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- Chemicals
- Pesticides
- oil fires
- low level radiation

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INFORMATION

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: SAMUEL R. BERGER

SUBJECT: Chemical Weapons and the Gulf War

- Final Report by end of the year

- Expect them to recommend new
Commission to

As you know, in June, the Department of Defense announced that, on March 4, 1991, shortly after the end of the Gulf War, U.S. troops destroyed chemical weapons in a bunker at the Khamisiyah ammunition depot, without knowing it at the time. Since then, DOD has been trying, with varying degrees of success, to determine whether there were any other incidents during or after the war in which U.S. troops potentially may have been exposed to chemical weapons. During the summer, based in part on information from the UN Special Commission (UNSCOM), DOD determined that U.S. forces had been involved in a second chemical weapons demolition operation, at a pit near Khamisiyah on March 10, 1991. In recent weeks, DOD has uncovered information about another demolition operation at Khamisiyah on March 12, 1991 which may have involved chemical weapons.

This new information will need to be considered in the work of the CIA modelers and DOD troop unit location experts who are trying to determine how many U.S. soldiers may have been exposed to low levels of chemical agents at Khamisiyah in March 1991. DOD announced today that, in an effort to be proactive, they will not wait for this work to be completed before sending out notification letters to approximately 21,000 troops who were in the vicinity of Khamisiyah between March 4-15, 1991 (for copies, see Tab A). One letter is being sent to members of units identified as being on-site at Khamisiyah at the time of the demolition operations. A separate letter is going to those identified as being within roughly 50 km. of the site (double the area in which any lethal or sublethal effects would have occurred at the time). These letters will inform recipients of where to call if they have health problems they believe are related to their service in the Gulf and ask them to respond to a survey about their experience at Khamisiyah in March 1991 in order to assist DOD's efforts to determine what happened. Although other troops may need to be contacted later, this notification is a critical step toward furthering DOD's investigation of Khamisiyah and toward caring for our veterans.

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Sent

cc: Vice President
Chief of Staff

In addition to the outreach to veterans, DOD also announced their new information about the possibility of a third chemical weapons demolition operation at Khamisiyah on March 12 and discussed the work underway to try to model the chemical dispersion pattern that might have resulted from the three demolition operations, including plans to have the Institute of Defense Analysis (a DOD-supported research institute) convene an expert panel to evaluate the modeling effort. The Presidential Advisory Committee you established last year, Hill staff and veterans service organizations have been notified about the DOD announcement.

Senior DOD officials are now beginning to recognize that the revelations about Khamisiyah require a fundamentally new approach to their work on Gulf War illnesses. As a consequence, a DOD investigative team is now reviewing thousands of wartime records of other demolition operations as well as re-examining some 26 incidents in which detection equipment reported the possible presence of chemical agents in the environment, including the Czech and French detections discussed in Saturday's New York Times (for the article, see Tab B). A separate team in the Deputy Secretary's office is reviewing the Department's overall effort on Gulf War illnesses, as is the National Academy of Sciences, at DOD's request. DOD has also asked the Institute of Medicine to examine whether other medical tests or treatment should be given to Gulf War veterans in light of the new information about possible chemical exposures, and is launching several million dollars worth of new scientific research aimed at better understanding the potential health effects of exposure to low levels of chemical agents. Here at the White House, we are also enhancing our effort on Gulf War illnesses, bringing into the NSC a two-star admiral from the Coast Guard to coordinate and oversee agencies' work, especially that of DOD, on the issue.

Today's DOD announcement will not create positive stories about the Pentagon's activities in and of themselves; the revelation of a possible third incident and the delay in announcing the results of CIA's modeling work and the number of troops potentially affected are too much for reporters to resist. The announcement should help to demonstrate, however, that DOD is trying to get to the bottom of this problem and is working for veterans, not against them. These efforts, along with the efforts of the White House, the Presidential Advisory Committee, and the Veterans' Administration, should communicate more effectively your commitment and record of "leaving no stone unturned" on this issue.

Attachments

Tab A DOD Letters

Tab B New York Times article

LEVEL 1 - 16 OF 16 STORIES

Copyright 1996 The Washington Post
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September 26, 1996, Thursday, Final Edition

SECTION: A SECTION; Pg. A29; THE FEDERAL PAGE; INSIDE: DEFENSE

LENGTH: 881 words

HEADLINE: Gulf War Syndrome Gets New Diagnosis

BYLINE: Bill McAllister, Washington Post Staff Writer

BODY:

Faced with mounting bipartisan criticism, the Pentagon yesterday promised to reassess its response to mysterious illnesses affecting several thousand Persian Gulf War veterans. It put its second-ranking official in charge of the review.

The decision removes Stephen C. Joseph, the Pentagon's senior doctor, from responsibility for the department's response and replaces him with Deputy Defense Secretary John White.

