



Gulf War Review

VA Reevaluates Khamisiyah Veterans

A study of death rates (mortality) by scientists of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) concerning veterans who served near the Iraqi munitions dump at Khamisiyah during the Gulf War found no substantial increase in deaths nor any unusual causes of death among veterans at Khamisiyah compared to all Gulf War veterans.

The study began after an earlier VA report in February 2002 suggested a dramatic increase in deaths among a group of about 35,000 veterans serving in the Gulf area during the war. That report was described in the March 2002 issue of the *Gulf War Review*.

“I regret if that earlier report caused alarm,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony J. Principi. “We’re in the business of providing information to veterans as soon as we can. In this instance, some information was released before being properly scrutinized and scientifically validated.”

On February 21, 2002, VA employees held a briefing for veterans service organizations in Washington. The briefing included information that suggested a ten-fold increase in the death rate among one group of veterans who were identified as being near the Khamisiyah munitions depot, which contained chemical weapons, when U.S. forces destroyed it on March 10, 1991.

However, the most recent in-depth VA study, based upon more complete data, matched death records with the Social Security numbers of 134,379 veterans whom the Department of Defense said may have been exposed to chemical weapons at Khamisiyah.

(Continued on page 2)

Former Coordinating Board Director is New Head of VA’s Health Agency

On March 22, 2002, the U.S. Senate confirmed Dr. Robert H. Roswell as the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Under Secretary for Health. He was sworn in on April 2, 2002.

“Dr. Roswell has distinguished himself in serving veterans and the



Robert H. Roswell, M.D.

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VA Reevaluates Khamisiyah Veterans

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The latest study found 368 deaths that were not included in the February report, plus 650 deaths that were attributed earlier to the wrong group of veterans. When the two errors were combined, they dramatically distorted the mortality pattern among Khamisiyah veterans.

“The bottom line is that Khamisiyah veterans have death rates similar to their non-exposed counterparts and less than half the rate of their civilian counterparts,” Principi said.

The latest study was based upon current information and a larger, more comprehensive pool of data from the National Death Index, compiled by the National Center for Health Statistics. The February report involved matching VA records and DoD rosters of service members notified that they were exposed to two different models of the chemical “plume” from Khamisiyah.

To view the complete text of the recent VA study, go on the Internet to: www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/docs/KhamisiyahReport_1_1.pdf.

Former Coordinating Board Director is New Head...

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public health community,” said VA Secretary Anthony J. Principi. “I am pleased to have him lead VA in providing comprehensive, first-class health care and in achieving our goals for medical research, education, and emergency preparedness.”

As Under Secretary, he heads the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and is responsible for the Nation’s largest integrated health care system. VHA has a medical care budget of about \$23 billion and a health care staff of 180,000. It provides health care service to veterans through 1,300 sites nationwide, including 163 hospitals, 800 outpatient clinics, 135 long-term care facilities, 206 readjustment counseling centers (commonly known as Vet Centers), and 73 home-care programs.

On February 6, 2002, President Bush nominated Dr. Roswell to be VA’s Under Secretary for

Health. “For the past 20 years, I have devoted my professional life to serving the needs of veterans,” Dr. Roswell said. “I am honored to be considered for this position. “Since 1995, Dr. Roswell directed VA’s health care network for Florida and Puerto Rico. Based in Bay Pines, FL, the network includes 7 VA medical centers, 10 satellite outpatient clinics, and 34 community clinics. Previously, he served as Chief of Staff at VA Medical Centers, Birmingham, AL, and Oklahoma City, OK, and was in leadership positions in other VA facilities and VA Central Office. He also held leadership positions at several medical schools.

Headed Gulf War Veterans Board and Began Health Examinations

Dr. Roswell was executive director of the Persian Gulf Veterans Coordinating Board from 1994 to 1999. The Board, which coordinated Gulf War activities within the Executive Branch of the Federal Government, was jointly chaired by the Secretaries of Veterans Affairs, Defense, and Health and Human Services. The Military and Veterans Health Coordinating Board replaced the Gulf War board in 2000, and the new board was disbanded earlier this year.

In August 1992, as Associate Deputy Chief Medical Director, Dr. Roswell directed VA medical centers “to begin collecting data for inclusion in the Persian Gulf Registry once [pending] legislation [is enacted] and to respond to requests from symptomatic Persian Gulf veterans for an examination and health care.”

