

February 23, 2020

Thank you for taking the time today to read my written testimony. My name is TSgt. (E-6) Douglas Riley Wilson, and this is a record of my service in the United State Air Force (USAF), in relation to my time at Karshi-Khanabad Air Base (K2), Uzbekistan.

I joined the USAF in July of 1998, following my graduation from St. Cloud High School in St. Cloud, Florida. After basic, I was stationed at Dyess Air Force Base in Abilene, TX. Prior to 9/11 I was deployed twice, once to Prince Sultan Air Base in Saudi Arabi and once to Muscat, Oman. In December of 2001, I was deployed to Ali Al Salem, Kuwait. Roughly a week later, I was forward deployed to K2. I remained in K2 for three months. Upon arrival, I was not briefed on any hazardous conditions. Since this was not our original assignment, the temperatures were extremely different for those we prepared for in Kuwait. The temperature was well within freezing. It was either raining or snowing, which caused standing water all over the ground. We were told we could beg, borrow, or steal whatever we could to stay warm. This resulted in us trading items with both the Uzbeks and the Army to get what we could to stay warm and dry. We constantly had to scrap dried frozen mud off our shoes before getting dressed.

I heard rumors while we were there about what the previous purpose of the base. This included the disposal of chemical and biological weapons buried in the ground, which then were dug up for "tent city" where we slept. I never personally saw the signs identify hazardous waste. I continued to hear of these rumors for many years.

I met my wife in September of 2007, and we were married on December 31, 2008. We welcomed our first son, Colton, in May of 2009. Our second son was born in October of 2010. During my remaining time with the USAF, I deployed at least nine other times to various locations, some of which were with Air Force Special Operations Unit. In January of 2011 while on a TDY to Savannah, Georgie, I was in a Segway accident that left me with limited mobility in left elbow. Due to this injury, I was unable to complete a regulation push-up and was Medically Retired in April of 2013, after 15 years of active duty service.

I began working for *Sierra Nevada Co.* in July of 2013. It was important that or finances remained similar to those when I was in the USAF, because my wife works at the same small private Christian School that my boys attend. Our oldest son was diagnosed with Verbal Apraxia, when he was two years old. My wife graduated from Rocky Bayou Christian School, so she knew they specialized in assisting those with disabilities. By the time Colton was three, his teacher had him both talking and reading. But as a private school teacher, my wife makes less than county teachers, and we still have tuition to pay for our boys.

While with *Sierra Nevada*, I was still working as an Airframe and Powerplant Mechanic. In July of 2016 while stationed at Nellis AFB, I fell off of the steps of an airplane, about two months later my knees became painful. This resulted in surgery for a torn Meniscus in September of 2016. After the surgery, I began to have tremors in both arms and legs and would fall frequently. My emotions were a rollercoaster that I could not control. On Veterans Day, November 11, 2016, my wife was beyond frustrated with the lack of answers and effects of the tremors. She took me to Baptist Hospital in Pensacola, because we knew an ER doctor there. They began a workup to figure out was going on. A CT scan was done and found a 3mm mass in right cerebellum. I was immediately transferred to Sacred Heart Pensacola, because they had a Neurosurgeon on staff. I had a craniotomy on Nov 17, 2016 to biopsy tumor. They sent the biopsy to MD Anderson;

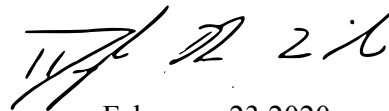
results came back inconclusive. I was referred to Dr. Mose Hayes. He was sure it was Primary Central Nervous System Lymphoma, after reviewing the result from MD Anderson he found T-Cell markers. I began in patient chemotherapy treatments in March of 2017. The treatments were done in rounds, one week on then one week off. I would spend four to five days in the hospital each time because of the strength of the chemo used to get past the blood/brain barrier. On day one, I was given Methotrexate 3,500 mg/m<sup>2</sup> by intravenous infusion over four hours, followed by 2 mg of Vincristine intravenously over 30 minutes. Day two, I was given Leucovorin 200 mg/m<sup>2</sup> intravenously over 30 min. Days three to five were used to monitor the levels of the Methotrexate in my system until it was safe for me to go home. I completed this same course of treatment for six cycles.