A congressional source said the action came after senior administration officials sharply criticized the Pentagon's handling of the issue during a Tuesday meeting.

Capt. Mike Doubleday, a Pentagon spokesman, said last night that the action was not a rebuke of Joseph, a former New York City health commissioner.

"It is an effort on the part of Dr. White to focus the attention and resources of the department and, in President Clinton's words, 'to leave no stone unturned' " in the search for what may have made the veterans ill, the spokesman said.

The review will "look across the board at all DOD activities," including intelligence and other areas not under Joseph's authority, Doubleday said.

The new review was disclosed in a letter made public at the start of a highly critical Senate hearing yesterday at which Sen. John D. "Jay" Rockefeller IV (W.Va.), ranking Democrat on the Veterans Affairs Committee, demanded Clinton fire Joseph.

"It's time to face the music -- way past time. It's time for a change at DOD," Rockefeller said, urging the ouster of Joseph, a public health academician who has served as assistant defense secretary for health affairs since 1994. A Rockefeller aide said the senator was not satisfied by the letter, written by White, and still believes Joseph had failed to move aggressively to discover why so many veterans from the 1991 conflict are suffering from a number of mysterious maladies known as the "Gulf War Syndrome."

More than 3,000 veterans from the war against Iraq have reported suffering from sore joints, headaches, chronic fatigue and other ailments they have said



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they believe were the result of exposure to Iraqi chemical or biological weapons.

Last week the Pentagon acknowledged that as many as 5,000 American troops may have been exposed to chemical agents as U.S. forces blew up ammunition in a remote weapons site.

Rockefeller and a bipartisan chorus used the joint hearing by the Senate intelligence and Veterans Affairs committees to express exasperation for why it took the Defense Department five years to confirm the veterans' complaints.

"We can do better. And we must do better," Rockefeller asserted. "That is why I have decided to call upon the president to bring new health leadership to the DOD."

Joseph maintained that the government's response to complaints of ailing Gulf War veterans had been instigated long before he took charge of the Pentagon's health programs in March 1994. He strongly defended the federal government's response, telling senators it would take more scientific studies to discover what happened to the troops.

"We cannot hurry science," he cautioned.

Although Joseph acknowledged that intelligence agencies knew of the presence of chemical weapons at a remote Iraqi site called Khamisiyah in 1991, he said their medical significance only recently was realized.

"This was not in our awareness until June of this year," he said. "I'm not making an excuse. I'm telling you what happened."

The criticisms were bipartisan. Sen. John F. Kerry (D-Mass.) said the government had given the veterans "a great stiff-arm" and Sen. Richard C. Shelby (R-Ala.) denounced "a shameful campaign of obstruction and delay" over the veterans' illnesses.

Senate intelligence committee Chairman Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) expressed surprise at the White letter, describing it as an obvious attempt to blunt criticism of the Pentagon.

In the letter to Sen. Strom Thurmond (R-S.C.), chairman of the Armed Services Committee, White said the Pentagon was "redoubling our efforts, broadening the scope of our investigations and adding additional resources" to investigate the illnesses.

White said the Defense Department would use more outside help reassessing the veterans' complaints and that he was directing Joseph to consider still more research projects.

The Army's inspector general has been ordered to conduct an inquiry into the destruction of weapons at Khamisiyah where some of the chemical bombs were destroyed shortly after the cease-fire, White said.

Defense Secretary William J. Perry's intelligence assistant also was asked to conduct an inquiry into whether the Pentagon mishandled early intelligence reports by United Nations teams on the chemical weapons destroyed at the site.



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Joseph and Kenneth W. Kizer, undersecretary for veterans affairs, remained firm in their belief that, as Kizer put it, "there is no Gulf War Syndrome in the strict medical sense of the term."

Ailing veterans from the war have exhibited a number of complaints, but these do not point to a "single, unique disease," Kizer said.

Moreover, both doctors told the committees that all medical research indicates long-term chronic illnesses are usually presaged by acute clinical signs and symptoms, something few of the Persian Gulf veterans have exhibited.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: September 26, 1996



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LEVEL 1 - 15 OF 16 STORIES

Copyright 1996 The Washington Post
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September 27, 1996, Friday, Final Edition

SECTION: A SECTION; Pg. A15; DEFENSE & DIPLOMACY

LENGTH: 263 words

HEADLINE: Gulf Troops Not Informed Of Test Drug, Pentagon Says

BODY:

The Pentagon said yesterday it did not tell U.S. troops in the 1991 Persian Gulf War that an anti-nerve gas drug they took was experimental, because it did not want Iraq to learn of U.S. defenses.

Investigators are now studying whether the drug, pyridostigmine bromide, in combination with insecticides or other chemicals used in the Gulf War, might be one cause of illnesses veterans have suffered since the war.

