



GulfNEWS

A bi-monthly newsletter serving the interests of Gulf War veterans

Birth defects study: good news for vets

The June 6, 1997 *New England Journal of Medicine* provided the results of an epidemiologic study of over 75,000 children of Gulf War veterans and other service members on active duty during the Gulf War. Evaluating data on all live births at 135 military hospitals in 1991, 1992, and 1993, this study found no overall increase in birth defects among children of Gulf War veterans.

"This study provides strong scientific evidence that the children of Gulf War veterans are not more likely to suffer birth defects," said study leader David Cowan, Ph.D. "Our work suggests that service in the Gulf War should not affect family planning or a veteran's decision on childbearing. We hope that healthcare providers who treat veterans and their families will share these findings with their patients."

The children of 579,000 active-duty servicemen and women who went to the Gulf were compared to those of about 700,000 people who were in the military at the same time but did not deploy.

Among the offspring of Gulf War veterans, the rate of any kind of birth defect (including defects as minor as large birth marks) was 7.45 percent. Among offspring of non-deployed soldiers, the rate was 7.59 percent, which, in statistical terms, was no different.

"It is possible someone had an exposure that resulted in a malformation," Cowan added. "Our study cannot eliminate that possibility. But if that did occur, it had to have been rare, because we did not detect any overall increase in risk."

Case narratives tell Gulf War story

The Department of Defense (DoD) is engaged in a comprehensive investigation of Gulf War operations to understand why many Gulf War veterans are ill. The efforts involve identifying what happened before, during and after the war to determine how incidents and practices relate to various potential causes of illnesses.

Extensive research and analysis goes into the investigative process. Methods we are using include interviews with key military personnel, examination of thousands of pages of original source documents for review of war operations, communication with veterans to obtain information that would strengthen the investigation and analysis, as well as inter-agency information exchange to identify new avenues of investigation. The final product which we produce is a case narrative designed to inform the American public of the specific details describing Gulf War incidents.

"If we can't explain what went on in the Gulf," explains Dr. Rostker when commenting on the process, "then we will have a very poor ability to put in place those military doctrine and medical policies and procedures that would allow us to avoid these kinds of problems in the future."

Each narrative is considered an interim report, one intended to open up a dialogue with Gulf War veterans in order to gain additional information that will help DoD more accurately understand key events. The **Khamisiyah** narrative, released on February 25, 1997, outlined the story of the demolition of the Khamisiyah ammunition storage facility in southern Iraq in 1991. It specifically discusses the demolition of munitions by U.S. forces and the subsequent United Nations Special Commission inspections and later public inquiry into the events. Since its publication, the investigation team has learned more about Khamisiyah from calls to the Incident Reporting Line,

callbacks to veterans who responded to the Khamisiyah survey, and additional interviews. An update of the narrative is scheduled to be released in late summer.

On May 22, 1997, the **Camp Monterey** case narrative was released. This narrative focuses on the reported detection of a chemical agent at a base camp in Kuwait on September 16, 1991. Several soldiers experienced eye irritation after being exposed to a chemical powder spill. Two Fox NBC reconnaissance vehicles initially identified the powder as sarin nerve agent. When each vehicle performed complete spectrum analyses, both vehicles identified the compound in question as CS, a riot control agent. Additional analysis by three expert laboratories provided further review and confirmed the presence of CS, not sarin.

The following cases are in various stages of development in OSAGWI and will be released in the future in narrative form:

Kuwaiti Girls' School — this case involves the reported positive detection of mustard blister agent in a tank outside a school in Kuwait after the war.

Czech/French Detections — During the first week of the air war, seven incidents were reported by either the Czech or French forces concerning the possible detection of very low

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Soldiers from the 82nd Airborne Division take a water break during nuclear, biological and chemical training in the Gulf War.

Rudman to review DoD's work on Gulf War illnesses

(GulfLINK) - Defense Secretary William J. Cohen has asked Warren Rudman, a retired Republican senator from New Hampshire, to review the work the Pentagon is doing on Gulf War illnesses.

Rudman agreed to take on the responsibility in keeping with President Clinton's public commitment to Gulf War veterans to "leave no stone unturned" to learn the causes for the ailments afflicting many Gulf War veterans.

In a letter to Rudman, Cohen asked him to make "whatever recommendations you believe appropriate," based on the findings of DoD investigations. Rudman has been asked to provide an independent evaluation of the thoroughness of DoD efforts, to pay attention to the cooperation and integration between DoD and the Intelligence Community, and to suggest ways to improve the provision, handling and use of intelligence information during battle.

Senator Rudman is a decorated combat veteran of the Korean War and he previously served on the Senate Intelligence Committee. He is best known for his co-authorship of the Graham-Rudman-Hollings Act, which is designed to reduce deficit spending by the federal government. He currently serves as Vice-Chairman of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board. Cohen said a "vigorous program"

under Bernard Rostker, the Pentagon's Special Assistant for Gulf War Illnesses, "is producing tangible results." The defense secretary pointed also to 90 medical research projects currently underway. And he cited a number of investigations being pursued by different agencies without the Defense Department.

