

**Yu, Cathy** [REDACTED]

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**From:** Adams, Tony L. [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, November 09, 2015 2:51 PM  
**To:** Yu, Cathy [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** Berner, Hannah [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** FW: [EXTERNAL] RE: Letter from Senator McCaskill regarding VA compensation for mustard gas experiments  
**Attachments:** Example MG letter.doc; Example CBRNE letter.doc

Cathy,

We are still working on creating an official response to the Senator's letter; however, below is the interim response to your emailed requests. We are still working on question 3.

Take care,  
Tony

**Deliverable 1:** An example of a letter that was sent out to servicemen

**Response:** Please see the two attached sample letters.

**Deliverable 2:** the exact numbers of who was notified and when

**Response:** VA began notifying Veterans who could be identified in the early 1990s. Outreach efforts included articles in military magazines, broadcast announcements, posters in VA regional offices and medical centers, and a public affairs notice to Veterans providing them a toll free number for more information. However, VA cannot provide an accurate accounting of Veterans identified, located, and contacted. This is partly due to the fact that initial mailings in the 1990s were completed in a paper environment, and electronic processing did not begin until much later.

In December 2004, DoD provided VA a database that identified approximately 4,500 Veterans who were identified as being exposed to mustard gas during DoD's World War II (WWII) era testing. VA was able to locate and contact approximately 300 living Veterans who participated in mustard gas testing. The remainder were deceased or could not be located due to incomplete information in DoD's database. Additionally, the DoD database for mustard gas participants has been subsequently merged with the Shipboard Hazard and Defense (SHAD) and the chemical-biological (CB) databases. Following the database mergers, as new participants were identified by DoD, VA sent the attached CBRNE outreach letter.

**Deliverable 3:** The numbers of people denied for mustard gas claims (if you have that)

**Response:** Still pending with VBA.

**Deliverable 4:** Other agency involvement that VA contracted with (I have in my notes that VA worked with IRS and the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health at some point, so just looking for additional details on how that worked).

**Response:** In 1993, prior to receiving DoD's initial list of participants in mustard gas testing, VA planned to contract with the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) to obtain current addresses and notify each participant of the potential health effects of their exposure. VA worked directly with DoD; however, VA is unable to locate a record of working directly with NIOSH.

When DoD released its WWII mustard gas database to VA in 2004, VA partnered with IRS and a contracted credit bureau, Choice Point, to obtain current addresses for living Veterans whom DoD identified as being exposed to mustard gas.

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THE UNDER SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS FOR BENEFITS  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20420

SSN# <SSN>

<First Name> <MI> <Last Name>  
<Address 1>  
<City>, <State> <Zip Code>

Dear Mr./Ms. <Last Name>,

Certain documents recently declassified by the Department of Defense (DoD) show that you were exposed to mustard agents (mustard gas, sulfur mustard, nitrogen mustard) or Lewisite during your tour of service while in the <Branch of Service>. This letter provides information that you may want to consider in determining whether to file a claim for benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) based on this exposure.

### Exposure Periods and Locations

According to DoD, some chemical exposures occurred during combat or in the handling or destruction of chemical agents. However, most chemical exposures occurred in connection with World War II testing programs, via chamber, field, patch, drop, and syringe tests.

The following is a list of all known test, combat, and military occupational duty sites where exposures occurred:

- Bainbridge Naval Training Center, Maryland
- Bari, Italy
- Bushnell, Florida
- Camp Lejeune, North Carolina
- Camp Sibert, Alabama (1943-1944 only)
- Charleston, South Carolina
- Dugway Proving Ground, Utah
- Edgewood Arsenal, Maryland
- Hart's Island, New York
- Great Lakes Naval Training Center, Illinois
- Naval Research Laboratory, Virginia
- Ondal, India (1944 only)
- Rocky Mountain Arsenal, Colorado
- San Jose Island, Panama Canal Zone
- Naval Research Laboratory, Washington, D.C.
- *USS Eagle Boat No. 58*

Note: Some American servicemembers may have participated in Allied mustard agent testing in Finschhafen, New Guinea, and Porton Down, England.

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<Last Name>, <MI>, <First Name>

C# <Claim Number>

## **Compensation for Full-Body Exposure**

VA may grant compensation to veterans who have certain diseases associated with **full-body exposure** to mustard agents or Lewisite during military service. This means that the entire body was exposed rather than just one or more locations on the skin, such as in a “patch test.”

