

Gulf War Review

INFORMATION FOR VETERANS WHO SERVED IN DESERT SHIELD/STORM AND THEIR FAMILIES

www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/GulfWar

Shinseki Sworn In, Vows 21st Century Service to Veterans

Retired Army General Eric K. Shinseki took the oath of office January 21, 2009, as the Nation’s seventh Secretary of Veterans Affairs, assuming the leadership of the Department of Veterans Affairs following confirmation by the U.S. Senate.

“The overriding challenge I am addressing from my first day in office is to make the Department of Veterans Affairs a 21st Century organization focused on the Nation’s Veterans as its clients,” Shinseki said.

Shinseki plans to develop a 2010 budget that realizes the vision of President Obama, to transform VA into an organization that is people-centric, results-driven and forward-looking.

Key issues on the Secretary’s agenda include smooth activation of an enhanced GI Bill education benefit that eligible Veterans can begin using next fall, streamlining the disability claims system, leveraging informa-



*Secretary of Veterans Affairs
Eric K. Shinseki*

tion technology to accelerate and modernize services, and opening VA’s health care system to Veterans previously unable to enroll in it, while facilitating access for returning Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans.

(continued on page 2)

A Message to Veterans from Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Eric “Ric” Shinseki

Fellow Veterans,

My name is Ric Shinseki, and I am a Veteran. For me, serving as Secretary of Veterans Affairs is a noble calling. It provides me the opportunity to give back to those who served with and for me during my 38 years in uniform and those on whose shoulders we all stood as we grew up in the profession of arms.

The Department of Veterans Affairs has a solemn responsibility to all of you, today and in the future, as more Veterans join our ranks and enroll to secure the benefits and services they have earned.

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Shinseki Sworn In, Vows 21st Century Service to Veterans *(continued from page 1)*

Shinseki, a former Army Chief of Staff, takes the reins of a 284,000-employee organization delivering Federal benefits to millions of Veterans and their families, under a \$98 billion budget authorized this year. VA is the second largest of the 15 Cabinet departments and operates nationwide programs for health care, financial assistance and burial benefits through networks of health care facilities, regional benefits offices and cemeteries from coast to coast.

Born in 1942 on the island of Kauai, Hawaii, the Secretary graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1965. He served two combat tours and was wounded in action in Vietnam. He served with distinction in Europe, the Pacific and stateside, eventually becoming the Army's senior leader from June 1999 to June 2003.

Retired from military service in August 2003, Shinseki's military decorations include three Bronze Stars and two Purple Hearts.

Shinseki succeeds Dr. James B. Peake.

A Message to Veterans from Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Eric "Ric" Shinseki *(continued from page 1)*

I am committed to transforming our department so that it will be well-positioned to perform this duty even better during the 21st Century. We welcome the assistance and advice of our Veterans Service Organizations, other government departments and agencies, Congress, and all VA stakeholders as we move forward, ethically and transparently, so that Veterans and citizens can understand our efforts.

Creating that vision for transforming the VA into a 21st Century organization requires a comprehensive

review of our department. We approach that review understanding that Veterans are central to everything VA does. We know that results count, that the department will be measured by what we do, not what we promise, and that our best days as an organization supporting Veterans are ahead of us. We will fulfill President Lincoln's charge to care for Veterans and their families by redesigning and reengineering ourselves for the future.

Transforming any institution is supremely challenging; I know this from my own experience in leading large, proud, complex, and high-performing organizations through change. But the best organizations must be prepared to meet the challenging times, evolving technology and, most importantly, evolving needs of clients. Historically, organizations that are unwilling or unable to change soon find themselves irrelevant. You and your needs are not irrelevant.

Veterans are our clients, and delivering the highest quality care and services in a timely, consistent and fair manner is a VA responsibility. I take that responsibility seriously and have charged all of the department's employees for their best efforts and support everyday to meet our obligations to you. Our path forward is challenging, but the President and Congress support us. They have asked us to do this well—for you.