"Our efforts in this regard must be as thorough and complete as possible," said Rostker. "I believe an outside review of our findings will help accomplish that objective. I am pleased you have agreed to advise us."



Demolition testing aids in research

WASHINGTON, May 27, 1997, (GulfLINK)- On May 15, the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) began a series of small scale demolition tests designed to assist in developing a model of the detonation of chemical weapons by U.S. troops at Khamisiyah, Iraq on March 10, 1991. The results of these tests are expected to assist in answering two fundamental questions: 1) who may have been exposed to chemical agents at Khamisiyah, and 2) to what extent they may have been exposed.

The tests at Dugway Proving Grounds in Utah were funded by the DoD and performed in collaboration with the CIA.

Dugway Proving Grounds provided a specialized test center where the results could be performed using the expertise and objectivity of technical experts. The CIA contributed extensive modeling experience and intelligence work to the endeavor, as well as comprehensive interviews with soldiers involved in the demolition itself. At the recommendation of the Institute for Defense Analysis, other agencies such as the Naval Surface Warfare Center, the Defense Special Weapons Agency, and the Naval Research Laboratory, furnished their expertise in constructing models which predicted the transportation and diffusion of materials over the Khamisiyah landscape and the meteorology on the day of March 10, 1991. With advice from a panel of national experts, DoD and CIA collaboratively developed the best available model to better understand what happened at Khamisiyah in the pit area, and who might have been exposed to agents as a result of the March 10 demolitions.

The Dugway testing was not intended to replicate the Khamisiyah detonation exactly, because exact details of the event are ambiguous and unknown and often can only be estimated from existing photographs and individual accounts. The process involved a series of scientific experiments to determine what happens when rockets are blown up in a manner similar to that of March 10, 1991.

To conduct the experiment, DoD used 32 foreign-made 122mm rockets and warheads filled with the simulant triethyl phosphate, a substance which had already been approved for outdoor testing in Dugway Proving Ground, in National Environmental Policy Act documents, and air approval orders. Triethyl phosphate was chosen for the testing because when exploded in the rockets, it disperses in a manner similar to sarin gas. Consequently, testing posed no health threat to the surrounding community.

The testing process fundamentally examined how the rockets explode and how much material vaporizes or spills into the ground. Information derived from the tests will be applied to mathematical models which are used to predict the direction in which the chemical agent may have traveled, how far it traveled, how fast, and at what concentration.

The demolition tests were performed several times, starting with the explosion of a single test rocket on May 15, 1997. Over the two week period, there was a series of test explosions which used increasing numbers of rockets at a time. The final, largest test, exploded nine rockets simultaneously.

It is expected that findings will be published by late July.



Ops teams verify unit locations

Selected officers of units that were in the vicinity of Khamisiyah have been gathering in small groups for a week at a time since mid-April at the U.S. Armed Services Center for Research of Unit Records near Fort Belvoir, Virginia. Their mission is to assist in clarifying unit locations throughout the duration of the Gulf War.

The officers participating in this effort are representatives from: XVIII Airborne Corps, 101st Air Assault Division, 24th Infantry Division, the 82nd Airborne Division, and the 1st Cavalry Division. While determination of the units' daily locations is the primary focus, each officer is also afforded the opportunity to contribute his insights regarding information on possible unit exposure to environmental incidents and any information concerning the location of operational records that might still be available.

This effort is being accomplished in conjunction with the Gulf War Declassification Project. This project was established by the deputy secretary of defense in March 1995 to conduct a DoD-wide review of all operational records to find those which could help shed light on veterans' illnesses, to provide useful documents to the Office of the Special Assistant for Gulf War Illnesses, and to post declassified health-related documents on the DoD Worldwide Web site, GulfLINK. As of December 31st, 5.4 million documents have been reviewed throughout the Services and over 65,000 pages posted to GulfLINK.

In the search for causes of Gulf War illnesses, this is an important step to improve our ability to track unit movements and to understand the hazards our soldiers may have encountered. The information in this database offers a point of departure for additional analysis and is a significant tool to assist in our efforts to take care of our soldiers and veterans of the Gulf War.



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concentrations of nerve or blister agents. The case narrative is in internal review and will be published soon.

Marine Breaching Operations — This narrative examines two reports of chemical detections when Marine divisions attacked north through Kuwait mine fields into Kuwait on February 24, 1991. An interim report will be released soon.

In addition to these cases, the following is a brief list of incidents and issues under investigation for case narrative preparation: the possible exposure to chemical warfare agent at Al Jabayl harbor on February 16, 1991; the mustard agent exposure involving a soldier in March 1991; possible exposure to chemical agent at Tallil airbase, Marine activities and possible chemical detection at Al Jaber airfield; Fox vehicle detections at various locations; oil well fire exposure; depleted uranium contamination and others.

All narratives will be posted on the GulfLINK Internet site (<http://www.gulfink.osd.mil>). The OSAGWI continues to solicit additional information on all cases. Veterans with information or experiences that could assist in these investigations are encouraged to call the Incident Reporting Line at 1-800-472-6719.