He was a national spokesman for VA on Gulf War health concerns and sensitively dealt with many difficult veterans’ health issues during the years immediately following the Gulf War, before many of today’s programs were in place.

A native of Bartlesville, OK, Dr. Roswell is a 1975 graduate of the University of Oklahoma School of Medicine, where he completed his residency in internal medicine and a fellowship in endocrinology and metabolism. He served on active duty in the U.S. Army, and now is a colonel in the Army Reserve Medical Corps.

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. For past and current issues of the "Review" and additional information, see our Web site at www.va.gov/gulfwar.

The most recent issues of the newsletter are dated November 2001 and March 2002. Additional issues will be prepared when warranted by significant developments. EAS anticipates publication of the "Review" three or four times annually. Four were issued in Calendar Year 2001. This issue was completed in mid-May 2002 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 the prior issues is available. Please specify the quantity and issue date requested.

Questions about the Gulf War 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**.

Dr. Roswell succeeds Dr. Thomas L. Garthwaite, who resigned to become director of the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services.

Annual Report to Congress on Federally Funded Gulf War Research Available

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently released the seventh comprehensive report to the Congress on the results, status, and priorities of research Federally funded activities on the health consequences of military service in the Gulf War. VA is required to submit an annual report to Congress describing Federally sponsored research activities related to the health consequences of military service in the Gulf War. This research is taking place at both Federal and university facilities.

The two-volume document, entitled *Annual Report to Congress - Federally Sponsored Research on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses for 2000*, describes the Gulf War veterans' illnesses research portfolio in great detail. As of March 31, 2001, a total of 193 Federal projects have been sponsored by the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Defense, or Health and Human Services.

\$173.6 Million for Gulf War-Related Research

The scope of the Federal research portfolio is very broad, ranging from small pilot studies to large-scale epidemiology studies involving large populations and major research centers. The recent report noted that the Federal Departments are projecting cumulative expenditures of \$173.6 million for research through Fiscal Year 2001.

As of March 31, 2001, 116 projects were completed and 77 projects were ongoing. These studies have focused mainly on symptoms and general health status, and brain and nervous system function.

The 65-page 2000 annual report is divided into six sections: Section I is an introduction. Section II highlights and summarizes research progress

since the last *Annual Report*. Section III consists of an analysis of the Federal portfolio on Gulf War veterans' illnesses. Section IV describes significant new research. Section V covers the management of Federal Gulf War veterans' illnesses research programs, including oversight, peer review, and coordination. Section VI discusses priorities established in past years for future research, and highlights the progress made to date.

There is an accompanying 188-page volume consisting of three appendices. Appendix A describes all Federally funded research projects. Research projects are listed by the supporting Department and by research focus area. Project funding is presented in table format. Appendix B reprints the Proceedings from the 2001 Conference on Illnesses Among Gulf War Veterans, held in January 2001 in Alexandria, VA. Appendix C consists of a summary of progress in response to 21 research questions highlighted in the *1996 Working Plan for Research on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses*.

The Annual Report was prepared by the Research Working Group of the former Military and Veterans Health Coordinating Board.

The report is on the web at: www.va.gov/resdev/prt/gulfwar2001. Questions about the report or requests for hard copies can be directed to the VA Office of Research and Development, VA Central Office, 810 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20420.

Continuing Medical Education Program on Gulf War Veterans' Health, Registry Training Video Released

Two new VA Gulf War-related educational tools have recently been completed and released to VA facilities nationwide. Both were produced by the VA Employee Education System (EES) in close collaboration with the Environmental Agents Service, the office responsible for this newsletter.

In April 2002, VA released a continuing medical education independent study program book entitled *A Guide to Gulf War Veterans' Health*. This program is part of the Veterans Health Initiative, an

independent-study program in several specific high priority health topics.

The target audience for the independent study program is VA health care providers and others who seek information on this subject. It represents a complete revision and updating of the independent study on this subject that was released in March 1998. The revised course provides an overview of the Gulf War experience, Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense health care programs available for Gulf War veterans, and the common symptoms and diagnoses of these veterans. Emphasis is placed on providing the most recent information from clinical and scientific studies of Gulf War veterans' illnesses.

