

Testimony of



NATIONAL GULF WAR RESOURCE CENTER

Submitted by

**Stephen L. Robinson
Executive Director**

Before the

**Subcommittee on Health
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs**

Regarding

Lessons learned from the Gulf War

January 24, 2002

Mr. Chairman and other distinguished members of the Committee, on behalf of National Gulf War Resource Center (NGWRC), we are pleased to have this opportunity to present our views with respect to the issue of Lessons Learned from the Gulf War. In this statement, we will discuss Lessons Learned from the veteran advocate and end user perspective. NGWRC is most appreciative of your inviting us to submit testimony and to provide a statement for the record in this matter, and for your leadership in seeking to insure the Lessons Learned are actually implemented. We believe this hearing will generate the action needed to protect future veterans and insure that those fighting the war on terrorism today do not repeat policy failures from the Gulf War.

More than decade ago, U.S. Forces were deployed to fight in a war that would be won in a matter of hours rather than years. The speed of battle and the technology that was employed ensured our success as we achieved our objectives. Generals were lauded as heroes and soldiers returned home to parades and fanfare. Many soldiers left the military immediately upon return and others continued to serve. Not long after the Gulf War veterans began to report symptoms and illness. Some veterans believed they were ill as a result of their service during the war. The President of the United States and the Department of Defense made a critical decision at this moment in time that I believe will soon be the most studied and dissected decision of my generation. The leadership of our government had to choose what to do, tell the truth about what soldiers faced during the Gulf War or begin a long protracted Public Affairs campaign designed to delay the truth, control the story and fund the coffers of beltway contractors.

“Its all in your head” Lessons Learned from the gulf war.

To understand what we have learned we must first understand what we believed prior to the Gulf War.

What we believed then

We were told we were the best-trained, best-equipped army in the world and that we should expect 60% casualties going into the breach. The Iraqi Army was the third largest army in the world.

What we know now

Our leaders were given overstated intelligence assessments about the Iraqi Army and the threat. We went to war with defective chemical suits. Chemical and biological agent alarms were purchased and sent to the field even though it was known in 1988 they didn't work. The fox vehicles capabilities were not fully understood before deployment and Khamisiyah was a known chemical weapons storage facility prior to the Gulf War.

What we believed then

Anthrax, Botoxin and other weapons of mass destruction will be used as offensively against coalition forces therefore we should inoculate our forces to protect them and we wont tell them what shots they are getting. We will violate all standing policy on the use of investigational new drugs because “Here at DoD, we believe we know what’s best for soldiers”.

What we know now

It is not rational to inoculate for every perceived threat and strain of biological agent or chemical weapon. Usually, inoculation occurs when you intend to use a weapon offensively, because it is almost certain that some of it will blow back onto your own forces. The decision to give U.S. forces the anthrax vaccine made no sense; the vaccine was only approved for cutaneous anthrax and is still not FDA approved for inhalation anthrax, using it to protect against weapons grade offensively deployed inhalation anthrax was an experiment. This experiment continues today on postal workers who must waive their rights to sue Bioport should they have a severe systemic reaction. We also know that the Department of Defense is so far into bed with Bioport that it does not matter how many times Bioport deceives the nation, fails inspection and harms soldiers. DoD will be there for the former JCS and his foreign owned company. We also know that the use of pyridostigmine bromide as a pretreatment for Sarin exposure was an experiment. Conventional wisdom says you don’t give healthy people drugs designed for severely sick people, especially if you do not know what the long-term health effects will be. These decisions and others that were violations of human testing in any other setting are what I now call the “Black Beret Factor”. The BBF factor is the suspension of common sense, regardless of all conventional wisdom, and the implementation of policy even though its in violation of standing law or directly harms the end user.

What we believed then.

We believed DoD would look at what happened to Gulf War veterans and provide accurate reports that were sound in methodology and investigational practices. We believed DoD would fund studies and research that would seek to find answers. We believed that DoD would be forthcoming, revealing any intelligence that would unravel the mystery of Gulf War illnesses. We believed that “No stone would be left unturned”. We believed the mistakes made during the Gulf War would result in Lessons Learned that would be implemented to protect soldiers in future conflicts to come.

What we know now.

