

News Flash: Pentagon Stops Blood Donations from Iraq War Veterans

Doug Sample

US Department of Defense

http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Oct2003/n10212003_200310211.html

Posted 10/21/2003 1:21:00 PM

October 1, 2003, News Flash: There are cases of mysterious blood clots, pneumonia, and neurological problems among US soldiers serving in the Iraq War. Now the US Department of Defense has established a ban on blood donations from all US soldiers serving in Iraq. Congress should order independent medical researchers to step in now to determine what's going on ...

Blood Donations Halted From Personnel Deployed To Iraq

American Forces Press Service

Washington, DC - A parasitic disease being spread by sand flies in Iraq has prompted officials who oversee the military's blood supply to implement a one-year donor deferral for military personnel serving in that country.

The reason for the deferral is a form of the disease Leishmaniasis, which causes sores or lesions on the skin, and which in its most serious form can cause death.

Since 2002, military health officials have reported 22 cases of the disease, with the majority being reported this year.

"It's a cautious deferral; we're erring on the side of safety," said Lt. Col. Ruth Sylvester, director of the Armed Services Blood Program Office.

"People who actually get the disease are permanently deferred," she explained. "The issue with those who are exposed is that there is an incubation period before any symptoms appear — the deferral will prevent them from unknowingly donating blood."

According to the Armed Services Blood Program office, the parasite that causes the disease has been proven to survive in blood products stored under standard conditions for up to 25 days, and at least six cases of transfusion-transmitted cases of the disease have been reported.

Sylvester, who said she is not a physician but understands the disease, said there are two types of Leishmaniasis. The most common, but less serious, form is cutaneous Leishmaniasis, which causes lesions on the skin that may look like a volcano with a raised edge and center "crater" and may be covered with a scab, she said. "All of the military cases so far have been cutaneous," she added.

However, she said the more serious form of the disease -- visceral Leishmaniasis -- can affect the internal organs of the body, such as the spleen and liver, and can lead

to death.

Sylvester said military people who have been infected with the disease are being treated at Walter Reed Army Medical Center here, where doctors have set up a special treatment program just for the disease. People infected with the disease undergo a three-week drug regimen that "will eliminate the disease and take care of the infection," she said.

"I don't believe there is cause for alarm," Sylvester emphasized. "We had 22 cases in the last two years with all the people we've had deployed in Afghanistan and Iraq and throughout the entire Central Command area. So it's a very small number, given the total number of people deployed."

But she did express concern about the disease's impact on the number of eligible military blood donors. The latest deferral is just one of many the military's blood program is now facing, she said.

In recent years, the Armed Services Blood Program had to defer donors due to malaria risks around the world, and also had to defer people who might have been exposed to a variant of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease -- better known as "Mad Cow" disease -- or who lived in certain parts of Europe for specified time periods between 1980 and 1996.

"When we lose these donors, we have to bring in more donors," Sylvester said. "We have to find donors who have not traveled, not been deployed, and haven't lived in Europe. It's imperative that we find donors who have not been deployed, and we're focusing our efforts on bringing those donors in."

Sylvester noted that the military has plenty of eligible donors to draw from, and she encouraged military and DoD personnel, as well as family members, to donate blood on a regular basis by scheduling appointments with local DoD donor centers. Where DoD does not have donor centers, she encourages donations to local civilian agencies.

"In the DoD blood program, we only touch a very small percentage of the population that we draw from -- about 20 percent of the eligible donors," she said. "So there are plenty of donors out there. The challenge is to get them in the door and to get them to donate."

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RE: ANNIE
The Historian

Posted 10/21/2003 10:12:00 PM

ANNIE, this is amazing that an army medic should ask the public for ideas .When common sense dictates take care of the wounded 'the healthy ones can be moved into tents temporarily

Reminds me of what i was up against in st. albans naval hosp in 1969 as i was waiting for surgery to heal .Iwas put in charge of an old world war one complex ,as the tet offensive had used up all available hosp space , Upon inspecting the new quarters I found that fungus was growing in the showers four inches deep and filth was everywhere with men in bandages and open wounds using the space . I brought it to the attention of the commander of the hosp by ,bypassing the chain of command , who assigned five brig rats to clean it up . Took almost a month . Never did find out how the place had passed inspection previously or why it had not been cleaned before assigning bunks .One thing that really pissed me off was that the brig rats one sunday were planning a mutiny and even went so far as to threaten me with bodily harm if i was caught on the sidewalks of ny.

These little things are what make you want to reenlist ,wave the flag ,kiss the politicians and support village idiots according to SYV

Back Atcha Historian

Annie

Posted 10/21/2003 11:05:00 PM

I would add in big bold letters:

DO NOT STOP AT FT STEWART!!

On the spot, right now, assess every continental US military installation for hospital, doctor, corpsman, nurse, bed, and barracks availability. Also, assess for any and all sick and wounded military individuals waiting for medical assistance.

Once again, this is NOT DIFFICULT. We have these things now called computers that contact each other at the speed of light. There are also phones, that old fashioned thing that lets you talk to other people and discuss what needs to be done, then by the gods, DO IT.

Isaac

Annie

Posted 10/21/2003 11:08:00 PM

I agree with you. And you did a good thesis on freedom to and freedom from. Where ever it came from, don't lose it. I'm still thinking you good thoughts.

The carnage score sheet

Watchdog

Posted 10/22/2003 7:06:00 AM

Here's a few stats for the fair and balanced news network, aka Fox.

<http://www.ifamericansknew.org/>

The terrible treatment of Bill O'Reilly

Watchdog

Posted 10/22/2003 7:58:00 AM

Wish I had heard this interview. For my money Terry Gross is one of the best interviewers. Big mouth O'Reilly, it seems, got a dose of his own medicine and couldn't stand to be on the hot seat and receiving end for a change. More P C bullshit.

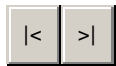
National Public Radio Apology

NPR's ombudsman says the interview two weeks ago with our very own Bill O'Reilly (search) was -- "unfair to O'Reilly" and "unlike many interviews on NPR where the tone is civil."

Ombudsman Jeffrey Dvorkin says host Terry Gross's questions -- "were pointed from the beginning. She went after O'Reilly using critical quotes from the [new AI] Franken book and a New York Times book review...By the time the interview was about halfway through, it felt as though Terry Gross was ...carrying AI Franken's water

<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,100743,00.html>

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Reference: www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml

Veterans for Common Sense is an organization of Gulf War veterans working to ensure the debate over war considers all necessary issues.

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