The independent study is primarily designed for VA physicians, physician assistants, and nurse practitioners. Other health care providers, especially in VA health care facilities, are also encouraged to complete the program. The expected outcomes of this program are (1) improved sensitivity to the effect of military experiences and exposures on veteran patients' health and attitudes, (2) improved patient satisfaction, and (3) increased awareness of the occupational risks in a patient's history. Health care providers who complete the course and pass the test will receive AMA or ANCC continuing education credits. Detailed procedures and instructions are included in the course book.

Videotape

A 41-minute videotape, entitled *Inside VA: Role of the Registry Coordinator* provides a general overview of three VA registry programs: the Gulf War Registry, the Agent Orange Registry, and the Ionizing Radiation Registry. The video provides guidelines for the correct completion of problematic entries on Registry code sheets. The target audience for this program is new Registry coordinators, existing Registry Coordinators who desire a refresher, and other interested VA staff.

Individuals who carefully view the video should be able to (1) describe the background and historical time frames for each of the registries,

(2) describe the roles and responsibilities of the Registry Coordinator, (3) describe the role of the Austin Automation Center, and (4) identify techniques to avoid the most common coding errors.

Individuals who complete all the requirements (registration, view the entire video, pass the written examination, complete the evaluation forms) receive a certificate of completion.

Gulf War Publications Available in Spanish

Two VA-produced Gulf War-related publications are now available in Spanish. Specifically, the eight-paneled *Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses: Questions & Answers* brochure, dated May 2001, identified as IB-41, and the four-page *A Report to Veterans - Department of Veterans Affairs - Gulf War Research*," dated May 2001, identified as IB-42," have been translated into Spanish and have been distributed to all VA medical centers, especially those serving large Hispanic populations.

The Questions and Answers brochure includes the following topics: Is there a Persian Gulf Syndrome or Gulf War Syndrome? What health problems are Gulf War veterans reporting? What is VA doing to help veterans of Desert Shield and Desert Storm? What is the Gulf War Registry examination program? How can a veteran participate? What happens to the information from the registry examination program? Can an ill Gulf War veteran get medical treatment at VA for his or her medical problems? Can spouses and children of Gulf War veterans get free medical examinations? What happens if a veteran has symptoms that cannot be diagnosed by doctors at the local VA medical center? How can a veteran get referred to one of these special centers? What research is doing on Gulf War veterans' health? And much more.

The research report describes what research VA and other Federal departments are doing regarding Gulf War veterans' illnesses. It highlights the major research projects and the clinical and research results to date.

These publications have been translated into Spanish to enhance outreach to Hispanic veterans, their families, and others for whom Spanish is the first language. Ten thousand copies of each publication have been produced.

Address Changes

If you have recently moved, please use this form to update our mailing list. Send the completed form to the Gulf War Review, Austin Automation Center (200/397A), 1615 Woodward Street, Austin, TX 78772-0001. Thank you.

Please print your:

First Name _____

Middle _____

Last _____

SSN: _____

New Street/RFD/Military Unit:

APO/FPO: _____ (Indicate which if applicable)

City: _____

Alpha State/or APO/FPO Code: _____

ZIP Code: _____

If you are receiving more than one copy of the newsletter, please let us know. Write to the address above. Please provide your name, address, and social security number.

Thank you.

Environmental Agents Service spearheaded the publication of the Spanish versions with substantial assistance from the VA's Center for Minority Veterans. Both are located in VA Central Office in Washington, DC.

In addition to field facilities and offices, copies are available from Donald J. Rosenblum (131), GW Publications--Spanish, VA Central Office, 810 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20420. Please specify which publication is wanted and the quantity needed. These publications are also available on the World Wide Web at www.va.gov/gulfwar/ and can be freely reproduced.

VA Gulf War Research Advisory Committee Holds Initial Meeting

On April 11-12, 2002, the 12-member VA Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses held its first meeting at VA Central Office in Washington, DC. The committee is required by Section 104 of Public Law 105-368. "Scientific excellence is what the Secretary of Veterans Affairs expects of us," said Committee chairman James H. Binns, Jr. "In our charter, he charged us to measure federal research against one fundamental objective – to improve the health of Gulf War veterans. And that means doing good science." There have been about a dozen federally funded advisory or oversight committees on Gulf War veterans' health during the past decade.

