

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ATOMIC VETERANS

Chandler, AZ 85248

“ The Atomic Veteran – The Forgotten Warrior “



Houston, Texas

October 10, 2002

There were 1066 atomic weapon device detonations, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Defense and the U. S. Atomic Energy Commission, from July 16, 1945 to September 23, 1992. Two of those detonations were on August 6, 1945 and August 9, 1945, over enemy soil, and during a declared war with the Empire of Japan.

The remaining 1064 detonations were for the purposes of continuing development and improvements of nuclear, thermonuclear and hydrogen war weapons, in the interest of the National Security of the United States of America, during the “ Cold War “ years. More than 500,000 military and civilian personnel were witness to, and actively participated in these detonations; the military by order of the Defense Department, the civilians as members of the atomic weapons development teams from Sandia Laboratories, Lawrence Livermore Laboratories, Scripps Oceanographic Institute, Oak Ridge National Laboratories, and several prominent Universities, who were overall participants in the development and enhancement of America’s current nuclear arsenal.

Little was known, early on, of the hazards of radiation exposure on the human mechanism, however; the Defense Department had a need-to-know of the immediate effects of a nuclear explosion on military personnel & equipment, including tanks, vehicles, ships and submarines, and the effects on live animal specimens, used as control subjects. It is only within the last 15 years, that the long term effects of ionizing radiation has begun to be recognized by the medical community involved in post atomic period studies.

The National Association of Atomic Veterans (N.A.A.V.) was formed by a group of ex-military personnel who were first hand participants in the U. S. atomic testing program, including some of those involved in the actual development and detonation of the first atomic bomb on July 16, 1945, at “ Trinity Site “ in the New Mexico desert, as well as participants involved in “ Operation Crossroads,” (June & July, 1946 in the Marshall Islands), and some of those who were a part of “ Project Ivy “, (the first Hydrogen Bomb detonated at Enewetak Atoll), on October 31, 1952. Other members of N.A.A.V. were the very first to go ashore at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, after the Japanese surrendered to General McArthur, in Tokyo Bay, for the purposes of assessing the atomic bomb damage and to assist in the post blast clean up operations.

The common link between all of those who were associated with these events, and who are still alive to recall their experiences, is exposure to ionizing radiation particles, the by-product of an atomic bomb detonation. The radiation detection devices used, at that time, were crude, did not reflect all of the exposure hazards, and (it was later determined) the readings were, in a large percentage of cases, questionable and inaccurate.

This fact of record has recently prompted the U. S. Government to form a “ Radiation Dose Re-construction “ team, comprised of select scientist-physicians, to approximate the radiation exposure of the thousands of military participants who are currently seeking medical assistance from the Veteran’s Hospital’s and clinics. It is assumed that the dose reconstruction project will satisfy the increased challenges to the “Official “ radiation exposure data issued early on by the Department of Defense & Military agencies.

The Achilles heel of this approach does not take into account the non-measurable levels of “ free air “ radiation particles inhaled, or ingested into the human body, at or near the blast site.

This is viewed by Atomic Veterans as an attempt by the U.S. Congress to determine a base line measurement that will justify acceptance of the Atomic Veteran's claims that an illness, or health anomaly is "the result of," or "presumed to be" related to his / her participation in the U. S. Atomic Testing Program, and it is feared by all, that only a few Atomic Veterans will be found to be eligible for 100% service connected V. A. benefits.

The ability to gain access to proper V. A. medical facilities is greatly hampered by the fact that the Defense Department (and Pentagon) did not permit any mention of atomic test participation on a veteran's (DD-214) discharge form. Additionally, the Defense Department demanded that most military personnel swear to a (20 or 25 year) oath of secrecy, under penalty of imprisonment, should they mention, in any way, their association with or participation in any atomic device test. The Veterans Administration uses the DD-214 discharge form to determine the level (or group) of medical services to which the veteran is entitled.

Currently, veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange (during the Vietnam conflict) are classed in medical Group 6C, and those Atomic Veterans who can prove their participation of any atmospheric atomic device detonation event is also classed in Group 6C, while those who were awarded the Purple Heart are listed in Group 3 , and entitled to unlimited, no-cost, no-copay V. A. services.

Given these restrictions, it was virtually impossible for an Atomic Veteran to get a fair hearing for medical treatment from the Veteran's Administration admissions office, for illnesses, that include several types of cancers, melanomas, lymphomas, etc., that are "presumed " to be the result of their atomic test participation. The burden of proof is on the shoulders of the Veteran seeking such services. Additionally, many Atomic Veterans were told that their military records were destroyed in a fire, and therefore were, and are unable to get past the Veteran's Administration "burden of proof " fence. In other cases, they were told (by U.S. Government Agencies who are responsible for researching their claims,) that it would cost them \$ 65.00 per hour, plus additional added costs for copies, etc., for the information they were seeking, for the purposes of satisfying the V. A. mandates.

