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### IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Release No: 471-00  
July 27, 2000

### DOD RELEASES FINAL REPORT ON RISKS OF CARC PAINT EXPOSURE TO GULF WAR VETERANS

The Department of Defense released today the final environmental exposure report that examines servicemembers' exposure to chemical agent resistant coating ( CARC ) paint fumes and the possible connection between those exposures and the illnesses some veterans have experienced since the Gulf War. This report updates the previously released interim report.

██████████ the special assistant for Gulf War illnesses, finalized the investigation after the Presidential Special Oversight Board indicated the issue had been thoroughly studied and adequately addressed. Since the interim report was published, no new information has come to light to cause DoD investigators to change any of their conclusions or recommendations.

Several thousand vehicles and pieces of equipment deployed to the Gulf region had to be quickly repainted from the three-colored woodland camouflage paint scheme to desert camouflage prior to the start of the Gulf War. The desert paint was a urethane-based chemical agent resistant coating which makes up the largest category of paint applied to U.S. military vehicles and equipment. CARC is resistant to a variety of chemicals and solvents and has a unique quality for preventing chemical warfare agents, such as blister and nerve agents, from penetrating the coating.

Inhaling high concentrations of some of the compounds and solvents in CARC can cause short-term symptoms like coughing, shortness of breath and watery eyes. Long term exposure could lead to respiratory problems, including asthma. Paint fumes present the most potential risk to users. CARC paint emits very little in the way of harmful fumes when applied with a brush or roller, but when it is aerosolized during spray-painting applications, the risk of inhaling high concentrations of harmful components rises significantly. CARC paint used in the Gulf War contains no carcinogenic compounds and presents no health risks when dry unless the painted surface is sanded or welded.

Most of the people at risk of exposure during the Gulf War were members of the Florida Army National Guard's 325th Maintenance Company, which operated painting sites at two ports in Saudi Arabia. In the rush to get vehicles quickly painted for desert operations, much of the painting was done by soldiers who did not have the proper personal protective equipment, including respirators required by normal operating procedures.

Members of every Service have reported illnesses they believe are connected to their Gulf War service, but only a limited number of soldiers spray-painted with CARC during the Gulf War. Experts estimate that fewer than 500 people were involved in painting operations during the Gulf War, including about 200 soldiers of the 325th Maintenance Company.

This investigation doesn't definitively link CARC painting operations with undiagnosed illnesses reported by Gulf War veterans, except in a small number of cases involving a limited number of personnel who were known to be directly involved in painting operations.

The complete final environmental exposure report is available on GulflINK at [http://www.gulflink.osd.mil/carc\\_paint\\_ii/](http://www.gulflink.osd.mil/carc_paint_ii/).

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