Veterans are our sole reason for existence and our number one priority—bar none. I look forward to working together with all VA employees to transform our department into an organization that reflects the change and commitment our country expects and our Veterans deserve.

Thank you and God bless our military, our Veterans, and our Nation.

VA Committee Releases Report on Research Related to Gulf War Veterans' Health

INSTITUTE OF MEDICINE TO REVIEW

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has received a copy of the latest report on the health of Gulf War Veterans from the Research Advisory Committee (RAC) on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses (GWVI). The RAC was created to advise and provide recommendations to VA concerning proposed research studies, plans, and strategies on health issues related to Gulf War service.

The report identified potential causes for—and asserted that research supports the existence of—a multisymptom condition resulting from service in the 1990-1991 Gulf War, which the committee identified as “Gulf War Illness.”

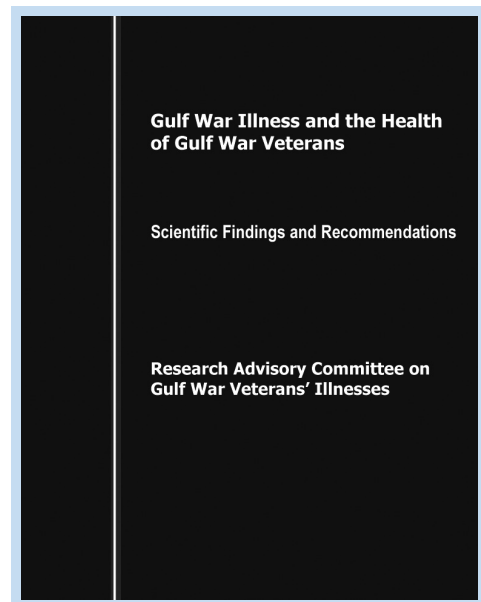
In November 2008, VA requested that the National Academy of Sciences Institute of Medicine (IOM) explain discrepancies between findings contained in nine congressional mandated IOM committee reports on Gulf War health issues completed since 1998, and the October 2008 report released by the RACGWVI. As a result of these discussions with IOM, an invitation was issued and members of the RAC presented their key findings and the background for those findings on April 14, 2009, as part of the next IOM Gulf War literature review. The IOM committee's formal report is due February 2010.

VA has long recognized conditions of, granted benefits to, and provided health care for Gulf War Veterans suffering from a broad range of symptoms, even though these conditions have not been scientifically recognized as a specific disease, injury, or illness. These conditions include chronic fatigue, persistent rashes, hair loss, headaches, muscle pain, joint pain, neurological symptoms, neuropsychological

symptoms (such as memory loss), respiratory system symptoms, sleep disturbances, gastrointestinal symptoms, cardiovascular symptoms, abnormal weight loss, and menstrual disorders.

“I appreciate the committee's work on this report, and I am eager to see the results of further independent study into their findings,” former Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake said at the time of the report's release. “Of course, VA will continue to provide the care and benefits our Gulf War Veterans have earned through their service, as we have for more than a decade.”

An extensive list of Gulf War Veterans benefits and care is provided in this issue.



On November 17, 2008 the Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses presented a comprehensive report, Gulf War Illness and the Health of Gulf War Veterans, to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

The full report can be accessed online at http://www1.va.gov/rac-gwvi/docs/GWlandHealthofGWVeterans_RAC-GWVIReport_2008.pdf

VA Establishes ALS as a Presumptive Compensable Illness

CITES ASSOCIATION BETWEEN MILITARY SERVICE AND DEVELOPMENT OF ALS

Veterans with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) may receive urgently-needed support for themselves and their families after the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that ALS will become a presumptively compensable illness for all Veterans with 90 days or more of continuously active service in the military.

“Veterans are developing ALS in rates higher than the general population, and it was appropriate to take action,” former VA Secretary Peake said.

The former Secretary based his decision primarily on a November 2006 IOM report on the association between active-duty service and ALS.

