***Information for Veterans  
Who Served in Desert Shield/Storm  
March 1998***



**Department of  
Veterans Affairs**

**Environmental Agents Service (131 )**  
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