

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 7, 2012

**VA Supports Gulf War Veterans on Multiple Fronts**

It has now been 22 years since the start of the 1990-1991 Gulf War which comprises the deployment and combat operations known as Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Almost 700,000 Servicemembers were deployed during this period. Those Veterans who have enrolled in the VA health care system have made over 2 million outpatient visits for health care and had over 20,000 inpatient admissions in the VA health care system.

“The Department of Veterans Affairs has not forgotten the service and dedication of Gulf War Veterans,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “We continue to provide high-quality health care and benefits to them while we invest in research that helps us understand and treat Gulf War Veterans’ illnesses.”

In support of care and services to the Veterans of the first Gulf War, VA has led efforts to better understand and characterize Gulf War Veterans’ illnesses and to improve treatment. Research initiatives have included:

* Funding an independent Institute of Medicine (IOM) review of scientific and medical research related to treatment of chronic multi-symptom illness among Gulf War Veterans. The report is expected in 2013.
* Funding and encouraging a wide spectrum of research focused on identifying new treatments to help Gulf War Veterans, including studies on pain, muscle and bone disorders, autoimmune disease, neurodegenerative disease, sleep disorders, gastrointestinal disorders, respiratory problems, and other chronic diseases. Research is ongoing in other conditions, as well, that may affect Gulf War Veterans, such as brain cancer, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (Lou Gehrig’s disease, or ALS), and multiple sclerosis.
* Launching in May 2012, the third follow-up study of a national cohort of Gulf War and Gulf War Era Veterans (earlier studies were conducted in 1995 and 2005; the health surveys are done to understand possible health effects of service and guide health care delivery).
* Continuing the clinical, research, and education activities of the War Related Illness and Injury Study Center program which focuses on post-deployment health.

VA is also improving care and services for Gulf War Veterans through initiatives outlined in the 2011 GWVI Task Force Report. These include the evaluation of a clinical care model specifically for Gulf War Veterans and of enhanced education for health care providers about Gulf War Veterans’ concerns. Additionally, a VA Gulf War Research Strategic Plan has been developed to address effective treatment for the symptoms experienced by some Gulf War Veterans and to guide efforts toward improvements in diagnosis, the understanding of genetic and biologic factors related to Gulf War Veterans’ illnesses, and the application of research findings in Veterans’ health care.

VA provides care for Veterans of all eras as part of its mission. VA operates the nation’s largest integrated health care system. With a health care budget of more than $50 billion, VA expects to provide care to 6.1 million patients during 920,000 inpatient hospital admissions and nearly 80 million outpatient visits during 2012. VA’s health care network includes 152 major medical centers and more than 800 community-based outpatient clinics.   
 For more information on Gulf War Veterans’ illnesses, see: <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/gulfwar/>.

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