“We are extremely grateful to Secretary Peake, Congressman Henry Brown and Senator Lindsey Graham for standing on the side of Veterans with ALS across the country,” said Gary Leo, president and CEO of The ALS Association. “Thanks to their leadership, Veterans with ALS will receive the benefits and care they need, when they need them. Thanks to their efforts, no Veteran with ALS will ever be left behind.”

The IOM report, titled *Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis in Veterans: Review of the Scientific Literature*, analyzed scientific and medical studies on the issue and concluded “there is limited and suggestive evidence of an association between military service and later development of ALS.”

“ALS is a disease that progresses rapidly, once it is diagnosed,” the former Secretary explained. “There simply isn’t time to develop the evidence needed to support compensation claims before many Veterans become seriously ill. My decision will make those claims much easier to process, and for them and

their families to receive the compensation they have earned through their service to our nation.”

ALS, also called Lou Gehrig’s disease—a neuromuscular disease that affects about 20,000 to 30,000 people of all races and ethnicities in the United States—is generally relentlessly progressive and is almost always fatal.

ALS causes degeneration of nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord that leads to muscle weakness, muscle atrophy, and spontaneous muscle activity. Currently, the cause of ALS is unknown, and there is no effective treatment.

The new interim final regulation applies to all applications for benefits received by VA on or after September 23, 2008, or that are pending before VA, the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, or the United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit on that date.

VA will identify and contact Veterans with ALS, including those whose claims for ALS were previously denied, through direct mailings and other outreach programs.

For more information on VA’s disability compensation program, go to www.va.gov or call VA at 1-800-827-1000.

GULF WAR HEALTH REGISTRY STATISTICS (as of July 1, 2009)*

INITIAL EXAMINATIONS:	112,515
FOLLOW UP EXAMINATIONS:	6,531
TOTAL (INITIAL & FOLLOW-UP):	119,046

**These numbers reflect examinations of Veterans of the 1990-1991 Gulf War and of Veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom. (Operation Enduring Freedom Veterans are not eligible for the Gulf War Registry health examination.)*

Have You Had Your Gulf War Registry Health Examination?

If you are a Veteran who served on active military duty in Southwest Asia during the Gulf War from 1990 to the present, including Operation Iraqi Freedom, you are eligible for a Gulf War Registry Examination. Military duty covered includes service in one of the following areas:

- Iraq
- The Neutral Zone (between Iraq and Saudi Arabia)
- Saudi Arabia
- Kuwait
- Qatar
- The United Arab Emirates
- Oman
- Gulf of Oman
- Gulf of Aden
- Waters of the Persian Gulf, Arabian Sea and Red Sea.

A health registry examination is a personalized and comprehensive examination which includes blood work, urinalysis, and, where medically indicated, a chest x-ray and EKG.

This examination is available to all eligible Veterans with no copayment requirement. This health registry examination provides an opportunity to enroll in the VA health care system. However, Veterans do not have to enroll to receive this registry examination. Veterans also automatically receive or have access to VA's newsletters with updates or special information on health care and other benefits for them.

The demographic information (personal details), exposures, reported symptoms, and diagnoses are all maintained in a computerized index or list of Veterans located at the Corporate Franchise Data (CFD) Center (formerly Austin Automation Center (AAC) in Austin, Texas.

Note: A Gulf War Health Registry Examination is not a claim, nor is it required, for VA benefits or compensation.

Following the examination, the results of the physical examination and laboratory tests are provided to the Veteran both face to face and in a followup letter. Also, the results of this examination are maintained in the Veteran's medical record.

In addition to the Gulf War Health Registry Examination, if you have been identified as having possible Depleted Uranium (DU) exposure during your military service in the Gulf War or you have concerns about potential exposure to DU, you may request a DU evaluation. This evaluation involves urine testing.

The following Web link can provide Veterans with a great deal of information on registries and many related topics: www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures.

VA also provides several hotlines and contact numbers for Veterans covering the Gulf War Health Registry Programs and other topics.