DoDs investigational methodology is suspect and leans away from the veteran. In doing so, the veteran has suffered for the last 10 years waiting to be recognized and compensated fairly for injuries incurred during service to their country. We know that the vast majority of research conducted was funneled to beltway contractors who realized the gravy train that the investigation would produce. We know that independent research was crushed, stalled, demonized and ridiculed by the Office of the Special Assistant for Gulf War Illnesses.

We know that DoD has not been forthcoming in revealing the important intelligence matters of the Gulf War and as they begin to conclude the Gulf War investigation there are several areas of intelligence and investigation that they have conveniently ignored. We know they did not turn every stone. They turned selected stones.

We know that DoD is not implementing the Lessons Learned from the Gulf War that was passed into law. This blatant disregard for their own policy endangers soldiers who are called to deploy into hazardous areas of the world where chemical and biological agents may be used in time of war. We know that the truth will come out, it always does.

The question here today is, do we have the courage to invest in the truth today so that we protect the soldier of tomorrow?

**National Gulf War Resource Center
Funding Statement**

National Gulf War Resource Center (NGWRC) is a national non-profit veterans organization registered as a 501(c)3 with the Internal Revenue Service. NGWRC is not in receipt of any federal grant or resource.

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Stephen L. Robinson

Steve Robinson entered the Army on September, 28, 1981 and on completion of basic training and Airborne School, he was assigned to C co 1/75 Ranger Battalion where he earned his Ranger Tab and Black Beret. Steve Robinson has served in a wide variety of assignments to include; the Ranger Battalion, 24th Infantry Division, 1/10th Special Forces, Ranger Instructor Florida Phase, Long Range Surveillance Detachment Team Leader in Korea, Military Science Instructor, and finally as the NCOIC, Preliminary Analysis Group, Investigations and Analysis Directorate, Office of the Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Gulf War Illnesses, Medical Readiness, and Military Deployments from February 1999 through September 2001. During this period, Mr. Robinson was actively involved in all aspects of the organization's mission. He served as the Senior Non-Commissioned Officer to the Preliminary Analysis Group and assistant to the Executive Officer for all immediate response and request for information

Steve has held a wide variety of leadership positions. He served as a 60mm mortar gunner and 90mm recoilless rifle gunner, FDC assistant and FO controlling Joint CAS/Artillery while assigned to the Ranger BN.

He has served as a Squad Leader in two Mechanized Infantry Battalions and was the Branch Chief of the Mountaineering Phase of Platoon Confidence Training Course in Bad Tolz, Germany. He also augmented C co 1/10th ODA 32 during Operation Provide Comfort after the Gulf War.

Steve is a graduate of several Army schools and courses including; Airborne, Ranger, Jungle Warfare, Marine Corps Amphibious Scout Swimmer, Primary Leadership Development Course, Basic Non-commissioned Officer Course, International Long Range Surveillance Course basic/advanced, Special Forces Jumpmaster Course, Instructor Training Course, Combat Lifesaving Course, Tactics Certification Course, Survival Escape Resistance Evasion Course High Risk, Explosives Ordinance Demolition Course, S.O.C.C Course and The Revolutionary Warfare Course.

Mr. Robinson was hand selected to train the following Government, Federal and State organizations:

- U.S. Airforce Security Police Team for the worldwide competition Peacekeeper Challenge 94.
- U.S. Ambassadors Staff, Bonn Germany - Survival.
- Correctional Emergency Response Team Eglin AFB - Hostage Rescue and Close Quarters Battle.
- Special Operations Response Team. Federal Prison Panama City, Florida - Hostage Rescue.

Military awards include: Infantry Cord, Expert Rifle, Expert 60-mm mortar, EIB, Master Parachutist U.S., Master Parachutist German, Master Parachutist Korean, German Marksmanship Silver, German EIB Bronze, Ranger Tab, SF Combat Patch,

OSR - 3, ASR - 1 NCOPD-3, NDSM, GCM-6, HSM - 1, AAM - 4, ARCOM - 4, MSM – 1, DMSM - 1

After successful completion of a twenty-year military career, Steve Robinson continues to serve his country and his fellow soldiers. He has accepted the position of Executive Director of the National Gulf War Resource Center, a non-profit organization that helps veterans of the Gulf War and protects soldiers of today's Army. In this capacity, Mr. Robinson serves as a representative for the organization and its agenda to veterans, congress and the media.

Steve Robinson is married to the former Patricia A. Tomlin of Cape May Court House, New Jersey.