# RESPIRATORY HEALTH EFFECTS, AIRBORNE HAZARD EXPOSURES IN SOUTHWEST ASIA THEATER OF OPERATIONS (DESERT SHIELD/STORM)

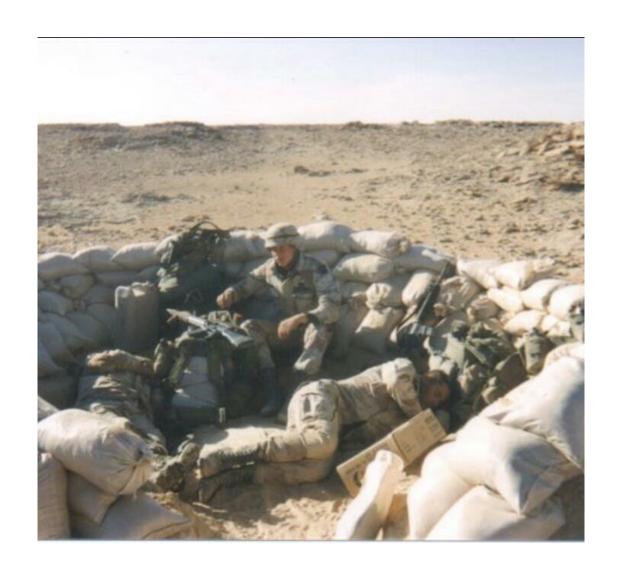
BY, RONALD BROWN

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RESEARCH ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON GULF WAR VETERANS ILLNESSES (RACGWVI)

02/09/2023

WHAT LIFE IN IRAQ WAS LIKE IN MY **UNIT. ROBERT** HAHN PULLING **SECURITY AND** SSGT STEVE COPENING **GETTING SOME REST IN THEIR FIGHTING** POSITION.



**QUOTE FROM** DESERT STORM **VETERAN EDWARD DAVIS ABOUT HIS** BREATHING **ISSUES AFTER** RETURNING BACK TO FORT BRAGG N.C. AFTER THE WAR.

 "Almost immediately upon returning stateside I developed a cough and started getting bronchitis and asthma symptoms."

## OIL WELL FIRES DURING THE GULF WAR

- Between February and November 1991, Iraqi armed forces ignited more than 600 oil well fires, producing dense clouds of soot, liquid, aerosols and gases.
- Plumes of billowing smoke remained low to the ground, in some areas enveloping U.S. military personnel. Exposures were highest during wintertime encampments in Saudi Arabia.



QUOTE FROM
DESERT STORM
VETERAN WALTER
SHELBURNE ABOUT
HIS BREATHING
ISSUES UPON
RETURNING TO
FORT BRAGG N.C.
AFTER THE WAR.

"Upon returning to fort Bragg N.C. after Desert Storm I was diagnosed with chronic sinusitis and asthma. More detailed testing revealed a diagnosis of emphysema and I have never smoked a day in my life."





OIL WELL FIRES FROM THE SERVICE MEMBERS' PERSPECTIVE

**QUOTE FROM** GABRIEL MAXWELL DESERT STORM **VETERAN ABOUT** HIS BREATHING **ISSUES UPON** RETURNING BACK **STATESIDE TO** CAMP PENDLETON CA AT THE END OF THE WAR.

"I was an ironman triathlete, was with Task Force Ripper, First Marines Division. I noticed an inability to uptake Oxygen at the same rate. My airway was restricted and there was a persistent burning sensation in my lungs. Over time I developed a cough which sounds like a smokers cough. Today it's a persistent cough."





## OIL WELL FIRES FROM THE SERVICE MEMBERS' PERSPECTIVE

- Take note of the color of the sand in the tire tracks. All of that black covering the sand was being breathed into service members' lungs.
- That sand is supposed to be white.
- All that residue covered service members' clothing, and was on the food they ate (MRE).
- Fine mist called black rain, soaked service members' clothing.

**QUOTE FROM DESERT STORM VETERAN GEOFFREY BLANKENSHIP ABOUT HIS BREATHING ISSUES UPON RETURNING** BACK TO FORT BRAGG N.C.AFTER THE WAR.

"One of the very first things I noticed was a change in my breathing, I was struggling to make my runs for my P.T. test the medics said I had bronchitis and put me on albuterol inhalers that did not seem to help very much."

