

Parliamentary Activity
For period 01/1/08 – 04/04/08

Gulf War Illness

07/01/08

Column WA140

Lord Morris of Manchester asked Her Majesty's Government:

How many consolatory payments have been made by the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency to the dependants of war pensioners who have died since serving in the 1990-91 Gulf War and other recent deployments; and of what amounts. [HL811]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Defence (Baroness Taylor of Bolton): One consolatory payment of £500 has been made by the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency, or its predecessors, to the dependants of war pensioners who have died since serving in the 1990-91 Gulf War and other recent deployments. However records in respect of these payments are only kept from 1997 to date.

Lord Morris of Manchester asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether they will ensure that, in implementing the powers given in the Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act 2007, no change to the structure of tribunals will remove the protection given to the Armed Forces by the existence of an independent and specialised tribunal for war pensions appeals. [HL877]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Justice (Lord Hunt of Kings Heath): I can confirm that appeal rights will not be undermined as a result of the Government's proposals. There will be no loss of independence or dilution of expertise.

14/01/08

Column WA237

Lord Roberts of Conwy asked Her Majesty's Government:

Further to the Written Answer by Baroness Taylor of Bolton on 27 November (WA 108), whether the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency's decisions in the case of Gulf War veteran, the late Mr T E Walker, were in accordance with the evidence and the rules of the

scheme; and whether they have any bearing on the case of Mr Mark McGreevy or that of any other Gulf War veteran. [HL902]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Defence (Baroness Taylor of Bolton): An incorrect decision was made in the case of the late Mr T E Walker and the Ministry of Defence made an apology to Mr Walker's family. This was followed by an apology from my noble friend Lord Drayson on 11 October 2007 (*Official Report*, col. 341).

The mistake made in Mr Walker's case has no bearing on the case of Mr Mark McGreevy or that of any other Gulf War veteran.

Baroness Finlay of Llandaff asked Her Majesty's Government:

How blood samples from Gulf War veterans are being banked so that, as new assay methods emerge for organic compounds, the samples can be tested; and whether samples are being banked from other veterans returning from other conflicts. [HL919]

Baroness Taylor of Bolton: A number of blood samples were collected from UK service personnel being prepared for deployment to the **Gulf** in 1990-91 at various stages of the anti-biological warfare agent vaccination programme; these are currently stored at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory, Porton Down. The samples are stored at -20C and in theory could be subjected to additional testing as new techniques emerge. However, these samples are now over 16 years old and inevitably will deteriorate with time.

The samples were analysed in 1991 with the aim of investigating the level of protection conferred by giving anthrax vaccine in combination with pertussis vaccine. The results of the study were set out in a paper "Operation GRANBY: The effect of co-administration of the pertussis vaccine on specific antibody titre development to the anthrax vaccine in man", which was made available in October 1997 and is available in the Library of the House. The Ministry of Defence has no plans for additional banking of blood samples from veterans of the 1990-91 Gulf conflict, and has not collected samples from UK service personnel deployed to Iraq (Op TELIC) and Afghanistan (Op HERRICK).

17/01/08:

Column WA278

Lord Morris of Manchester asked Her Majesty's Government:

What further representations have been received by the Ministry of Defence from Dr Malcolm Hooper, emeritus professor of medicinal chemistry at the University of Sunderland, on the deaths and illnesses

of service personnel deployed to the 1990—91 Gulf War; and what responses they are making to the questions now posed by him.
[HL1223]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Defence (Baroness Taylor of Bolton): Professor Hooper wrote to Lord Drayson, then Minister for Defence Equipment and Support, on 24 September about the incidence of motor neurone disease among veterans of the 1990-91 Gulf conflict. My honourable friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence wrote to Professor Hooper on 7 January responding to his concerns on this and related issues. A copy of this letter was placed in the Library of the House. We are not aware of any other correspondence having been received from Professor Hooper by the Ministry of Defence since the 24 September letter.