"I believe there was a conscious decision made at the time not to tell the troops," a Defense Department spokesman, Navy Capt. Michael Doubleday, said.

"And the reason that that was done was that there was enormous concern at the time of raising any specter and any concern . . . with the Iraqis that we were prepared to defend against certain kinds of chemical weapons," he said.

"In retrospect, had circumstances been otherwise, we probably would have proceeded differently," Doubleday said.

But he said the Defense Department believed then and now that the drug was safe and would have been an effective defense if Iraq had launched nerve gas against coalition forces.

Doubleday said a large study found that less than 0.1 percent of the troops suffered side effects, such as nausea, cramps and headaches, that would have caused them to be taken off the drug.

But the federal Food and Drug Administration said it gave the Defense Department a waiver from normal consent requirements during the war with several conditions, including that the U.S. troops be told it was being used as an anti-nerve gas drug on an experimental basis.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

COUNTRY: IRAQ;

LOAD-DATE: September 27, 1996



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September 28, 1996, Saturday, Final Edition

SECTION: A SECTION; Pg. A18; DEFENSE & DIPLOMACY

LENGTH: 242 words

HEADLINE: Pentagon Alters Stand On Gulf War Drug Testing

BODY:

The Defense Department said yesterday it did not deliberately withhold information from U.S. troops in the 1991 Persian Gulf War on an anti-nerve gas drug to keep Iraq from learning about U.S. defenses.

Almost completely reversing comments made at a Pentagon briefing Thursday, it said troops were not told the drug was being used on an investigational basis and might have side effects but said that information was not deliberately withheld from them.

Researchers are studying whether the drug, pyridostigmine bromide (PB), in combination with chemicals in the Gulf War, might be one cause for illnesses among thousands of veterans.

On Capitol Hill, Sen. John D. "Jay" Rockefeller IV (W.Va.) called on Defense Secretary William J. Perry to fire the Pentagon's top health official. Rockefeller, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, told Perry in a letter that the Pentagon has "squandered its credibility" on the issue of Gulf War illness.

The senator did not name a specific official in his letter. But a spokeswoman for Rockefeller, Laura Quinn, said he was referring to Stephen C. Joseph, the Pentagon's assistant secretary for health affairs.

Perry has been attending a NATO meeting in Norway, but a spokesman said both Perry and Deputy Defense Secretary John D. White "continue to have the full and utmost confidence" in Joseph and that "no changes" in "health leadership are being contemplated."

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: September 28, 1996



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October 02, 1996, Wednesday, Final Edition

SECTION: A SECTION; Pg. A12

LENGTH: 627 words

HEADLINE: Poison Gas Exposure Estimate Is Growing; More Than 15,000 May Have
Been Affected in Gulf Region, Pentagon Says

BYLINE: Dana Priest, Washington Post Staff Writer

BODY:

For four years, the Pentagon maintained that U.S. soldiers in the Persian Gulf War had not been exposed to chemical or biological weapons. In June, the Defense Department acknowledged that up to 400 engineers might have come in contact with poison gas. By last week the estimate of soldiers who might have been affected had risen to 5,000.

Yesterday, Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon announced that "a very large number" of soldiers, probably far more than 15,000, could have been exposed to a chemical weapons explosion in 1991.

And after weeks of bipartisan criticism by Congress and a barrage of unfavorable news reports, Bacon also announced that the department would bring in the National Academy of Sciences and its Institute of Medicine to scrutinize its investigation.

Last week it put the department's second-ranking official, Deputy Defense Secretary John P. White, in charge of a new investigation.

"It's an attempt to try to get to the bottom of the questions raised about" the Gulf War illness, Bacon said yesterday, in explaining why the two science bodies were brought to the effort. "We have to pay more attention to the possibility that there was an explosion of chemical weapons."

Over the past four years, more than 50,000 men and women who served in the Persian Gulf region have received medical examinations from military or Veterans Affairs physicians for chronic health problems that the veterans believe resulted from their service there. The symptoms, typically chronic fatigue, headaches, skin rash and memory loss, have been dubbed Gulf War Syndrome.

The Defense Department had maintained that there was no evidence of any exposure to chemical or biological weapons. But in June, the Pentagon announced that chemical weapons -- nerve and mustard gas -- were present when a site known as "Bunker 73" was destroyed by military munitions experts on March 4, 1991. Later they said chemical weapons were also contained in rockets found in a pit two miles away and blown up by U.S. troops March 10, 1991.

United Nations inspections teams have said the pit contained several hundred



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122mm rockets that carry the poison gases.

Last week the Pentagon acknowledged that as many as 5,000 U.S. troops might have been exposed to chemical agents. Yesterday, Bacon said the 5,000 estimate would grow "considerably," but said he could not be more precise.

