

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 07, 2024

The Honorable Denis R. McDonough
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary McDonough,

We write to request the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) utilize the framework for establishing presumptive conditions created by the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act to evaluate the impact of radiation exposure on veterans who served at Karshi Khanabad (K-2) Air Base.

Toxic-exposed veterans have waited decades to receive the benefits and recognition the PACT Act provides, and we appreciate VA's efforts to implement the largest expansion of VA health care and benefits in decades. Particularly important is VA's use of the framework for establishing additional presumptive conditions not included in the PACT Act. Congress included this framework in the law because it acknowledged the PACT Act could not expand VA benefits to every incident or circumstance of military toxic exposure. VA has rightfully utilized this framework to evaluate the need to add Leukemia and other cancers to the list of presumptive conditions for burn-pits exposed veterans.

Veterans who served at K-2 are suffering from adverse health conditions at high rates. That is why Congress included Uzbekistan in the list of locations where veterans are presumed to be exposed to hazardous airborne toxins. VA has also taken steps — beyond what was required under the PACT Act — to improve health care and benefits for K2 Veterans. It has come to our attention, however, that these veterans were also exposed to radiation. The Army Medical Department Journal previously identified potential connection between K2 deployment and certain rare cancers associated with radiation exposure. Additionally, documents included in an Associated Press article entitled "*Jon Stewart presses for a breakthrough to get the first 9/11 troops full care*" confirm the uranium found at K-2 was "not depleted uranium but rather an enriched product."

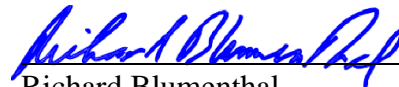
These veterans were among the first servicemembers deployed in our nation's War on Terror and went to war with the promise that we would take care of them if they were harmed or injured by their experiences. For these reasons, we respectfully request VA utilize its authority under the PACT Act to ensure those harmed by radiation exposure at K-2 are provided the health care and benefits they have earned.

We thank you for your work to improve the lives of those who have worn our nation's uniforms and look forward to continuing to work together to ensure the PACT Act delivers for veterans and survivors.


Sincerely,



Jon Tester
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Mark Takano
Member of Congress