

Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses
Comments and Recommendations
Regarding Gulf War Research Strategic Plan
June 28, 2011

At its June 27-28, 2011 meeting, the Committee adopted the following recommendation regarding the ORD draft "Gulf War Research Strategic Plan" dated June 21, 2011.

The Committee appreciates ORD staff's preparation of the draft plan in response to the Committee's recommendations made at its February 28-March 1, 2011 meeting and previously, that VA prepare a comprehensive plan with the assistance of knowledgeable outside experts to guide its Gulf War illness research program. The Committee also appreciates the opportunity to provide input to the plan in its draft form.

This rapidly assembled draft understandably needs substantial additional work. Areas to concentrate on particularly include conveying the urgency and importance of the problem, focusing on what research now indicates are the most promising directions rather than discussion of research questions identified in the 1990's, integrating VA Gulf War research studies conducted outside ORD, and providing more detailed objectives and strategies to truly define and direct VA's Gulf War research program.

The Committee welcomes the role being undertaken in this effort by the VA Gulf War steering committee, whose members have also recently received this draft, many of whom participated in the June 27-28, 2011 RAC meeting, including its chair, Dr. Maximillian Buja.

The Committee recommends that the process proposed by Dr. Buja be pursued, in which he would appoint (with input from ORD and the Committee) subcommittees of individuals from the Steering Committee, the Research Advisory Committee, and VA staff to revise the sections of the strategic plan, to develop a revised plan for consideration at a joint meeting of the Steering Committee and the Research Advisory Committee this fall.