

**Congressman Jeff Miller
Warfighter Safety Initiative Testimony to HAC-D
April 15, 2015**

GOOD MORNING, MR. CHAIRMAN. THANK YOU FOR PROVIDING ME AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO TESTIFY TO THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON ISSUES CRITICAL TO OUR NATIONAL SECURITY, AND IN THIS CASE, CRITICAL TO THE PREVENTIVE CARE OF OUR SAILORS AND AIRMEN.

THE NAVY'S BASIC RESEARCH ON HUMAN RESILIENCE AND PERFORMANCE IN HIGH ALTITUDE AND UNDERSEA ENVIRONMENTS IS OF VITAL IMPORTANCE.

TO ENABLE THE CONTINUED SUPREMACY OF U.S. FORCES IN THE 21ST CENTURY AND TO PREVENT SERIOUS ILLNESS IN LATER YEARS IDENTIFIED TO BE CAUSED BY PROLONGED WORK IN THE RELATED DOMAINS OF AVIATION AND DIVING, IT IS CRITICAL THAT THE NAVY'S RESEARCH INTO THE EFFECTS OF EXTENDED EXPOSURE TO EXTREME PRESSURE ENVIRONMENTS IS FULLY FUNDED.

IN THE NAVY BUDGET UNDER THE WARFIGHTER SUSTAINMENT PROGRAM ELEMENT, THE OFFICE OF NAVAL RESEARCH'S MEDICAL TECHNOLOGIES PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS THIS

RESEARCH AS A REQUIREMENT IN SUPPORT OF SUCH MISSION AREAS.

UNFORTUNATELY, FUNDING FOR THIS RESEARCH IS INSUFFICIENT AND DOES NOT UTILIZE D.O.D.'S PREMIER AEROMEDICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH FACILITY, THE NAVAL MEDICAL RESEARCH UNIT IN DAYTON, OHIO.

RECENT RESEARCH HAS SHOWN THAT THE LOW AIR PRESSURE UNDER WHICH HIGH-ALTITUDE PILOTS WORK AND THE RESULTING HIGH CONCENTRATIONS OF OXYGEN THEY BREATHE LEADS TO DECOMPRESSION SICKNESS, INCLUDING A TYPE KNOWN AS NEUROLOGIC DECOMPRESSION SICKNESS.

THE RESEARCH CITES SUCH SYMPTOMS IN PILOTS AND DIVERS AS TEMPORARY AND PERMANENT COGNITIVE DECLINE, SLOWED THOUGHT PROCESS, AND UNRESPONSIVENESS BEYOND THOSE DUE TO THE NATURAL AGING PROCESS.

OF GRAVE CONCERN TO ME IS THAT THE EFFECTS OF THESE ILLNESSES ARE NOT TOO DIFFERENT FROM WHAT RESEARCHERS ARE FINDING IN TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY VICTIMS.

OUR MILITARY NEEDS TO FUND MORE BASIC RESEARCH INTO THE CAUSES AND METHODS OF PREVENTING THESE ILLNESSES IN OUR PILOTS, DEEP SEA SAILORS, AND SPECIAL OPERATORS

EXPOSED TO PROLONGED PERIODS OF EXTREME PRESSURE CONDITIONS.

THERE IS A PROMISING SIDE TO THIS ISSUE.

IN 2005, THE DEFENSE BASE CLOSURE AND REALIGNMENT COMMISSION DIRECTED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NAVAL MEDICAL RESEARCH UNIT IN DAYTON AND ITS JOINT CENTER OF EXCELLENCE FOR AEROMEDICAL RESEARCH AT WRIGHT PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE.

SINCE THAT TIME, DOD HAS SPENT MORE THAN \$40 MILLION TO DEVELOP A WORLD-CLASS RESEARCH FACILITY SUPPORTED BY A COLLECTION OF STATE-OF-THE-ART EQUIPMENT FOUND AT NO OTHER LOCATION ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD.

THIS UNIQUE ASSORTMENT OF CAPABILITIES ENABLES THIS FACILITY TO TRANSITION VALIDATED KNOWLEDGE AND EFFECTIVE TECHNOLOGIES TO THE WARFIGHTER THAT WILL MITIGATE AND PREVENT THE EFFECTS OF HIGH ALTITUDE AND UNDERSEA ENVIRONMENTS.

HOWEVER, SINCE THE CREATION OF THIS INCREDIBLE FACILITY, THE NAVY HAS BEEN UNABLE TO FUND CRITICAL RESEARCH THAT WOULD CAPITALIZE ON D.O.D.'S INVESTMENT AND MAXIMIZE RESEARCH INTO ESTABLISHED NAVY AND AIR FORCE REQUIREMENTS.

I THINK YOU'LL AGREE THAT FUNDING THE EFFICIENT UTILIZATION OF THIS FACILITY IN SUPPORT OF ESTABLISHED AIR FORCE AND NAVY REQUIREMENTS IS GOOD FOR OUR SAILORS, AIRMEN, VETERANS, AND THE TAXPAYER.

AS YOU BEGIN WORK ON THE FISCAL YEAR 2016 DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS BILL, I RESPECTFULLY REQUEST THAT YOU PROVIDE AN ADDITIONAL \$8.9 MILLION FOR WARFIGHTER SUSTAINMENT, MEDICAL TECHNOLOGIES PROGRAM, IN THE NAVY BUDGET.

ALL MONIES PLACED ON CONTRACT WILL BE DONE SO THROUGH A ROBUST COMPETITION AND WILL INCREASE UTILIZATION OF RESEARCH FACILITIES BY ADDRESSING REQUIREMENTS CURRENTLY ESTABLISHED IN THE F.Y.16 PRESIDENT'S BUDGET.

I THANK YOU AND RANKING MEMBER VISCLOSKY FOR HAVING THIS HEARING AND I URGE YOU AND THE SUBCOMMITTEE TO LOOK CLOSELY AT THIS ISSUE DURING YOUR DISCUSSIONS.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME TODAY, AND I APPRECIATE THE OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE MY THOUGHTS ON THIS IMPORTANT RESEARCH WITH THE SUBCOMMITTEE.