From the desk of:
Bernard D. Rostker
Special Assistant for
Gulf War Illnesses



As part of our veterans' outreach effort, I participated in a series of town hall meetings in April and May, hosted by the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars. In order for us to fully understand what occurred during the Gulf War, it is essential that veterans tell us their experiences. These meetings allowed me to hear first-hand from veterans and to get a better understanding of their concerns.

During the meetings, I addressed three basic but very important questions that I am often asked by veterans. First, "Why am I sick?" Second, "Are you listening and do you really care?" Finally, "Why should I trust you?"

In answer to the first question, we don't know why many veterans are sick. We have not yet found a single cause to explain these illnesses, but we are doing

everything possible to try to understand the potential causes of these illnesses.

In response to the second questions — are we listening? — Absolutely! There is no question that initially the DoD did not respond appropriately to our veterans' concerns. But today, we are listening and are involving veterans in our inquiry into critical Gulf War events. We have developed an organization sufficiently staffed and resourced to investigate thoroughly all Gulf War issues. My organization is committed to finding the answers not only for our Gulf War veterans, but also to protect our present and future generations of service members.

In regard to the final question of trust, we have to earn your trust. I think we will do that by conducting a comprehensive and thorough investigation that is open and involves sharing our information with the public, Congress, and other oversight agencies. By listening, being open, and by finding answers, we hope to earn your trust.

I found the town hall meetings to be extremely valuable for me. I was able to hear, first-hand, of the pain you are suffering and the frustrations you are experiencing. Equally important, I learned of your experiences in the Gulf, obtained documents, maps, photos and names of personnel who can help in this investigation. I cannot over-emphasize the importance of your experiences to our investigation.

Our success in the desert in 1990-91 was the result of concentrated focused effort. We had the right forces at the right place and time. Now, as we investigate Gulf War illnesses, we need to demonstrate the same resolve. Your involvement is key to this process.

In the next three months, I will also be meeting some of our coalition partners from the Gulf War. Through this contact, we hope to gain even further insight into the events we are investigating.



GulfLINK

Please note that **GulfLINK**, our web site on the Internet, has a new address: <http://www.gulfink.osd.mil> This service provides timely information on all Gulf War illnesses issues. You can find press releases, Congressional testimony, and detailed case narratives of Gulf War incidents. There are also declassified intelligence documents and operational documents from all Services, JCS, CIA, and USCENTCOM. Best of all, this is available 24 hours a day. If you want to communicate directly with us by e-mail, just send your comments to brostker@gwillness.osd.mil We will reply.

Other web sites which may be of interest include:

DefenseLINK - Department of Defense (DoD)	(http://www.dtic.mil/defenseink/)
Early Bird - American Forces Information Service (DoD)	(http://www.dtic.mil/ebird/)
American Forces Information Service - (DoD)	(http://www.dtic.mil/defenseink/afis/)
Defense Technical Information Center - (DoD)	(http://www.dtic.mil/)
U.S. Army	(http://www.army.mil)
U.S. Navy	(http://www.navy.mil)
U.S. Marine Corps	(http://www.hqmc.usmc.mil)
U.S. Air Force	(http://www.af.mil)
U.S. Coast Guard	(http://www.dot.gov/dotinfo/uscg)
DoD Health Affairs	(http://www.ha.osd.mil/)
Center of Military History - (DoD)	(http://imabbs.army.mil/cmh-pg/)
The Intelligence Community	(http://www.odci.gov/ic/)
Central Intelligence Agency	(http://www.odci.gov/cia/)
Government Accounting Office (GAO)	(http://www.gao.gov)
The Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA)	(http://www.va.gov)
Persian Gulf Veteran's Illnesses - (DVA)	(http://www.va.gov/health/environ/persgulf.htm)
The Presidential Advisory Commission on Gulf War Illnesses (PAC)	(http://www.gwvi.gov/)
The White House	(http://www.whitehouse.gov/WH/Welcome.html)
The U.S. Senate	(http://www.senate.gov)
The U.S. House of Representatives	(http://www.house.gov)
Library of Congress	(http://www.loc.gov)

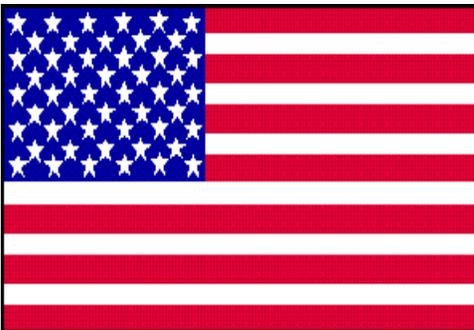
Resources for veterans

Your Ticket to the Information Highway — Visit our GulfLINK web site at:
<http://www.gulfink.osd.mil>

Gulf War Veterans seeking information on VA benefits of all types should call the Gulf War Information Hotline at:
1-800-749-8387

Anyone with information on Gulf War incidents should call the DoD Incident Reporting Line at:
1-800-472-6719

Are you a Gulf War Veteran (or know one) with health problems? Call the DoD Gulf War Veterans Hotline at:
1-800-796-9699



Editor's Notes

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