VA's national toll-free telephone number, staffed by Veteran service representatives, provides information about disability compensation benefits as well as vocational rehabilitation and education programs available to Veterans: 1-800-827-1000.

The Special Health Issues Helpline is also a source of valuable information for Gulf War Veterans: 1-800-749-8387.

For VA Health Eligibility/Enrollment: 1-877-222-8387.

VA Helps Vets Address Mortgage Problems

HAS A "SOLID RECORD OF SUCCESS"

Many homeowners have found it difficult recently to pay their mortgages, but quick intervention by loan counselors at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has reduced the number of Veterans defaulting on their home loans.

"VA is reaching out to Veterans—both those who use our home-loan guaranty program and those who don't take advantage of our guaranties—to keep people in their homes," said former VA Secretary

Peake. “I’m proud of our solid record of success in helping Veterans and active-duty personnel deal with financial crises.”

Part of this success is due to VA counselors, located at ten VA offices nationwide, that assist those with VA-guaranteed home loans to avoid foreclosure through counseling and special financing arrangements. The counselors also can assist Veterans with non-VA loans and since the year 2000 have helped about 91,000 Veterans, active-duty members, and survivors keep their homes, saving the government approximately \$1.8 billion.

Depending on a Veteran’s circumstances, VA can intercede with the borrower on the Veteran’s behalf to pursue options—such as repayment plans, forbearance, and loan modifications—that can allow a Veteran to keep a home.

To obtain help from a VA financial counselor, call VA toll-free at 1-877-827-3702. Information about VA’s home loan guaranty program is available on the Internet at www.homeloans.va.gov.

Conditions Automatically Recognized for Service Connection

Enacted in 1994, Public Law 103-446 allows 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 specified time period after their Gulf War service, which led to a degree of disability of 10 percent or more.

Three health conditions suffered by some Gulf War Veterans are presumptively (automatically) recognized by VA for service connection. These are fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome, and irritable bowel syndrome. In 2001, Public Law 107-103, expanded the definition of “qualifying chronic disability” to include these three conditions.

VA encourages Veterans with these conditions—including those denied service connection before this law was passed—to apply for VA disability compensation.

How to Apply for VA Disability Compensation

Like other Veterans, Gulf War Veterans with service-connected illnesses or injuries are eligible for monthly payments called disability compensation. The disability must have been incurred or aggravated during active military service. Furthermore, the military service of the Veteran must have been terminated 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. Receipt of military retirement pay, disability severance pay, and separation incentive payments, known as SSB and VSI (Special Separation Benefits and Voluntary Separation Incentives), affects the amount of VA compensation paid.

Disability Ratings Ranges. Disability ratings range from 0 to 100 percent (in increments of 10 percent). For example, in 2009, a Veteran with a disability rating of 10 percent receives \$123 per month; a Veteran with disability rating of 50 percent gets \$770 per month; and a Veteran with no dependents who is totally disabled and evaluated at 100 percent receives \$2,673 monthly. Veterans with disability ratings between 30 and 100 percent also are eligible for monthly allowances for each dependent. (The amount depends on the disability rating.)

Additional Disability Benefits. A Veteran who either is in need of regular aid and attendance of another person (including the Veteran’s spouse), or who is permanently housebound may be entitled to additional benefits. VA must make that determination before the Veteran can get these benefits.

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

What's New? Gulf War Veteran Benefits and Care:

CURRENT AND NEW PROGRAMS

New VA Enrollment Information. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has put forth new regulations for certain Priority Group 8 Veterans. These regulations may allow certain Priority Group 8 Veterans to enroll in the VA health care system, although they may have been denied in the past. Included are Veterans who applied for health care on or after January 1, 2009 but were denied because their household income was higher than VA's income limit. Veterans who fall into the Priority Group 8 may qualify if their income does not go over the current VA income limit by more than 10%. This new regulation went into effect on June 15, 2009. For more information about enrollment and to access a calculator to see if you qualify, visit: www.va.gov/healtheligibility. If you have any questions, please call 1-877-222-VETS (8387).

