

## Unaddressed Toxic Exposures

### The VFW's Concern:

Veterans frequently contact the VFW about toxic exposures not included in the *Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act of 2022*, commonly called the PACT Act. Examples of these exposures and conditions include but are not limited to uranium exposure at the Karshi-Khanabad (K2) Air Base in Uzbekistan; water contamination at Fort McClellan, Alabama, and at the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii; and conditions related to nuclear testing and waste cleanup at various locations domestic and abroad. Veterans have reported contact with firefighting foam and other materials exposing them to per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). The VFW has had veterans report anomalous health incidents (Havana Syndrome), radiological exposures, and the use of burn pits in locations not currently covered by the PACT Act. Finally, air crews and their supporting ground crews, nuclear technicians, and personnel who work near reactors are routinely exposed to chemicals and other toxins. Overall, the military is an inherently dangerous profession, and these examples highlight the need for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to continuously review toxic exposures.

The PACT Act included an enduring framework, known as the Presumption Decision Process, to guide VA's continuous and systematic evaluation of toxic exposures. This law directs VA to announce in the Federal Register, at least annually, its selections of military environmental exposures and adverse health outcomes for formal evaluation. Congressional oversight is needed to ensure VA is being transparent with veterans about its ongoing evaluation of toxic exposures and related conditions.

### The VFW Urges Congress to:

Require VA to publicly post announcements, updates, and the current status of research pertaining to presumptive conditions stemming from service-connected exposures.

Conduct oversight hearings to ensure VA's compliance with the PACT Act's Presumption Decision Process for the ongoing evaluation of conditions associated with toxic exposures.