The chairman added that he was dissatisfied with the pace of research, commenting the research probably will outlive the last Gulf War veteran. In his opening remarks he called for a new way of exploring and considering the health problems that some Gulf War veterans are reporting. Chairman Binns, a businessman, suggested a different way of considering the scientific data. He called this a "product development approach."

Both Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony J. Principi and Deputy Secretary Leo S. Mackay, Jr., attended and participated in the meeting. "Our obligation is not reduced when there is no name for a disease-or when we have no explanation for

their symptoms," Secretary Principi said. He encouraged the Committee to think "outside the box."

Dr. Mackay reminded the Committee of "VA's commitment to excellence in research and in the treatment of veterans." He added that VA--and Gulf War veterans--needs to hear "the unvarnished truth."

Background

On January 23, 2002, Secretary Principi announced the establishment of this committee to help VA oversee its research into the medical problems of Gulf War veterans. The committee was established to advise the VA Secretary on proposed research studies. The panel must submit an annual report on the status and results of government research during the previous year and on research priorities identified by the committee.

Public Law 105-368 directs the committee to provide advice and make recommendations to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on "proposed research studies, research plans and research strategies relating to the health consequences of military service in the Southwest Asia theater of operations during the Persian Gulf War."

Although the panel will not conduct research, its charter instructs the committee to review "all relevant research, investigations, and processes" done in the past to assess methods, results and implications for future research. The committee will also review proposed federal research plans, initiatives, procurements, grant programs, and other activities regarding Gulf War-associated illnesses.

An expert panel of scientists and subject matter authorities that will add additional expertise, will function as an auxiliary group that reviews committee findings and provides expert guidance to the committee and the Secretary.

For additional information about the committee, including the full membership, see the March 2002 issue of this newsletter. It is anticipated that the next meeting will be held this Summer in Washington, DC.

Web Pages Revamped

In February and March 2002, the Department of Veterans Affairs' Environmental Agents Service announced several enhanced Web sites, including one devoted to Gulf War veterans' health problems and concerns at www.va.gov/gulfwar/.

The others are www.va.gov/environagents/ for general information regarding the health consequences of exposure to environmental agents; www.va.gov/agentorange/ for Agent Orange issues; www.va.gov/irad/ for issues that relate to veterans exposed to ionizing radiation during military service in the occupation of Japan at the conclusion of World War II, during the nuclear weapons tests program, or in other service-connected settings; and www.va.gov/shad/ for information regarding Project Shipboard Hazard and Defense (SHAD), a series of tests, conducted by the Department of Defense in the 1960's, to evaluate the effectiveness of shipboard detection and protective procedures against chemical and biological warfare agents.

Q's & A's

The "Review" occasionally includes a questions-and-answers section in which VA responds to inquiries from readers regarding the Gulf War experience, problems experienced by Gulf War veterans and their families, and programs initiated by VA and other Federal departments or agencies to help these veterans and their families.

Questions should be sent to Mr. Donald J. Rosenblum, Deputy Director, Environmental Agents Service (131), ATTN: Gulf War Review - Q's & A's, 810 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20420.

Q. Victor H (location unknown) wrote regarding an article that appeared in a recent newsletter regarding the oil well fire smoke. He indicated that the article was limited in its consideration to respiratory ailments. He argued that cancer is a more serious consequence of Gulf War service, noting the case of a 29-year old with bladder cancer, but no history of cancer or any chronic disease, and no risk factors.

A. Certainly respiratory ailments are a small subset of the symptoms we have seen and expect to see in Gulf War veterans. Seeing the massive smoke from the oil well fires -- in person, in photographs, or on television -- one could not imagine how our service members could not be severely affected at least in the short-term and most likely long-term by this smoke. Indeed, in 1991, Congress ordered the Department of Defense (in Public Law 102-190) to establish a registry of members of the Armed Forces "exposed to fumes of burning oil in connection with Operation Desert Storm."

A great deal of research has occurred during the past decade to learn more about the hazards -- natural or man-made -- encountered by Gulf War veterans in the SW Asia theater of operations and the medical problems that some of these veterans currently face or may experience in the future. According to the latest annual report to Congress on Federally sponsored Gulf War-related research, 193 projects costing a total of more than \$173 million have been or are projected to be spent on this research.