"My expectation is that, based on the amount of chemical weapons in the pit and what we've been told, there could be a very large number of troops included in a possible cloud area," Bacon said, referring to the cloud of gas that would have been released upon detonation. "We have to think in terms of big numbers."

Pressed to be more specific, he said: "I just don't think we know at this stage, but we have to think in terms of big numbers, bigger than 15,000 certainly."

The higher estimate will be based on a CIA computer model. The model will take into account such things as the estimated amount of poison gas in weapons in the pit, the rate the gas would burn off and dissipate after detonation and the weather and wind pattern on March 10 five years ago. With that information, it will produce an estimate for the size of the contaminated plume, or cloud, of gas, and where it would have drifted. At the same time, Pentagon investigators are trying to determine how many troops were in the exposed area.

"First we have to figure out the size of the cloud and then figure out who's underneath it," Bacon said.

Then, they will have to determine whether the exposure could have caused any of the reported illnesses. No illnesses are known to result from one- or two-time exposure to nerve gas at concentrations that are too low to cause acute symptoms.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: October 02, 1996



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October 3, 1996, Thursday, Late Edition - Final

SECTION: Section A; Page 1; Column 2; National Desk

LENGTH: 1625 words

HEADLINE: U.S. JETS POUNDED IRAQI ARMS DEPOT STORING NERVE GAS

BYLINE: By PHILIP SHENON

BODY:

American intelligence reports show that the United States conducted an extensive bombing campaign during the Persian Gulf war against a sprawling ammunition depot in southern Iraq that was later determined to have then contained chemical weapons.

The Pentagon has previously acknowledged the possibility that some American soldiers might have been exposed to Iraqi chemical or biological agents when United States combat engineers blew up part of the Kamisiyah ammunition depot in March 1991, after the gulf war ended. But the air strikes raise the possibility that such agents wafted over thousands of American troops in Saudi Arabia, where they were then preparing for the ground invasion of Iraq, several weeks before the engineers' operation.

Both the Pentagon and the United Nations, which is responsible for weapons inspections in Iraq, say they have no evidence that air strikes on the depot resulted in the release of chemical weapons. But many chemical agents dissipate quickly, which means there may have been no trace of them by the time inspectors arrived at the depot, months after the bombing.

Much of the rest of the depot was destroyed after the war by the engineers, many of whom have since complained of debilitating ailments that they link to exposure to chemical or biological agents there. Their symptoms, including chronic fatigue, digestive ailments and joint pain, are considered typical of the so-called gulf war syndrome reported by thousands of American soldiers.

The Pentagon announced last June, more than five years after the war, that it was investigating the possibility that the combat engineers might have been exposed to nerve gas when they blew up the complex.

And Pentagon officials said this week that as a result of those explosions, clouds of chemical agents might have wafted over more than 15,000 American troops, more than three times an earlier estimate.

A senior Pentagon official told reporters yesterday that a belated appreciation of what occurred at Kamisiyah had caused the Defense Department to reconsider its entire approach to looking for evidence of gulf war syndrome.

The official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the events at



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The New York Times, October 3, 1996

Kamisiyah had made the Pentagon more vigilant in its examination of clues that might corroborate the claims of many veterans that they were made ill by chemicals during the war. "Kamisiyah is a watershed in the search for information," he said. "Kamisiyah is the first time we have been able to place American troops in the presence of chemical weapons. This changes the way we think about this subject."

Among the several hundred engineers who helped demolish the Kamisiyah depot in 1991 and have recently been interviewed by the Pentagon, the official said, there has been no evidence of any extraordinary frequency of illness. But the official said the Pentagon was nonetheless establishing a special research team to review the Kamisiyah incident and to search for any similar incidents not yet discovered.

At the time of its announcement last June concerning the combat engineers, the Defense Department did not disclose that the same depot had also been bombed repeatedly during the air war. And Government intelligence documents on the air strikes there, which had been made public last year, were suddenly withdrawn from public inspection last February, along with hundreds of other documents.

One intelligence report -- dated Feb. 3, 1991, the 18th day of the air war against Iraq -- says 37 storage buildings at the Kamisiyah depot were destroyed in the air attacks, along with about 10,000 tons of ammunition.

The document describes the depot as a primary target for American bombers and says the air strikes there accounted for "the most extensive hit to ammunition storage structures thus far" in the war.

The United Nations and the Pentagon say that all available evidence shows that nerve gas at Kamisiyah was stored only in a single bunker and in a dirt pit on the outskirts of the huge depot. Neither, they say, was damaged in the air war.

And Pentagon officials insist that the Feb. 3, 1991, report vastly overstates the damage that was actually done by the aerial bombing on the depot, which spread across nearly 20 square miles of the southern Iraqi desert and was about 100 miles north of Saudi staging areas where tens of thousands of American troops awaited the start of the ground war.

