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Contact: Oversight and Government Reform Press Office, (202) 225-5051 **Chairman**

Towns Wants Information from VA on Health Effects, Treatment Related to Toxic Exposures

WASHINGTON – Chairman Edolphus “Ed” Towns (D-NY) is asking the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to turn over information that has been compiled on the treatment and analysis of veterans who have reported health problems resulting from toxic exposures in Iraq and Afghanistan. Chairman Towns is dedicated to addressing the illnesses, determining their causes and ensuring the appropriate medical treatments are available to returning troops and civilians.

Last week, [Chairman Towns announced an investigation](#) into reports that hundreds of military personnel and civilian workers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan have contracted illnesses that may be a result of toxic exposures. Health experts have alleged that the illnesses may be related to contaminated water, poor air quality, and toxic exposure from improper waste management procedures, including “burn pits,” in Iraq and Afghanistan. “As previous experience has shown, it may take years to definitively understand the relationship between toxic exposures and illnesses,” said Chairman Towns. “However, we must remain vigilant when confronted with returning soldiers who suffer from rare and often difficult-to-diagnose illnesses.”

The health problems reported by veterans or active military personnel and civilians include a variety of serious health problems, including asthma, skin infections and rare cancers. The chairman is deeply concerned that the proximity of active burn pits to living quarters, dining areas and other posts, as well as exposure by those working on the pits daily, is causing the illnesses.

In a letter to VA Secretary Eric Shinseki, Chairman Towns requested documentation on toxic exposures including assessments on the potential health effects of burn pits, treatment of veterans or active military who may have been exposed to burn pits and records on toxicity levels detected in medical testing.

“To fully understand the relationship between toxic exposures and serious illness, we must understand the history of reported health problems associated with these sites,” said Chairman Towns. “We must determine what is compromising the health and welfare of these men and women and confront the situation before more people become ill.”

Documents and Links

[Letter from Chairman Edolphus Towns to Secretary Eric Shinseki](#)