



THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON

December 12, 2005



Commemorating 75 Years of Service

The Honorable Lane Evans
Ranking Democratic Member
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Evans:

I am responding to your letter of October 13, 2005, regarding the review of various disability awards for Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). A similar response has been sent to Senator Akaka.

Plans for that review arose out of a report of the Department of Veterans Affairs Office of the Inspector General (OIG) that found deficiencies in the processing of a number of PTSD claims.

After a further review of the cases where the OIG found discrepancies, it was determined that most of the problems encountered were of an administrative nature. That being the case, I determined not to conduct the extensive retrospective review of PTSD cases that had been proposed. Enclosed is a press release, dated November 10, that clarifies that decision.

I appreciate your concern for America's veterans and look forward to working with you in the years ahead to ensure that all veterans receive the benefits to which they are entitled. Specifically with regard to PTSD, we are committed to providing our veterans with compassionate, timely, and world-class health care and appropriate compensation for their disabilities.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. James Nicholson".

R. James Nicholson

Enclosure



**Department of
Veterans Affairs**

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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 10, 2005

No Across-the-Board Review of PTSD Cases – Secretary Nicholson

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will not review the files of 72,000 veterans currently receiving disability compensation for post-traumatic stress disorder, the Department's secretary announced today.

On May 19, 2005, VA's Inspector General reported on an examination of the files of a sample of 2,100 randomly selected veterans with disability ratings for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The IG cited insufficient documentation in the files and a dramatic increase in veterans filing for disability compensation for post-traumatic stress disorder since 1999.

"We have now just completed our own careful review of those 2,100 files cited in the IG's report," said the Honorable R. James Nicholson, Secretary of Veterans Affairs. "The problems with these files appear to be administrative in nature, such as missing documents, and not fraud."

"In the absence of evidence of fraud, we're not going to put our veterans through the anxiety of a widespread review of their disability claims," Nicholson said. "Instead, we're going to improve our training for VA personnel who handle disability claims and toughen administrative oversight."

"Not all combat wounds are caused by bullets and shrapnel," Nicholson added. "We have a commitment to ensure veterans with PTSD receive compassionate, world-class health care and appropriate disability compensation determinations."

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