Once MRIs were clear in May of 2017, I was referred to Moffit Cancer Center Tampa, FL for a autologous stem cell transplant. Due to insurance approval, I finally arrived at Moffit in July of 2017, to begin my pre-harvesting work-up for the stem cell transplant. One of these tests was another MRI, which revealed that the cancer had returned yet again. I had my second craniotomy on my 37<sup>th</sup> birthday on July 31, 2017. Their biopsy once again showed an abundance of T-cells. Once I returned home, it became difficult to get in touch with or get answers from Moffit. So, my home-based oncologist Dr. Hayes sent us to MD Anderson in Houston Texas. They did not believe it was cancer, but instead an autoimmune disease. Please note that the radiologist at Moffit suggested that maybe I had CLIPPERS Syndrome and they sent me back to Mayo, because they specialize in CLIPPERS. I saw Dr. Marin Collazo. She did not feel that it was CLIPPERS but felt strongly that Dr. Hayes was correct with his diagnosis for Primary CNS Lymphoma. She referred me to a Hematologist at Mayo, Dr. Han Tun. Dr. Tun reviewed my case with the hematology and cancer board at Mayo. They all agreed that it was Primary CNS Lymphoma. On August 31, 2018, Dr. Tun started the process of working with Dr. Hayes to restart my chemotherapy rounds.

In November 2018, I began another 8 rounds of the same chemotherapy treatments, as I previously completed earlier in 2017. After completing treatments, I was immediately sent to Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, FL. The scans were clear, and I began my Autologous Stem Cell Transplant process with Dr. Ayala in February of 2019. This process involved more scans to ensure the cancer was dormant. I remained in Jacksonville from the middle of March until the end of April for the transplant. The process involved harvesting my stem cells. After that was completed, I was given super strong chemo to kill all of my white blood cells. Then they intravenously gave me back my previously harvested stem cells, which had been filtered and cleaned of any possible cancer. I returned home in May of 2019. Since then all of my scans have returned clear. I just completed my 10-month scan on February 19, 2020. I will not receive those results until February 27, 2020. My one-year anniversary of my stem cell transplant, or my second birthday as they called it at Mayo will be April 1, 2020- great April Fool's Day reminder. The cancer and surgeries have left me with limited mobility, emotional issues, and a financial burden on my family. It is hard to walk due to balance issues from a weak right side, and tremors, which still occur on my right side. For mobility, I use a rolling walker for distances of 25ft or less. For anything else, I use a wheelchair. I have been actively receiving in-home physical therapy for the past three years, but I was released to an out-patient facility in November of 2019. I go to Physical Therapy twice a week at an outpatient facility. Since my

wife works Monday through Friday, I ride in my wheelchair the 1.5 miles up the road to the facility and back. I struggle with short term memory loss and depression from the affects to my cerebellum. We had to sell our home and down-size into a smaller home closer to my wife's work. This both allows her to help me easily if I fall and provided some aid to the financial burden we now face. I am unable to work. I do receive Social Security Disability, which provides some financial relief. Our youngest son, Lucas, was diagnosed with Tourette's in June of 2019. The stress of me being sick has taken a toll on him greatly. If I have a bad day, we know that he will also have a bad. He struggles with understanding and dealing with my new reality. I am blessed to still be with my family, and we appreciate every day that we have together. However, the VA's refusal to service connect my cancer, even knowing what I was exposed to at K2 and the burn-pits in Balad, Iraq, has placed unwanted burdens on my family. We have had to modify our home to be handicap accessible and purchase a new vehicle. I am not asking for a handout, but I am asking for the country, that I love and served, to acknowledge the harm they placed me in and the connection that it has to my new reality post-cancer. I also want acknowledgment for all the other veterans that have been put through the ringer for this great country but have to fight for the benefits and being taken care of that we were all promised when we joined.

Douglas R. Wilson

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. R. Wilson', written in a cursive style.

February, 23 2020