The VA Gulf War Veteran Health Registry. Even prior to the 1991 Gulf War cease-fire, VA had concerns that returning Veterans might develop certain unique health problems, including respiratory issues from exposure to intense oil fire smoke.

In response, VA quickly established a clinical registry to screen for this possibility. Formally established

by law in 1992, VA's Gulf War Veterans' Health Examination Registry is still available to all Gulf War Veterans, including those of the current conflict in Iraq. The registry offers all Gulf War Veterans a comprehensive physical examination, and collects data from participating Veterans about their symptoms, diagnoses, and hazardous exposures. As of February 2009, this program had evaluated more than 110,000 Gulf War Veterans.

Compensation for Undiagnosed Illnesses. Many Gulf War Veterans encountered problems when trying to prove that their difficult-to-diagnose or undiagnosed illnesses were connected to military service. This affected these Veterans' access to disability compensation.

In response, VA asked Congress for the authority to provide compensation benefits to Gulf War Veterans who are chronically disabled by undiagnosed illnesses. The 1994 statute authorizes VA to pay compensation for disabilities that cannot be diagnosed as a specific disease or injury, or for certain illnesses with unknown cause, including chronic fatigue, persistent rashes, hair loss, headaches, muscle pain, joint pain, neurological symptoms, neuropsychological symptoms such as memory loss, respiratory system symptoms, sleep disturbances, gastrointestinal symptoms, cardiovascular symptoms, abnormal weight loss, and menstrual disorders.

More than 3,400 Gulf War Veterans have received service connection for their undiagnosed or difficult-to-diagnose illnesses under this authority. Veterans from the current conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq are also eligible for this special benefit.

War-Related Illness & Injury Study Centers: Specialized Health Care for Combat Veterans. In 1998, as part of VA's overall health response on behalf of Veterans returning from the 1991 Gulf War, the Department established War-Related Illness and Injury Study Centers (WRIISCs) at the Washington, DC, and East Orange, NJ VA Medical Centers (VAMCs). A third Center is now operational at the Palo Alto, CA VAMC.

New Disability Compensation Rates for 2009:

Percent Disabled	No Dependents	Veteran & Spouse
10%	\$123	—
20%	\$243	—
30%	\$376	\$421
40%	\$541	\$601
50%	\$770	\$845
60%	\$974	\$1,064
70%	\$1,228	\$1,333
80%	\$1,427	\$1,547
90%	\$1,604	\$1,739
100%	\$2,673	\$2,823

Today, these three centers provide specialized health care for combat Veterans from all deployments who experience difficult-to-diagnose or undiagnosed-but-disabling illnesses. VA now anticipates concerns about unexplained illness after virtually all deployments, including Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, and is building on its understanding of such illnesses.

Depleted Uranium (DU) Surveillance Program.

Special armor-piercing munitions and tank armor made from depleted uranium (DU) was used with great effect by U.S. forces during the 1991 Gulf War. In 1993, VA established the DU Follow-up Program at the Baltimore VA Medical Center to monitor the health of Veterans who had retained DU fragments in wounds.

The program provides ongoing and thorough detailed physical examinations for affected Veterans, including testing of the blood, immune, reproductive, and central nervous systems, and of kidney and liver function. In 1998, this program was expanded to offer DU screening for any Veteran concerned about possible DU exposure, and not just those with possible retained DU fragments or other types of high-exposure risks. The program is also open for Veterans who served in Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.

Information for Veterans and their Families.

VA offers many programs designed to help returning combat Veterans and their families. To help Veterans of the 1991 Gulf War and their families increase awareness of their VA health care and other benefits, and to inform them of new research results on Gulf War Veterans' health, VA initiated this Gulf War Review newsletter, regularly mailed to more than 400,000 Gulf War Veterans.