"We do not believe that any troops were exposed to chemical agents as a result of the bombing," the Pentagon said in a statement prepared in response to a reporter's questions.

United Nations weapons inspectors first visited Kamisiyah in October 1991, eight months after the end of the war. Sarin, one of the nerve agents stored at the Iraqi depot, can dissipate in minutes, and any trace of chemical agents might have vanished before the weapons inspectors arrived.

The Pentagon has acknowledged that groups of French and Czech troops made reports to their superiors about as many as seven detections of chemical weapons from Jan. 19 to Jan. 25, 1991, most of them in areas near the Saudi staging points for United States troops.

But the United States Government has said it believes that chemical agents

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The New York Times, October 3, 1996

were released during the air war only at two other Iraqi complexes, both of them more than twice the distance from the Saudi staging areas as was Kamisiyah. And the Pentagon has insisted that there is no evidence that large numbers of American soldiers were ever made sick because of chemical or biological agents.

The intelligence reports were among hundreds of documents made public last year on an Internet site maintained by the Defense Department for gulf war veterans. But the documents were withdrawn from the site in February, four months before the Pentagon announced that the engineers might have been exposed to chemical weapons at the Kamisiyah depot when they blew it up.

The Pentagon said the intelligence reports had been pulled off the Internet at the request of the Central Intelligence Agency. A C.I.A. spokesman, Rick Oborn, said that the documents had been withdrawn "because of intelligence sensitivities" and that their removal had been entirely unrelated to the announcement four months later that American troops might have been exposed to chemical agents at Kamisiyah. "The issue of Kamisiyah," he said, "had nothing to do with the action that was taken."

Pentagon officials said the C.I.A. had believed that the documents had been declassified too quickly and that they exposed too much information about American intelligence-gathering methods. Most of the documents pulled off the Internet in February were returned later in the year, but not the documents on Kamisiyah.

These documents were obtained by James Tuite 3d, a Washington security consultant who directed an investigation of gulf war illnesses by the Senate Banking Committee in 1993-94. Mr. Tuite said he believed that there was no innocent explanation for the Government's decision to withdraw the documents from public inspection.

"I find it disturbing that all of the documents regarding Kamisiyah were withdrawn, including those that showed that 37 bunkers had been destroyed in the bombing," he said. "The whole appearance that we see emerging here is one of political or bureaucratic damage limitation, admitting only what they absolutely have to admit."

Because of heavy censorship by the Government before the documents were released on the Internet, it is difficult to identify their authors or the agencies for which those authors worked. But two of the documents are labeled "Bomb Damage Assessment" or "B.D.A." and refer to the "Tal al Lahm Ammunition depot," another name for the depot at Kamisiyah.

The Feb. 3 intelligence report was titled "Special B.D.A. Study on Iraqi Military Support Production and Storage Capability." It reported "significant losses" at Kamisiyah and two other ammunition depots that "will affect Iraq efforts inasmuch as these facilities were either within or in close proximity to the theater" of operations where American troops operated during the war.

A report dated Feb. 4, 1991, describes "40 new craters in six rows" running from southeast to northwest as a result of the bombing at Kamisiyah. "Three impacts caused light damage to nearby structures," the report says. "They were: 2 storage bunkers." Much of the rest of the document was blackened out, on

The New York Times, October 3, 1996

grounds of national security.

In its prepared response to a reporter's questions, the Pentagon said that "our current thinking, based on reports from U.S. units involved in the weapons destruction after the war" and on United Nations reports, "is that while the Kamisiyah facility was bombed during the air war, neither Bunker 73 nor the pit area were damaged during the bombing." Bunker 73 was the bunker later determined to have contained shells filled with nerve gas, and it was destroyed by American ground troops.

Although the Feb. 3 report states that 37 ammunition sites were destroyed in the allied bombing, the Pentagon now says that "we believe that three or possibly four bunkers -- of a total of about 100 -- were damaged by bombing." Pentagon officials said the 1991 report had dramatically exaggerated the bombing's effect.

If the Pentagon's account is accurate, it would seem to call into question the effectiveness of the department's multibillion-dollar program to gather intelligence in a war zone through satellites and its ability to determine the effectiveness of American air strikes.

"This raises questions about their entire ability to do bomb damage assessments based on satellite imagery," Mr. Tuite said. "That kind of gross exaggeration would be incredible."

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: October 3, 1996



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October 08, 1996, Tuesday, Final Edition

SECTION: EDITORIAL; Pg. A18

LENGTH: 534 words

HEADLINE: Nerve Gas Stonewall

BODY:

FOR FIVE years, the Pentagon insisted that no troops were exposed to chemical weapons during the gulf war. Strong evidence now points to a contrary conclusion. The staff of an independent presidential commission believes that the Pentagon's prolonged failure to search for or consider relevant evidence that might undermine its early assumptions "has served to gravely undermine the credibility" of Defense Department inquiries. The staff further concluded -- correctly -- that an outside body now should take over.