DoD has confirmed that you were subjected to full-body mustard agent or Lewisite exposure during one of the following events:

- Battlefield conditions in World War I
- Field or chamber experiments to test protective clothing or equipment during World War II
- The German air raid on the harbor of Bari, Italy in 1943

## **Disabilities Due to Chemical Exposure**

VA has determined full-body exposure of mustard agents or Lewisite may cause certain disabilities. These include:

- (From mustard agents only) Chronic conjunctivitis, keratitis, corneal opacities, scar formation, or the following cancers: nasopharyngeal; laryngeal; lung (except mesothelioma); or squamous cell carcinoma of the skin
- (From either mustard agents or Lewisite) A chronic form of laryngitis, bronchitis, emphysema, asthma, or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
- (From nitrogen mustard only) Acute non-lymphocytic leukemia

## **Health Care**

Most veterans are required to apply for enrollment to receive VA health care benefits. If you are not already enrolled with your local VA health care facility we encourage you to do so at your earliest convenience. Please be aware that VA is currently not enrolling new applicants who fall into high income brackets unless they have a service-connected disability. Also, some veterans are required to make co-payments for care and/or medications provided by VA.

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<Last Name>, <MI>, <First Name>

C# <Claim Number>

## **What You Can Discuss About The Tests**

You may be concerned about discussing your participation in mustard agent or Lewisite tests with VA or your health care provider.

On March 9, 1993 the Deputy Secretary of Defense released veterans who participated in the testing, production, transportation or storage of chemical weapons prior to 1968 from any non-disclosure restrictions. Servicemembers who participated in such tests after 1968 are permitted to discuss the chemical agents, locations, and circumstances of exposure only, because this limited information has been declassified.

## **If You Have Questions or Want to File a Claim for Benefits**

If you have been diagnosed with one of the disabilities discussed above, you should apply for VA disability compensation. If you believe you have any other medical condition that is related to your military service, you should also file a claim for disability compensation.

- To obtain further information or file a claim, call us at 1-800-749-8387 (then select option 4). You may speak to a VA representative from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Eastern time. You can also email us at [MUSTARDGAS@VBA.VA.GOV](mailto:MUSTARDGAS@VBA.VA.GOV). If you go to one of our regional offices, please take this letter with you.
- If you have questions about mustard agents or Lewisite, contact DoD at (800) 497-6261, Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Eastern time.

Sincerely yours,



Daniel L. Cooper  
Under Secretary for Benefits



**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**  
**Veterans Benefits Administration**  
**Washington, D.C. 20420**

Veteran Name  
Address  
City, State Zip Code

<Date>

Dear <Veteran Name>:

According to records released by the Department of Defense (DoD), you may have participated in tests at **US Army Chemical Warfare Laboratories, Army Chemical Center, Maryland** during your tour of service in the **Army**. The purpose of this letter is to inform you about the tests and what to do if you have related health concerns.

### **Information About the Tests**

The tests at **US Army Chemical Warfare Laboratories, Army Chemical Center, Maryland** exposed some participants, with their consent, to a number of different chemicals. The tests' objectives were to determine specific health effects associated with exposure, to assess various pre-and post-exposure medical treatments, and to evaluate the effectiveness of personal protective equipment. Not all volunteers were exposed to chemical agents; some received placebos (harmless substances with no health risks). Others performed stress tests without exposure to chemicals. Please see the enclosed DoD fact sheet, Chemical and Biological Agent Exposures, for additional information.

### **What You Can Discuss About the Tests**

You may be concerned about releasing classified test information to your health care provider when discussing your health concerns. To former service members who participated in these tests, DoD has stated:

"You may provide details that affect your health to your health care provider. For example, you may discuss what you believe your exposure was at the time, reactions, treatment you sought or received, and the general location and time of the tests. On the other hand, you should not discuss anything that relates to operational information that might reveal chemical or biological warfare vulnerabilities or capabilities."

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<Veteran Name>

## **If You Have Questions About the Tests**

If you have questions about chemical or biological agent tests, or concerns about releasing classified information, contact DoD at (800) 497-6261, Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Eastern Standard time.

## **If You Have Health Concerns**

Although there is no specific medical test or evaluation for the types of exposures you might have experienced more than 30 years ago, VA is offering a clinical examination to Veterans who receive this notification letter. If you have health concerns and wish to be medically evaluated, ***please bring this letter with you to the nearest VA Health Care Facility***. This letter will help you apply for the examination by providing needed documentation. Additional medical information about potential exposures is available through the “Environmental Health Coordinators,” who are located in every VA medical center.

**Note:** The examination itself does not constitute, or provide eligibility for, enrollment in the VA health care system. If you are not already enrolled, you are encouraged to apply for VA health care benefits at the time you apply for the examination.

In addition to this clinical examination, if you think that you suffer from chronic health problems as a result of these tests, **contact VA toll free at (800) 827-1000** to speak to a VA representative about filing a disability claim. You may also contact your local Veterans service organization for assistance.

Scientists know much about many of the agents used in these tests. In order to best serve Veterans and their families, VA continues to study the possibility of long-term health effects associated with in-service exposure to chemical and biological agents. If the medical community identifies such health effects, I assure you that we will share this information with you and other Veterans as it becomes available to us.

Sincerely yours,

Thomas J. Murphy  
Director,  
Compensation and Pension Service

Enclosure: Chemical And Biological Agent Exposures Fact Sheet