Funding Your College Education—Help from the U.S. Department of Education.

Veterans returning to the United States who wish to begin or continue postsecondary education can find an excellent overview of Federal Student Aid Programs on the Department of Education's Web site at www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov. This site covers Federal Student Aid eligibility, applying for assistance, Montgomery GI Bill benefits and other important

topics. For questions not addressed on the Web site, Veterans may call 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243) or TTY 1-800-730-8913.

As with any multistep process, questions, issues or problems may arise that cannot be answered or resolved through traditional sources of Federal Student Aid customer service. If this is the case, Veterans may contact the Federal Student Aid Office of the Ombudsman. For example: Service members returning from active duty may find that payments for postsecondary loans have not been kept up-to-date and loans have defaulted. The borrower will want to bring the account up-to-date. Also, when loans are in default, additional Federal student loans will not be approved. If the usual sources of customer service cannot help, the Ombudsman will assist in identifying options.

To contact the Ombudsman, visit www.ombudsman.ed.gov. The Web site provides information on many student loan topics, such as bankruptcy, default, disability, and more. Site users can submit an Ombudsman Assistance Request Form by clicking on the "Contact Us" button on the top banner of each page (look for the form link at the bottom of the "Contact Us" page). Service requests will be answered within 10 business days. Those without Internet access may call 1-877-557-2575 or 202-377-3800 to speak with the Ombudsman office in Washington, DC.

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the first step in the financial aid process. Use it to apply for Federal student financial aid, such as Pell grants, student loans, and college work-study. Most states and schools use FAFSA information to award their financial aid. For online instructions on how to complete the FAFSA online or on paper, visit the Web site <http://studentaid.ed.gov/completefafsa> and go to "Completing the FAFSA."

Application deadlines for your state or schools may be different from the Federal deadlines and you may be required to complete additional forms.

- ▶ Federal Student Financial Aid Deadlines:
www.fafsa.ed.gov/before003a.htm#federal_aid
- ▶ State Student Financial Aid Deadlines:
www.fafsa.ed.gov/before003a.htm#state_deadlines

- ▶ School Student Financial Aid Deadlines:
www.fafsa.ed.gov/before003a.htm#college_deadlines

In addition, schools may have their own deadlines and applications for awarding student aid. Check with the school's financial aid office for information. Additional information is available at www.federalstudentaid.ed.gov.

One-Stop Career Centers for Veterans.

Veterans can find the services they need at a convenient One-Stop Career Center. Work with a Veterans' Employment Specialist to find jobs, acquire skills and education, plan a career, attend workshops, and take advantage of other resources. Information on the One-Stop Career Center near you is available on the Internet at the Department of Labor Web site www.hirevetsfirst.gov/onestop_vet.asp or by telephone at 1-877-USA-JOBS (1-877-872-5627).

Transition Assistance Program for Veterans

(TAP). The U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) Transition Assistance Program (TAP) for Veterans Web site provides career information for active duty service members, National Guard, Reserves, and spouses of service members separating or retiring from the military. The Web site provides tools and information to use during transition from military life to civilian life. Those interested in more information can find it online at www.dol.gov/vets/programs/tap/main.htm.

HireVetsFirst: Department of Labor's

Transition Program. Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) is the U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) agency responsible for helping Veterans make the transition from the military to civilian jobs and for protecting their employment rights and benefits. Information regarding current programs is available at the DOL Web site at www.dol.gov/vets/programs/fact/Employment_Services_fs01.htm.

Small Business Administration's (SBA) Patriot

Express Loans. Patriot Express is open to Veterans, Reservists and National Guard members, current spouses of eligible personnel, the surviving spouses

of service members who die on active duty, and spouses of Veterans who die from a service-connected disability. The program can enable those wanting to establish or expand a small business.

More information about the SBA program is available at www.sba.gov/patriotexpress or contact the SBA Answer Desk 1-800-U-ASK-SBA (1-800-827-5722). Address e-mail inquiries to answerdesk@sba.gov.