This is a vital matter for thousands of military men and women who believe their current ill health can be traced to service in the Persian Gulf in 1990 and 1991. More than 30,000 out of the 700,000 who went to the gulf region during the war against Iraq have enrolled in a medical registry, and many more may have complaints. Reported symptoms -- including chronic and debilitating fatigue, skin rashes, memory loss, joint pain and more -- are frustratingly varied and so far do not point to any single syndrome, illness or cause. Some investigators believe stress may play a role. Others are not convinced that the incidence of ill health among gulf war veterans is higher than in the general population.

But unquestionably the suffering of many of these veterans is real, and the government has an obligation to pursue any lead that might shed light on their conditions. That is why the years of stonewalling -- not a coverup as much as a reluctance to investigate -- are so damaging. Until recently, the Pentagon insisted that because no soldiers reported acute nerve-gas symptoms during the war, there can have been no exposure.

But now, in part thanks to a United Nations report that was available as early as 1992, the Defense Department acknowledges that some troops may have been exposed inadvertently to nerve gas days after the war, when U.S. forces were blowing up Iraqi arsenals that they believed at the time to contain only conventional weapons. Pentagon spokesmen first admitted that a few hundred Army engineers might have been exposed to low levels of gas, then upped the number to several thousand, then to "a very large number," likely more than 15,000.

It is important to note that release of gas does not necessarily mean there was exposure, and exposure may well have caused no illness. There is no evidence that brief, low-level exposure to nerve gas, causing no immediate ill effects, leads to any chronic disability. But it also is true that little is known about the subject; more aggressive Pentagon inquiries would have led to earlier commencement of relevant research.



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The Washington Post, October 08, 1996

The Presidential Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses is likely to praise some aspects of the government's response to the baffling gulf war illnesses in its final report later this year. Already many commissions have met, and many research projects are underway. But the Pentagon's handling of the chemical-weapons issue -- including its inflexibility and its "slow, reluctant, on-again-off-again release of information" -- has "fallen short of the mark," committee staff found. Gulf war veterans now deserve an independent investigation of this matter.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: October 08, 1996

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October 10, 1996, Thursday, Final Edition

SECTION: A SECTION; Pg. A06

LENGTH: 1005 words

HEADLINE: Scientists Say Evidence Lacking to Tie 'Syndrome' to 1991 Gulf War;
House Subcommittee Criticizes Report

BYLINE: David Brown, Washington Post Staff Writer

BODY:

A prestigious committee of scientists, epidemiologists and physicians reported yesterday there is no evidence of a mysterious chronic illness arising from military service in the Persian Gulf War.

The group suggested, however, that the effects of psychological stress seen in all wars may be more noticeable among Gulf War veterans because that conflict was so nearly devoid of more dramatic and lethal injuries.

Furthermore, recent revelations that some soldiers may have been exposed to small amounts of nerve gas are unlikely to explain the lingering physical complaints of many veterans, the committee said. Nevertheless, it said such a possibility "has to be explored" in future research.

The observations were made by an 18-member committee assembled by the Institute of Medicine (IOM), which was asked by Congress and the Defense and Veterans Affairs departments to review current research on "the health consequences of service during the Persian Gulf War."

The IOM is a nonprofit organization affiliated with the National Academy of Sciences. The current committee formed three years ago and issued its initial findings last year. Yesterday's 140-page document is the final, more detailed report.

Since the end of the Gulf War in early 1991, an unknown number -- though possibly tens of thousands -- of Gulf War veterans have experienced chronic illness. Among their commonly mentioned complaints are fatigue, headache, skin rashes, muscle and joint pain, loss of memory and mood changes.

These illnesses have come to be called "Gulf War Syndrome," though in fact there is no clear-cut medical definition of the illness. Like the Institute of Medicine committee, several previous "blue-ribbon" scientific panels have said they doubt a distinct, war-related chronic illness exists.

Debate about a mystery illness, however, increased this summer after the Pentagon revealed that thousands of soldiers may have been exposed to small amounts of poison gas when two Iraqi munitions dumps were intentionally destroyed in March 1991. Some veterans believe the gas has caused long-lasting



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nervous system damage, even though there wasn't enough of it to cause acute problems or death.

Though it's unclear whether any soldiers had contact with the poison gas, more than 15,000 were close enough to the explosions that exposure was theoretically possible, according to recent defense department announcements. The Pentagon and Central Intelligence Agency are now "modeling" both the explosions and the weather at the time to estimate the likelihood that any gas that was not incinerated made contact with troops.

