

RCC1.960618.041b

PORTER GOSS  
14TH DISTRICT ALABAMA

200 CANNON BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-0913  
(202) 225-2138

COMMITTEE  
RULES  
STANDARDS OF OFFICIAL CONDUCT

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-0914**

DISTRICT OFFICES  
2000 MAIN STREET  
SUITE 303  
FT. MYERS, FL 33901  
(813) 333-4877

3301 TAMMAMI TRAIL, S.W.  
BUILDING F, SUITE 212  
MIAMI, FL 33142  
(305) 774-8080

PUNTA GORDA  
(813) 638-0061

January 4, 1994

The Honorable Bill Clinton  
President of the United States  
The White House  
Washington DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As Americans react in horror to revelations about secret government experiments on unsuspecting citizens, your Administration has jumped to action with commendable speed and appropriate pledges to right the wrongs.

Your senior adviser, George Stephanopoulos, was quoted in this week's Washington Post as saying: "If these people were tested against their will. . . certainly something must be done to right that." Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary has said "We cannot turn our back on our responsibility here. We have to do whatever is needed to make these people whole again." I agree wholeheartedly and am glad that timely and meaningful follow-up seems to be in the works.

In the process of reaching out to those people whose lives were forever altered by such tests, I hope you will not forget the plight of another group of American citizens who also became unwitting guinea pigs and suffered at the hands of their government. I refer to the more than 1700 naval trainees (and perhaps thousands of other American military personnel) who were used in secret Mustard Gas experiments conducted by the Department of Defense during World War II and later. These men, mostly 17 and 18 years old, were used in full-body gas chamber experiments designed to study the effects of lethal Mustard Gas, without their advance knowledge or consent -- and without proper medical follow-up or assistance. In addition, they were sworn to secrecy and threatened with courts martial if they divulged the nature of their exposure.

In its final report, "Veterans At Risk," issued in January of 1993, the National Academy of Science's Institute of Medicine concluded that "Although the human subjects were called 'volunteers,' it was clear from official reports that recruitment of the WWII human subjects, as well as those in later experiments, was accomplished through lies and half-truths." The report continues: "Most appalling was the fact that no formal, long-term follow-up medical care or monitoring was provided for any of the WWII human subjects. . ." Finally, the report recognizes that: "There can be no question that some veterans, who served our country with honor and at great personal cost were mistreated twice -- first, in the secret testing and second, by the official denials that lasted for decades."

For nearly 50 years, these men suffered in silence. Finally, after countless rebuffs by the federal bureaucracy, the Bush Administration opened the door for providing assistance and we have come to the point where the federal government has promised additional action. But even this process has become bogged down and real relief has been painstakingly slow in coming -- in fact, for most of these veterans, there has been no relief to date. Final rules for handling of these claims are still mired in red tape at OMB, even though your Department of Veterans Affairs announced one year ago that help was on its way.


As you wrote in a February 19, 1993 letter on the subject of righting the wrongs committed on these World War II veterans by the U.S. government, "be assured that this will not be treated as business as usual." While I am impressed with the speed with which your Administration has released information on the radiation experiments conducted on civilians, when compared with the bureaucratic stonewalling that has occurred in the case of Mustard Gas testing, any reasonable observer would conclude that there is a double standard for our men and women in uniform. As these veterans continue to receive form letters of denial from their government, should they assume that civilians exposed to radiation are a higher priority than veterans lied to by their government and exposed to lethal chemical gases?

Mr. President, I urge you to use the weight of your office to speed along recognition of these men, who continue to suffer from the actions of their government as they find obstacles at every turn in seeking recognition and medical attention. In addition to expediting final publication of the new VA regulations, I request your support for my legislation, HR 1055, to help locate and provide commendation for these men. This bill has more than 30 cosponsors, including the Chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, Rep. Sonny Montgomery, but it remains dormant in a House Armed Services subcommittee.

Our men and women in uniform need to know that their government stands behind them and will look out for their best interests. And, when a wrong has been committed, these brave citizens need to know the government will do its best to make things right. We must not have a double standard for our armed services.

I appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

  
Porter Goss  
Member of Congress