VA Home Loan Guaranty. A VA-guaranteed home loan offers Veterans a number of safeguards and advantages that may not be available to them in other home loans. For example, the interest rate is competitive with conventional rates with little or no down payment required. VA-guaranteed loans are made by private lenders, such as banks, savings and loan associations, and mortgage companies, but guaranteed by VA. As with any loan, applications must be made directly to the lender. A real estate broker can assist in finding a lender.

To apply, ask your lender to obtain a certificate for you through VA's secure Web site. For more information, including eligibility requirements, go to www.homeloans.va.gov or call 1-888-244-6711.

VA Education Benefits for Veterans.

Requests for education benefits from Veterans receive priority review and processing at VA in order to expedite application decisions. VA's Education Service administers education programs that provide benefits to qualified Veterans, service members, Reservists, and dependents.

Current programs include:

- Montgomery GI Bill—Active Duty (MGIB-AD)
- Montgomery GI Bill—Selected Reserve (MGIB-SR)
- Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP)
- Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance Program (DEA)
- Veterans Educational Assistance Program (VEAP)

Information about educational programs and the applications process is available on the Internet at www.gibill.va.gov or via telephone at 1-888-GIBILL1 (1-888-442-4551)

ADDITIONAL HELP AND INFORMATION

Active duty military personnel with questions or concerns about service in Southwest Asia (including Operations Desert Storm, Desert Shield, Iraqi Freedom, and Enduring Freedom) should contact their commanding officer or call the Department of Defense (DOD) Gulf War Veterans' Hotline at 1-800-796-9699. DOD also offers the Direct Veterans Hotline at 1-800-497-6261.

Operation Desert Storm, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation Enduring Freedom Veterans with concerns about their health should contact their nearest VA medical center. The center telephone numbers are 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 Operation Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom Veterans is also available on request.

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

Visit this Web site for more information on Gulf War Veteran health care and other benefits: www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/gulfwar/.

Gulf War Veterans in need of marital/family counseling should contact the nearest VA medical center or VA Vet Center, also listed in the phonebook under Department of Veterans Affairs in the "U.S. Government" listings. For additional information about these programs, call the VA 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 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). Claims may also be made online

at <http://vabenefits.vba.va.gov/vonapp/main.asp>. 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 or 1-800-839-1899), Disabled American Veterans (1-877-426-2838), and others have been very helpful to Gulf War Veterans, especially those seeking disability compensation. The organizations listed are examples; there are many other excellent organizations and VA does not endorse or recommend any one group over another.

County Veterans Service Officers can also be 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. This booklet, updated annually to reflect changes in law and policies, is available at www.va.gov/opa/Is1/index.asp. It also may be purchased from the U.S. Government Printing Office either at the Web site <http://bookstore.gpo.gov/> or by mail:

U.S. Government Printing Office
Superintendent of Documents
Washington, DC 20402

VA's Web pages include the most current information on compensation and pension benefits, health care benefits and services, burial and memorial benefits, and other areas. Visit www.va.gov to learn more.

ABOUT THE "REVIEW"

The Gulf War Review is produced by VA's Environmental Agents Service (EAS) to provide information on long-term health issues and other concerns of Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm Veterans, 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 past issues of this newsletter and related information, see the Web site www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/gulfwar/. The most recent issues of this newsletter are dated May 2008 and July 2006.

For information regarding the current conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan, please see the Operations Iraqi Freedom/ Enduring Freedom Review on the Web site at www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/.

This is the 40th issue of the Gulf War Review and EAS anticipates publication of the Gulf War Review newsletter once or twice a year, depending on available news. Comments, questions, and suggestions for future issues are encouraged and can be sent to the Gulf War Review, Comments, Environmental Agents Service (131), VA Central Office, 810 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20420.

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Send corrections to:

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Gulf War Review
INFORMATION FOR VETERANS WHO SERVED IN
DESERT SHIELD/STORM AND THEIR FAMILIES