06/02/08

Column WA179

Armed Forces: War Pensions

Lord Addington asked Her Majesty's Government:

Further to the Written Answer by Baroness Taylor of Bolton on 12 December 2007 (WA 54—5) about the cut from 100 per cent to 40 per cent in Gulf War veteran Mr T E Walker's war pension shortly before his death, what steps have been taken to prevent such incorrect cuts happening again; who was ultimately responsible for the incorrect decision to reduce Mr Walker's war pension; and whether at any stage the Prime Minister was informed of the handling of this case. [HL1466]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Defence (Baroness Taylor of Bolton): The War Pensions Scheme provides no-fault compensation for ex-service personnel disabled as a result of service before 6 April 2005. Awards are based on the percentage degree of disablement due to service, which is assessed by comparing the condition of the claimant with a normal healthy person of the same age and sex. In cases where the evidence shows that an individual's degree of disablement due to service has changed since the last assessment was made, the assessment may be revised on review and the pension rate changed as appropriate.

The Service Personnel and Veterans Agency (formed 1 April 2007), which is responsible for making this decision, strives to ensure that all decisions made are in accordance with the rules of the scheme and in accordance with the evidence. It is with regret that not all the correct procedures were followed in this case. In light of that error, any case where a reduction in war pension assessment is proposed is now subject to a further check to confirm that the

new decision is appropriately supported by the rules and in line with the evidence before the reduction is implemented.

Gulf War Illness

20/02/08

Column WA71

Iraq: Cancer

Lord Rea asked Her Majesty's Government:

What is their assessment of reports that since the 1990—91 Gulf War there has been a significant increase in the incidence and severity of cancer and foetal abnormality in southern Iraq; and [HL1682]

Whether they will facilitate an independent epidemiological study of the incidence and prevalence of cancer and foetal abnormality in southern Iraq since the 1990—91 Gulf War. [HL1683]

Baroness Crawley: The Government are aware of reports of high rates of cancer and foetal abnormalities in recent years in Iraq. However, due to the security situation and consequent constraints on access by aid agencies to affected populations, there are currently no independent, reliable data on this.

The Department for International Development (DfID) does not currently regard an epidemiological study as a priority for our work in Iraq. We are focusing our efforts on meeting urgent humanitarian needs, including in the field of health. For example, we are supporting the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which is providing urgently needed medical supplies, such as war wounded kits to hospitals dealing with mass casualties, and improving health facilities (physical rehabilitation and training for staff). We are also supporting the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), which is helping healthcare services in Syria and Jordan to cope with the influx of Iraqi refugees. As part of this support, Iraqis are receiving treatment for cancer in Syrian hospitals. The British Council and Department of Health are also building the capacity of the Iraqi health sector by training Iraqi doctors. So far 50 doctors have been trained and another 25 have been sent to the UK for two months.

Gulf War Illness

20/03/08

Column WA60

Lord Tyler asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether they intend to evaluate the results of the research undertaken on behalf of the United States Congress-appointed Committee investigating Gulf War illnesses by the University of California, in San Diego, and published in the proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, with a view to assessing its relevance to the conditions of United Kingdom veterans. [HL2490]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Defence (Baroness Taylor of Bolton):

The Ministry of Defence will examine any significant new research of which it becomes aware to assess its relevance to UK veterans of the 1990-91 Gulf Conflict. There are many research studies in the UK and elsewhere into the illnesses affecting Gulf veterans; most of these have been peer reviewed and published in scientific or medical journals and are usually available on the world wide web. The Government have particular arrangements to monitor the research undertaken in the United States; we have a British liaison officer based permanently in Washington DC who is tasked both with ensuring that the UK has full visibility of US research into Gulf veterans' illnesses and with providing a channel for communicating our own work to interested US parties. We are aware of a paper recently published by the Department of Medicine, University of California, entitled *Acetylcholinesterase inhibitors and Gulf War illnesses* and are giving it consideration; however, we note that the paper is not based on a systematic review of the literature.