Scientists are pursuing a wide array of research, from small pilot studies to large-scale epidemiology studies involving large populations and major research center programs. Important large-scale mortality studies have been completed and others are ongoing. Among other things, these studies reveal valuable information about the rates and types of cancers in Gulf War veterans.

One important research study is an ongoing examination by VA scientists of the rates and causes of cancers in all Gulf War veterans. That study is comparing the health of Gulf War veterans to their non-deployed counterparts. So far, Gulf War soldiers are dying at the same rate as non-deployed soldiers. No increase in cancers has been seen. As mentioned above, this study is ongoing.

For more information on these subjects, you may wish to see the annual report (especially pages 144-45 in the appendix) mentioned above: www.va.gov/resdev/prt/gulf_war_2000/.

Note: There is an underlined space before and after the word war.

We are truly saddened when anyone develops bladder cancer, especially one who is under 30 and served the Nation in war. However, not all health problems experienced by military veterans can be linked to their military service.

Q. Kevin B, Maj., U.S. Army, wrote: I am an active duty Army Major currently stationed in St Louis.... Our unit was involved in the major confrontation with the Republican Guards Force as well as many of the continuing operations such as guarding oil fields, and setting up northern presence. Until now I have not taken the opportunity to register and note the illnesses I have suffered since the war. However, I saw [a] brochure [on Gulf War illnesses]... and when I read it and some of the illnesses mentioned I fit into about five of those categories. I am not a complainer, but if I am entitled to benefits that were caused by my selfless service, then I should report the illness and claim the entitlements.

A. Since you are still on active duty, you should look to the Department of Defense (DoD) for your medical care and treatment. We suggest that you call one of the DoD hotlines. You can call 1-800-796-9699 to arrange for an examination or 1-800-497-6261 to discuss your problems.

If you are planning to leave military service in the immediate future, you can contact the nearest VA medical center to schedule an appointment following your discharge. You can also file a disability claim with VA after you leave active duty. You can find the telephone numbers for the nearest VA medical facility and benefits office in your local telephone directory under the "U.S. Government" listings. Look under "Department of Veterans Affairs." We hope this information is helpful. For information about VA health benefits, call toll-free 1-877-222-8387. A great deal of information is available on the VA website at www.va.gov.

Q. Sarah (last name/location unknown) wrote in response to the November 2001 *Gulf War Review* that her husband received: He is a veteran of Desert Storm, and he has numerous problems that he didn't have before going to Desert Storm. I would like to know if you could send him a

copy of the Readers Survey for him to fill out to describe what he saw and his symptoms now.... My husband has 11 of the 13 symptoms [that you listed]. I would like to know as much about this as possible. If you could send the survey for him to fill out and any other information, I would greatly appreciate it.

A. *The Gulf War Review* Readers' Survey asks readers what they think about the newsletter, whether it meets their needs, and what changes they would like to see in the newsletter, and asks for comments and suggestions. It is not a health survey. However, if your husband has not yet received a Gulf War Health Registry examination from VA, he may wish to contact the nearest VA medical center for an appointment.

New Benefits Book Available

A new edition of the Department of Veterans Affairs' popular handbook *Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents* updates the rates for certain federal payments and outlines a variety of programs and benefits for American veterans.

Most of the Nation's 25 million veterans qualify for some VA benefits, which range from health-care program enrollment to burial in a national cemetery. In addition to describing benefits provided by VA, the 2002 edition of the 100-page booklet provides an overview of programs and services for veterans provided by other federal agencies.

Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents includes resources to help veterans access their benefits, comprising a listing of various toll-free phone numbers, World Wide Web sites and a directory of VA facilities throughout the country. The handbook can be downloaded free from VA's Web site at www.va.gov/opa/feature/.

The handbook is one of the U.S. Government Printing Office's (GPO) top selling consumer publications. GPO accepts credit card orders for the publication at 866-512-1800 (toll-free) for a cost of \$5 each to U.S. addresses, \$6.25 for international customers. It can be ordered by mail from the Government Printing Office at

Superintendent of Documents, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250-7954 (stock #051-000-00225-3).