## PROXIMITY OF SERVICE MEMBERS TO THE DEMOLITIONS AT KHAMISIYAH ASP.

- Top Photo: Ist Sgt Lance Allen, C Company, I/504 PIR, 82nd Airborne Division
- Bottom Photo: 2/504 PIR, 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division Chris Thomas and members of his squad, all of whom had been afflicted with respiratory issues when they returned after the Gulf War





**QUOTE FROM CLETUS** SLABACH **ABOUT HIS RESPIRATORY** PROBLEMS HE SUFFERED FROM THE GULF WAR.

"I started having respiratory problems while in Iraq. I was coughing up black flem while in Iraq and the coughing continued upon returning back to Fort Bragg N.C. My run times on my PT test went from I2 minutes for the twomile run to over I7 minutes."



**QUOTE FROM RONALD BROWN** DESERT STORM **VETERAN ABOUT** BREATHING ISSUES HE HAD **UPON RETURNING TO** FORT BRAGG N.C. AFTER THE WAR.

"One of the first things I noticed was I struggled to make runs and road marches. I had not had any problems before my deployment to the Gulf War. Even worse was the fact that I could not explain why to my command. In a rapid deployment unit physical fitness is a very important requirement and the leadership is not interested in hearing excuses when you fail a run or fall out of a road march. Now I am stuck with three different inhalers and my respiratory issues have been given four different diagnosis reactive airway disease, asthma, bronchitis and COPD I have never smoked." GULF WAR VETERANS HAVE HAD HIGHER RATES OF RESPIRATORY ILLNESS SINCE RETURNING FROM THEIR SERVICE DURING THE GULF WAR

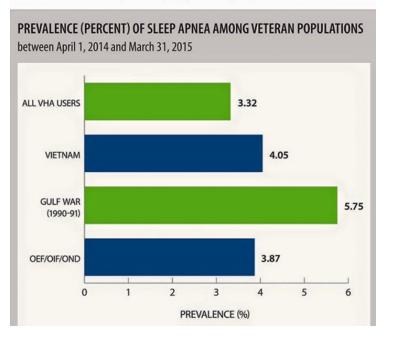
The RACGWVI really needs to make a strong recommendation VA looks into higher rates of sleep apnea in Gulf War Veterans based upon VA's own research which show's higher rates than any other era veterans.



#### Veterans Health Administration (VHA) - U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

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Among Veterans using VA health care services, a higher percentage of Gulf War Veterans experienced sleep apnea compared to Veterans of the Vietnam War, OEF/OIF/OND, and all VA health care users. Learn more in the first issue of the Post-Deployment Surveillance Report: ttp://go.usa.gov/cK3UG



#### publichealth.va.gov HEALTH OF GULF WAR AND GULF WAR ERA VETERANS 15.000 Gulf War Veterans (deployed) and 15.000 Gulf War Era were deployed continue to report poorer health than Veterans who Veterans (non-deployed). VA followed up with these Veterans with did not deploy. However, mental and physical health conditions are another survey in 2012-2013 to learn about their recent physical and common in both deployed and non-deployed Veterans. Read the CHRONIC ILLNESSES of Veterans reported at least one chronic medical condition (82% in deployed Veterans and 78% in non-deployed Veterans) The average number of self-reported chronic medical conditions was 3.5 (3.7 in deployed Veterans and 2.9 in non-deployed Veterans). MENTAL HEALTH SELF REPORTED HEALTH DISORDERS The survey included screening questions to see if Veterans may have certain mental health conditions. POSITIVE SCREEN FOR MAJO DEPRESSIVE DISORDER 45% of study participants screened nositive for at least one mental health condition (52% in deployed Veterans and 39% in non-deployed Veterans). VA OFFERS A VARIETY OF HEALTH CARE BENEFITS TO GULF WAR VETERANS. VISIT HBEXPLORER.VACLOUD.US TO CHECK

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ON BEHALF OF OUR MANY ILL GULF WAR VETERANS, THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND INTEREST

The one thing I hope this presentation has done is give the members on the Committee and those attending todays meeting a clear perspective of the different Toxic Airborne Hazards our Gulf War veterans faced on their deployment. WRITTEN AND VERBAL PERMISSION WAS OBTAINED FOR ALL PICTURES AND QUOTES FROM VETERANS