The IOM committee's job was to review research on Gulf War illnesses and to suggest ways the military could improve data collection in the future. As part of that work, however, the panel also offered its observations about the possible causes of chronic illness in veterans, based on current research, past research, and long-standing biological principles.

"The committee has not identified scientific evidence to date demonstrating adverse health consequences specifically of [Gulf War] service other than the documented incidents of leishmaniasis [a rare tropical infection], combat-related or injury-related mortality or morbidity, and increased risk of psychiatric sequelae [consequences] of deployment," the members wrote.

There are now more than 30 scientific studies of Gulf War illness underway. Some are attempting to answer basic epidemiological questions such as whether there is more illness among soldiers who went to the gulf than among soldiers who served elsewhere. Others are laboratory experiments aimed at trying to learn about the effects of pesticides, chemical fumes, anti-nerve agent drugs and other "exposures" soldiers faced. Almost none of the studies has been completed.

"The committee recognizes that studies provided thus far do not comprise a comprehensive scientific investigation of the health consequences of service" in the gulf, the members added.

As have several other expert panels, the IOM committee paid great attention to the psychological stress caused by rapid deployment to the gulf, the harsh conditions there, ubiquitous fears of gas attacks, and sudden re-entry to American life. It also noted that these -- and more obvious combat-related stresses -- were probably the cause of chronic illnesses reported among veterans of every American war back to the Civil War. The Gulf War, however, was different in one important way, the panel said.

"Puzzling reactions and symptoms seen during and after prior conflicts may have been incorrectly attributed to battle casualties and infectious diseases that were considered unavoidable and even relatively acceptable outcomes of war," the committee members wrote. "Thus, the lower prevalence of battle injuries and infections in the Gulf theater may have unmasked psychophysiological symptoms that were present in earlier conflicts but attributed to injury and casualty."

This aspect of the report was immediately criticized by a staff member of a House subcommittee, chaired by Rep. Christopher Shays (R-Conn.), that has held four hearings on "Gulf War Syndrome" in the last year.

"While we feel stress could have played a part in some of the illnesses of these veterans, we still think there is something much larger going on here,"



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The Washington Post, October 10, 1996

said Robert Newman. In particular, he noted that most of the IOM committee's work was done before the possible nerve gas exposure from the munitions dump was known.

The chairman of the IOM panel, however, said those revelations would not change the report because no link has been made between gas exposure and symptoms in soldiers. In fact, said John C. Bailar III, it is not even known if the troops near the Iraqi dumps have an unusual number of chronic physical complaints.

"If that link is demonstrated by further research, then the situation changes dramatically," said Bailar, who is an epidemiologist at the University of Chicago.

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LEVEL 1 - 2 OF 16 STORIES

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October 11, 1996, Friday, Final Edition

SECTION: A SECTION; Pg. A10

LENGTH: 335 words

HEADLINE: Pentagon Delays CIA Data on Gulf War Ills

BYLINE: Charles Aldinger, Reuter

BODY:

Announcing a delay in CIA efforts to help solve a major medical mystery, the Pentagon said yesterday it may never know how many Persian Gulf War troops might have been exposed to Iraqi chemical agents.

Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon said the Central Intelligence Agency and the Pentagon will have private experts review a new CIA study of a cloud of sarin nerve gas from the 1991 destruction of an Iraqi ammunition dump.

The review could delay release of the spy agency's "model" of the wind-blown cloud from the Kamisiyah dump in southern Iraq until after the Nov. 5 presidential election, but Bacon denied any political motive in the decision. "The reason there is no political connection is it will not help us to delay this," Bacon said when asked by reporters if there was an attempt to put off bad news on President Clinton's behalf in a growing controversy.

The Defense Department this month said at least 15,000 and perhaps far more U.S. Gulf War troops might have been exposed to sarin when Kamisiyah was destroyed by U.S. military engineers.

"I think it is important to realize that we will never have a precise, definitive picture of how chemical agents may have been dispersed on March 10, 1991, from Kamisiyah," Bacon said.

"It is impossible to go back and reconstruct precise wind patterns. It's impossible for us even to know how many weapons were exploded, how many jumped out of the pit, how many of them propelled themselves into the sand and buried themselves, how many didn't explode at all."

The CIA, using weather patterns and other information, has been working in recent weeks to develop a "model" of the cloud that drifted from the dump and how it was influenced by weather and other factors.

The Defense Department said no deaths have been caused by chemical agents and it has been unable to find any illnesses caused by such agents or any common cause of "Gulf War Syndrome" -- which describes an array of complaints ranging from numbness to memory loss.