In addition to health-care and burial benefits, veterans may be eligible for programs providing home loan guarantees, educational assistance, training and vocational rehabilitation, income assistance pensions, life insurance and compensation for service-connected illnesses or disabilities. In some cases, survivors of veterans who received benefits may also be entitled to continuing benefits.

The handbook describes programs for veterans with specific service experiences, such as prisoners of war or those concerned about environmental exposures in Vietnam or in the Gulf War, as well as special benefits for veterans with severe disabilities.

IOM Releases Report on Anthrax Vaccine

The National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine (IOM) recently released a 265-page report entitled *The Anthrax Vaccine: Is It Safe? Does It Work?*

In October 2000, IOM established and convened the 10-member Committee to Assess the Safety and Efficacy of the Anthrax Vaccine to prepare a congressionally mandated report for the Department of Defense (DoD). While DoD began to implement a plan to vaccinate all military personnel to protect them from anthrax, some service members were sufficiently concerned about the effectiveness and/or safety of the vaccination program that they chose to resign or face court-martial to avoid the vaccine. Some individuals have suggested that the health problems experienced by some Gulf War veterans may be related to the vaccine.

Brian L. Strom, M.D., M.P.H., Professor and Chair, Biostatistics and Epidemiology, University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, chaired the IOM committee. In the report preface, Dr. Strom acknowledged that the committee faced difficult scientific and political issues. "Scientifically, it was dealing with a series of questions on which the published data were limited," said Dr. Strom. "Politically, it was operating in a charged arena, where strong positions had been taken and strong emotions expressed, even in the absence of convincing data."

Dr. Strom explained that the committee embarked on a process that would be "as open as possible while maintaining maximum scientific rigor." The committee reviewed all available data, including unpublished material, heard from representatives of several government agencies, from the vaccine's manufacturer, from researchers, and others concerned about the safety and effectiveness of the vaccine.

Conclusion

The committee concluded that the vaccine known as Anthrax Vaccine Adsorbed (AVA), licensed in 1970, is effective in protecting humans against anthrax. Furthermore, the committee found that because of the way the vaccine functions – it exerts its protection via an antigen crucial to the action of the bacterium's toxins -- AVA should be effective against anthrax toxicity from all known strains of B anthracis, as well as from any potential man-made strains.

For additional information about this report, see the full text at www.nap.edu. Copies of the report are available for sale in paperback from the National Academy Press, 2101 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Box 285, Washington, DC 20055. The telephone numbers are 800-624-6242 or 202-334-3313 (in the Washington area).

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 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 or 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).

DoD has changed its "**Incidents Hotline**" to the "**Direct Veterans Hotline**" to more accurately reflect the work done by the Hotline's contact managers. The new toll-free number is 1-800-497-6261.

Veterans who have been diagnosed with a motor neuron disease (including **amyotrophic lateral sclerosis** or **Lou Gehrig's disease**) and who were on active duty between August 2, 1990, and July 31, 1991, regardless of whether they actually served in the Gulf War theater of operations (or family/friends of veterans who are deceased or otherwise unable to contact VA) - call 1-877-DIAL-ALS (1-877-342-5257) to participate in a national survey. This number will remain active at least through the end of calendar year 2002.

For additional information about VA's program initiatives, see VA's Gulf War **veterans' illnesses** home page at www.va.gov/gulfwar.

Gulf War veterans who **encounter difficulties** at a VA medical facility can contact the "**patient advocate**" at that facility for assistance in resolving the problem. The medical center telephone operator should have the telephone number.

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.

Readers' Survey

In the October 2000 and January 2001 issues of the *Gulf War Review*, we included a survey of our readers to learn more about their needs and how we might improve this publication. In response we received numerous suggestions for improving the newsletter and other aspects of our program.

We have decided to again formally solicit your comments and ideas. Please send your suggestions to Mr. Donald J. Rosenblum, Deputy Director, Environmental Agents Service (131), ATTN: Gulf War Review Survey, VA Central Office, 810 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20420, or fax them to 202-2743-9080. You can use this sheet or write to us separately.

1) What do you think of the "Review?"

2) Does it meet your needs? Why or why not?

3) What changes would you like to see in this publication? Additions? Deletions?

Additional comments or suggestions?

Thank you for your comments.



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Gulf War Review

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