



PRESS RELEASE

Vietnam Veterans of America

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VVA Holds OMB, Director Responsible for Withholding Benefits for Agent Orange-Afflicted Vietnam Veterans

(Washington, D.C)—“We hold the Office of Management and Budget and its director culpable in the deaths of those Vietnam veterans who went to their graves waiting for their government to do the right thing and grant service-connection for exposure to Agent Orange and other rainbow agents, as recommended by the VA Secretary based on findings of the Institute of Medicine.” John Rowan, National President, Vietnam Veterans of America

As confirmed by documents obtained through the Freedom of Information Act, in March 2018, when the then-VA Secretary set out to add bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, and Parkinson’s-like symptoms to the list of diseases eligible for VA benefits, he was stonewalled and then soon removed from his position in the administration.

The highly redacted documents obtained through FOIA by former Army Spc. Jeff O’Malley reveal that Mulvaney, Darin Selnick, and other OMB officials objected to the VA Secretary’s decision. Legible sections of the documents relay OMB’s determination that the Institutes of Medicine’s (now National Academy of Medicine) findings were based on “limited science,” as well as concern regarding the fiscal impact of the proposed additions.

“This is an outrage,” said VVA National President John Rowan. “We call on VA Secretary Robert Wilke to delay no longer and act on the IOM’s findings by adding bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, Parkinson’s-like symptoms, along with hypertension and stroke, to the service-connected, presumptive list for those who served in Vietnam and elsewhere in the Southeast Asia theater of operations.

It has been more than three years since the March 2016, release of *Veterans and Agent Orange Update 2014*, the tenth biennial evaluation of relevant scientific studies on Agent Orange and other herbicides used during military operations in Vietnam. The Agent Orange Act of 1991 called for a decision by the VA Secretary *no later than 60 days* after receiving the IOM’s report and another 60 days after the Secretary’s decision to issue proposed regulations setting forth his determination.

The IOM review called for the upgrading of the status of bladder cancer and hypothyroidism to the Limited/Suggestive Category of Association; it clarified that individuals with Parkinson's-like symptoms without other known etiology should be included in the presumption for Parkinson's disease; and it firmly supported earlier findings still not recognized by VA as presumptive conditions: hypertension and stroke.”

