



**Department of
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News Release

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Secretary Nicholson: VA Continues Commitment to Gulf War Vets

WASHINGTON – A recent funding increase for research related to illnesses affecting some veterans of the Gulf War – and the establishment of research treatment centers and a pilot program that partners VA with a prominent Texas medical center in studying such illnesses – drew praise today from Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary R. James Nicholson.

The funding increase for Gulf War illness research, the new research treatment centers and the creation of the pilot program at University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas were measures incorporated into the 2006 VA budget by Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-Texas). The budget was recently approved by Congress and signed by President Bush.

“VA is committed to further investigating the unique health care needs of Gulf War veterans, and the establishment of research treatment centers, including this pilot program, will help the department answer the questions that remain on this important issue,” said Nicholson.

Nicholson specifically noted Hutchison’s efforts in establishing the pilot program at the medical center, which is already conducting leading research on various illnesses affecting veterans of the Gulf War.

“I applaud the efforts of Congress and Senator Hutchison, in particular, for her continued commitment to this and other important veterans’ issues,” Nicholson added. “I look forward to working in the future with the senator, and all members of Congress, to ensure that America’s heroes continue to get the world-class care they have earned and deserve.”

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Gulf War Illness 2/2/2/2

Under the terms of the VA budget for 2006, \$15 million per year for five years has been earmarked for specific research on Gulf War veterans' illnesses.

“This new program builds upon VA’s history of caring for Gulf War veterans,” said Dr. Jonathan Perlin, VA Under Secretary for Health. “The strengthened commitment of research will ensure that we explore new ways to provide the best possible treatments to our veterans.”

Ailments ranging from fatigue, weakness and respiratory problems to sleep disturbances, skin rashes and persistent headaches are among the illnesses reported by some veterans who took part in Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm. Some studies have shown that these health care problems and other illnesses have been reported by Gulf War veterans at rates that significantly exceed those reported by veterans who served in other eras.

The funding earmarked in VA’s budget for research on Gulf War veterans’ illnesses allows the department to expand upon 12 research projects it announced earlier this year. Those projects – which are scheduled to begin in 2006 and will focus on enhancing understanding and treatment of illness affecting Gulf War veterans – also pursue the ultimate goal of better addressing any potential long-term health effects that might be connected with Gulf War-related exposures.

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