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October 23, 1996, Wednesday, Late Edition - Final

SECTION: Section A; Page 1; Column 6; National Desk

LENGTH: 952 words

HEADLINE: RANGE IS EXPANDED IN FEDERAL SEARCH FOR VICTIMS OF GAS

BYLINE: By PHILIP SHENON

DATELINE: WASHINGTON, Oct. 22

BODY:

The Pentagon said today that it would notify 20,000 veterans of the 1991 gulf war -- four times the number previously announced -- that they might have been exposed to nerve gas and blistering agents when a battalion of American combat engineers blew up an Iraqi ammunition depot that was later determined to have contained chemical weapons.

The announcement greatly expands the search for gulf war veterans who may have suffered exposure to clouds of chemical agents released from the Kamisiyah ammunition depot in southern Iraq in March 1991, shortly after the war.

The Defense Department had announced last month that it would contact 5,000 troops who were within 25 kilometers, or about 16 miles, of the sprawling depot when large parts of it were destroyed on March 4 and March 10, 1991. The search was expanded today to an estimated 20,000 veterans who were within 50 kilometers, or about 31 miles.

"Right now, this is our best guess of the people who could have come even close to very minimal exposure," said Kenneth Bacon, the department's chief spokesman.

Mr. Bacon explained that the area to be examined for possible chemical exposure had been expanded because "we decided to be safe, to go double that."

He warned, however, that the estimate of the number of veterans who may have been exposed to the chemicals could grow again if a computer model under review by the Central Intelligence Agency showed that the chemicals might have wafted over other areas of the Persian Gulf where American soldiers were deployed.

"Depending on what we learn from the C.I.A. model after it's been reviewed," Mr. Bacon said, "we may decide we have to notify more people." The agency's computer model of weather patterns and other scientific data is not expected to be released publicly for several weeks.

Thousands of gulf war veterans have complained of a variety of ailments, including chronic fatigue, chronic nausea and joint pain, that are sometimes known collectively as gulf war syndrome.



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The New York Times, October 23, 1996

The Pentagon also disclosed today that American troops might have blown up a third site within the Kamisiyah arsenal on March 12, raising at least the possibility of another, later chemical exposure. Officials said that combat logs suggested that hundreds of rockets were destroyed in a third blast, although there was no evidence to suggest that they definitely contained chemical agents.

Ailing gulf war veterans have accused the Pentagon of ignoring evidence that they were made sick by exposure to Iraqi chemical or biological weapons, and the string of recent announcements about the size of the potential exposure have fueled outrage and suspicion among many veterans groups.

Documents made public in recent months show that American military commanders ignored repeated warnings during the war that low levels of nerve gas and other chemical weapons had been detected in the vicinity of hundreds of thousands of American troops.

"Kamisiyah is by no means an isolated incident," said James J. Tuite 3d, a former Congressional investigator whose inquiry for the Senate Banking Committee in 1993 and 1994 uncovered evidence of dozens of possible chemical exposures in the gulf war.

Mr. Tuite said the Pentagon's focus solely on Kamisiyah was "misleading because there are many, many other incidents in which American soldiers were exposed to chemicals, in similar ways."

During a news briefing at the Pentagon, senior officials acknowledged again and again that the Defense Department was struggling to understand what had happened at Kamisiyah. Despite persistent reports of unexplained ailments among some of the 700,000 veterans who served in the Persian Gulf, the Pentagon has said repeatedly that it has no medical evidence of widespread gas poisoning or a gulf war syndrome.

Defense Department officials have said that they confirmed only this year that nerve gas and mustard agent had been stored at Kamisiyah in March 1991 and that Americans may have been exposed to the chemicals when they destroyed the depot.

"We had no evidence that there had been chemical exposure until this spring," Mr. Bacon said. "And when we found there was evidence, we announced it. It was a watershed event."

Another senior Pentagon official, speaking at the news conference on condition that he not be named, was even blunter in acknowledging how little the Pentagon knows about chemical exposure in the gulf war.

"We are in no position today to say that we are certain about anything with regard to possible chemical presence or release," he said. "We are looking everywhere we can. We're going to follow up ever report we get."

The Pentagon said it was trying to telephone the 1,100 soldiers who were directly involved in the demolition of the Kamisiyah depot. The other 18,900 veterans, it said, would receive certified letters with a questionnaire about their memory of the events of March 1991 and about their health.



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The New York Times, October 23, 1996

The combat engineers responsible for the demolition were from the Army's 37th Engineer Battalion, but they were surrounded by soldiers from dozens of other military units, including the 82d Airborne, 101st Airborne and 24th Infantry Divisions.

"We've decided, after looking at the facts, that it would be best to go out and aggressively reach out to those 20,000 people," Mr. Bacon said. "We want to make sure that we have the best possible information from troops there at the time about where they were and what they did."

The Pentagon said soldiers who believed they had been within 50 kilometers of Kamisiyah were being asked to call a toll-free hot line -- (800) 472-6719 -- with information about the March 1991 incidents and about their health.

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