

Group Says Gulf War Syndrome Report a Cover-Up

Joyce Riley, a spokesperson for the American Gulf War Veterans Association, said "This is the biggest cover-up of the century. It is not only the spoilage of records, it is criminal and medical negligence. We are aiding and abetting the enemy by not caring for these soldiers, and this is defined as treason," in response to the release of the 90-page report this week which concluded that "stress is likely a primary cause of illness in at least some Gulf War veterans."

A panel ordered by President Bill Clinton to oversee the Pentagon's investigation into Gulf War syndrome has found that stress may be a primary cause of the headaches, memory loss, nervous system disorders, chronic fatigue and other unexplained symptoms described by thousands of veterans of the war.

But in a three-page dissent, Dr Vinh Cam, one of the board's seven members, called the conclusion "a blatant misrepresentation". And a veterans group called the conclusion "the biggest cover-up of the century", likening the finding to "criminal and medical negligence" as well as "treason". Veterans' groups have charged that the government is hiding information about Iraqi chemical warfare agents to which veterans of the 1991 war may have been exposed. An estimated \$300 million has been spent to investigate possible causes for the syndrome, including vaccinations, chemical and biological weapons, oil well fires, desert sand and anti-nerve agent tablets.

So far, no specific cause for these symptoms has been identified. In September, the Institute of Medicine issued a report concluding there is no scientific evidence that long-term health problems suffered by Gulf War veterans can be linked to exposure to such chemicals and vaccines as the nerve agent sarin, the drug pyridostigmine bromide, depleted uranium, and anthrax and botulism vaccines.