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The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Thornberry and Ranking Member Smith,

Thank you, Chairman Thornberry, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the Committee for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding the FY 2018 National Defense Authorization Act.

I first became involved with this issue in 1999 when a constituent of mine asked me to investigate something he called Project 112/ Shipboard Hazard and Defense Project (SHAD).

Project 112 was a chemical and biological weapons research, development, and testing project conducted by the Department of Defense (DoD) and Central Intelligence Agency handled by the Deseret Test Center and United States Army Chemical Materials Agency from 1962 to 1973. Project SHAD, a part of the larger Project 112, was a series of tests conducted by the DoD during the 1960s to determine how well service members aboard military ships could detect and respond to chemical and biological attacks.

My constituent was the Senior Navy Officer in charge of 5 different light tug operations from 1964 to 1967. However, in 1993 he started having health problems. Since then, he has been diagnosed with malignant Melanoma; several types of skin cancers, prostate cancer and doctors have found 4 pieces of Asbestos in his lungs. As a senior officer, he was notified of some military chemical tests performed on animals on his ship while he was in service. Once he started getting sick, he asked me to investigate whether or not there could be a link between his health problems and Project SHAD.

As you know, the DoD performed experimental tests by spraying live chemical and biological agents on ships and sailors to test the Navy's vulnerability to toxic warfare. My constituent commanded some of the ships used in these experiments. These tests – known as Project 112, which included Project SHAD, exposed at least 6,000 service members without their knowledge to extremely harmful chemical and biological weapons.

The path of this investigation has been long and challenging. At first, the DoD denied that there were any tests at all. Then in 2001, the DoD confirmed Project SHAD. It revealed that there may have been some tests but indicated that no one had been at risk because the tests used simulated agents and the sailors were adequately trained and protected. In late 2002, DoD verified for the

first time that between 1962 and 1974 it had sprayed harmful chemical and biological agents on their ships and sailors. These tests included some of the most deadly chemicals on Earth: Vx Nerve Gas, Sarin Nerve Gas and *E. coli*.

These tests were performed *without* notifying the ships' commanders and crew about the toxicity of the chemicals or the potential for significant negative health effects. Nor were they adequately trained and protected as reported earlier. Many of the veterans who were on these ships have experienced serious medical illnesses and cancers.

Even today, despite these shocking revelations, DoD: has not publicly provided a complete accounting of these tests; to our knowledge, has stopped looking for records of Project 112 service personnel; and never notified the veterans subjected to these tests about their participation or the scope of the tests to which they were exposed.

For many years, I have been working with my colleagues in Congress to bring information to light regarding Project 112 and Project SHAD, including passing legislation that required DoD and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to disclose records relevant to the provision of benefits to those involved in the tests, as well as mandating two studies by the National Academy of Medicine to examine the health outcomes of SHAD veterans. These efforts helped reveal information on the substances to which the 5,900 SHAD veterans were exposed, but large gaps remain in our understanding of the origin of Project 112, and Project SHAD because a concentration of critical information remains classified.

This barrier undoubtedly impacted the balance of past studies conducted on Project 112 and Project SHAD. That is why I respectfully request that when you draft the 2018 NDAA, you include language that would require that DoD to fully declassify all materials and information relating to Project 112 and Project SHAD.

It is incumbent upon our country to ensure that any service member who participated in these tests is provided with treatment and other benefits if they have health problems and have developed a disability because of these tests. We cannot wait any longer. Many of these brave men who served their country are now sick or have even passed away. Project 112 and similar cases of chemical and biological testing on service members is an issue of trust and integrity.

It is imperative for us to right our government's past wrongs and help these brave veterans who unknowingly participated in these tests. Congress agrees that we must use sound science to make these critical determinations, and that is why I have taken such a strong interest.

Thank you for considering language as you draft 2018 NDAA. For additional information, please contact me or Jen Almendarez (5-3311) in my office.

Sincerely,



MIKE THOMPSON
Member of Congress