

Panel finds widespread Gulf War illness

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At least one in four U.S. veterans of the 1991 Gulf War suffers from a multi-symptom illness caused by exposure to toxic chemicals during the conflict, a congressionally mandated report being released Monday found.

For much of the past 17 years, government officials have maintained that these veterans -- more than 175,000 out of about 697,000 deployed -- are merely suffering the effects of wartime stress, even as more have come forward recently with severe ailments.

“The extensive body of scientific research now available consistently indicates that ‘Gulf War illness’ is real, that it is the result of neurotoxic exposures during Gulf War deployment, and that few veterans have recovered or substantially improved with time,” said the report, being released Monday by a panel of scientists and veterans.

Two things the military provided to troops in large quantities to protect them -- pesticides and pyridostigmine bromide (PB), aimed at thwarting the effects of nerve gas -- are the most likely culprits, the panel found.

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