The Mission Statement of the National Association of Atomic Veterans states that " We are dedicated to the goals of assisting all military and civilian personnel involved in the manufacture, testing, storage, or destruction of nuclear weapon devices, or nuclear materials, who's health has been adversely effected, as the result of their exposure to radiation particles during the performance of their duties and responsibilities associated with any of these events."

N.A.A.V. firmly believes that exposure to nuclear radiation is equal to, or above the level of being wounded in action. A war wound will heal and, in most cases, will not effect the continued health of those who have been wounded. However; radiation sickness is forever, and slowly damages and destroys the body mechanisms of those who were exposed, and several cases, the children of those who were exposed.

There is no credible medical proof that a bullet wound will effect the health of the offspring of the wounded. It has been proven that Ionizing radiation has caused genetic mutation of the reproductive processes of Atomic Veterans, that resulted in children were born with genetic defects, and other deleterious health conditions. In a statement recognizing July 16, 2002 as a " National Atomic Veteran Day of Remembrance," President George W. Bush compared the Atomic Veteran's exposure to nuclear radiation, as being just as grave as any War Veteran who was wounded in action, in both instances, standing in harm's way while doing their duty, and protecting The United States of America. N.A.A.V. firmly believes the President's statement was both accurate and compassionate, and we offer our thanks for his personal interest in the general welfare of all military personnel, including the America's Atomic Warriors.

Given the difficulties Atomic Veterans experience in dealing with the Veteran's Administration, it is the firm belief of N.A.A.V., that Congress should mandate that Atomic Veterans be given the same V. A. medical group classification as those who were awarded the " Purple Heart." Likewise, they should also eliminate " Dose Reconstruction " studies, as the results cannot be certified as being scientifically real, or believable, and cannot address the long term effects of inhaled or injected ionizing radiation particles, and the plight of the Atomic Veteran would once again, be prolonged until there are none remaining to register a compliant.

The Directors, Officers and membership of N.A.A.V. are all volunteers, who devote a great deal of their personal time to the N.A.A.V. Mission Statement. N.A.A.V. Directors are in constant contact with the U. S. Department of Veteran's Affairs, who are most helpful in assisting us in all of our areas of interest. While N.A.A.V. Officers, State Commanders and designated members are in daily contact with several key members of the U. S. Congress, in an effort to gain better access to an Atomic Veteran's military records, for the purposes of confirming his or her participation in atomic testing activities. We spend a lot of time trying to get local V.A. Hospital and Clinic personnel to read their own admissions guidelines manual, as most are obstinate and in total violation of the current rules governing Atomic Veteran issues.

N.A.A.V. Directors and Officers do not draw a salary for their positions, or daily activities. These activities are not accomplished without monetary costs. These costs are partially defrayed with (tax exempt) charitable contributions from other military organizations, (including the American Legion and the V.F.W.), fraternal groups (including the Loyal order of Moose, Elks, and Knights of Columbus), individuals and professionals. Other funds are realized from N.A.A.V. membership dues and membership donations. which are collectively applied the continued costs of researching atomic veteran military records, maintaining a medical database of all atomic veterans who seek assistance in dealing with the Veteran's Administration in these areas, publishing a quarterly newsletter, and in continuing public recognition programs. In one case, we received a contribution from a Labor Union in the New Jersey area, for which we were most grateful. In all cases, a receipt (for tax purposes) is made available to all contributors.

Time is not on the side of the thousands of Atomic Veterans who feel they have no hope of gaining the much needed medical assistance from (their) U. S. Government. These veterans are suffering from a host of atomic exposure illnesses, and are dying at a rapid rate, and it would be thankless and unforgiving for the United States of America to allow them to not be properly recognized and medically tended to, as a small reward for their being ordered to stand in harm's way.

The Atomic Veteran grieves for all of those who were amply rewarded by the U. S. Government, after loosing their loved ones during that terrible event on September 11, 2001. However; it is a fact that the Atomic Veteran is still lying mortally wounded and slowly dying on the " home front " battle field, with no visible hope of being properly recognized for their sacrifice behalf of the citizens of their own country. Is there no one who would listen ?

submitted by:

R. J. RITTER - Director – Treasurer
National Association of Atomic Veterans

Tax exempt contributions should be forwarded to the following address:
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" No amount of ionizing radiation exposure has been scientifically proven to be safe "