

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

BY, RONALD BROWN

COMMITTEE MEMBER/GULF WAR VETERAN

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: 1st Sgt Lance Allen, C Company, 1/504 PIR, 82nd Airborne Division
- Bottom Photo: 2/504 PIR, 82nd 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 12 minutes for the two-mile run to over 17 minutes.”



SAND STORMS IN
GULFWAR AS
EXPERIENCED
BY U.S. SERVICE
MEMBERS

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.

VA Veterans Health Administration (VHA) - U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
3 hrs · 🌐

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: <http://go.usa.gov/ck3UG>

PREVALENCE (PERCENT) OF SLEEP APNEA AMONG VETERAN POPULATIONS between April 1, 2014 and March 31, 2015

Population	Prevalence (%)
ALL VHA USERS	3.32
VIETNAM	4.05
GULF WAR (1990-91)	5.75
OEF/OIF/OND	3.87

publichealth.va.gov

HEALTH OF GULF WAR AND GULF WAR ERA VETERANS

In 1995, VA conducted a survey study on the health of a sample of 15,000 Gulf War Veterans (deployed) and 15,000 Gulf War Era Veterans (non-deployed). VA followed up with these Veterans with another survey in 2012-2013 to learn about their recent physical and mental health. About half of the Veterans responded. The survey results indicate that more than 20 years after the war, Veterans who were deployed continue to report poorer health than Veterans who did not deploy. However, mental and physical health conditions are common in both deployed and non-deployed Veterans. Read the full study online at www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26716848.

CHRONIC ILLNESSES

79% of Veterans reported at least one chronic medical condition (82% in deployed Veterans and 78% in non-deployed Veterans).

Condition	Deployed (%)	Non-deployed (%)
GULF WAR ILLNESS	43.9%	20.3%
HYPERTENSION	43.0%	40.0%
FUNCTIONAL DYSPEPSIA	27.7%	15.9%
DERMATITIS	27.4%	21.1%
IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME	24.4%	14.3%
MIGRAINE HEADACHES	20.3%	16.1%
GASTRITIS	20.2%	14.3%
CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME	11.8%	5.3%
ASTHMA	10.2%	9.0%
NEURALGIA	9.4%	6.3%
CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE	8.4%	6.3%
TACHYCARDIA	8.1%	5.9%
CORONARY HEART DISEASE	5.6%	5.3%
FIBROMYALGIA	3.7%	2.9%
SEIZURES	2.7%	2.0%

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 DISORDERS

The survey included screening questions to see if Veterans may have certain mental health conditions.

45% of study participants screened positive for at least one mental health condition (52% in deployed Veterans and 39% in non-deployed Veterans).

Disorder	Deployed (%)	Non-Deployed (%)
POSITIVE SCREEN FOR PTSD	20.9%	11.5%
POSITIVE SCREEN FOR MAJOR DEPRESSIVE DISORDER	32.9%	22.9%
POSITIVE SCREEN FOR OTHER ANXIETY DISORDER	18.7%	14.4%

SELF REPORTED HEALTH

Health Status	Deployed (%)	Non-Deployed (%)
VERY GOOD	10.3%	16.2%
EXCELLENT	3.6%	6.1%

VA OFFERS A VARIETY OF HEALTH CARE BENEFITS TO GULF WAR VETERANS. VISIT HBEXPLORER.VA.CLOUD.US TO CHECK YOUR ELIGIBILITY AND LEARN HOW TO APPLY.

1. Durso EK, Barth SK, Schneiderman AI, Bossarte RM. Physical and Mental Health Status of Gulf War and Gulf War Era Veterans: Results From a Large Population-Based Epidemiological Study. J Occup Environ Med 2016; 58: 41-46.

GULF WAR | WINTER 2016 | WWW.PUBLICHEALTH.VA.GOV

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 today's 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

