

Assembly Joint Resolution No. 67

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 129

Assembly Joint Resolution No. 67—Relative to radioactive depleted-uranium exposures to veterans during the Persian Gulf War.

[Filed with Secretary of State August 20, 1998.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AJR 67, Floyd. Persian Gulf War: depleted-uranium exposure.

This measure would memorialize the Congress of the United States to immediately investigate whether United States Armed Forces currently deployed in the Persian Gulf region have been trained regarding depleted-uranium safety measures, have been issued appropriate protective equipment, and have been provided with radiometers to detect depleted-uranium contamination.

This measure also would encourage the Congress to fund a nongovernmental organization or agency, with no ties to the Department of Defense and other specified agencies, to conduct a thorough investigation of all Persian Gulf War hazardous exposures, including depleted uranium, and to make recommendations to the Congress, as specified.

This measure also would encourage the Congress to provide all Gulf War veterans, their families, and civilians who have known or suspected exposures to depleted uranium, if they develop the known health effects of internal or external exposure to depleted uranium, with immediate medical care and disability benefits.

WHEREAS, The people of California have a special affinity for, and are greatly indebted to, the many brave men and women in the United States Armed Forces who serve and have served to protect and defend our precious freedom; and

WHEREAS, California's strong commitment to its veterans must not wane or ever be forgotten; and

WHEREAS, Nearly 120,000 Californians answered their country's call and put themselves at great risk of personal injury and death by serving in the Persian Gulf War (1990–91); and

WHEREAS, With the outbreak of hostilities, commencing with the beginning of the airwar and Operation Desert Storm in mid-January 1991, depleted uranium was used for the first time in tank armor, missile and aircraft counterweights and navigational devices, and in tank, antiaircraft and antipersonnel artillery; and

WHEREAS, More than 940,000 30mm and 14,000 105mm and 120mm depleted-uranium rounds were fired in the Persian Gulf

region that released between 300 and 800 tons of highly toxic and radioactive depleted uranium into the immediate environment; and

WHEREAS, Upon impact, as much as 70 percent of the uranium oxides are sent into a fine aerosol mist that contaminates the food and water supply and which can readily be inhaled into the lungs resulting in numerous immune-system-related diseases, cancers, congenital deformities, leukemia, and renal and hepatic dysfunctions; and

WHEREAS, Many of these diseases and illnesses are occurring in people throughout Iraq and among the soldiers of the United States, the United Kingdom, and other allies who served during the Persian Gulf War; and

WHEREAS, The basic question of whether the illnesses experienced by troops serving in the Persian Gulf War were the result of some specific and unusual exposure related to that service has not been answered conclusively; and

WHEREAS, The Presidential Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses recently released its report which found that the Pentagon has not "acted credibly" in its handling of the issue of troop exposure to chemical weapons; and

WHEREAS, Six years after the Persian Gulf War, there is still deep controversy over the causes of the severe health problems observed in veterans; and

WHEREAS, Available information indicates that both the Pentagon and the Department of Defense had previous knowledge that troops were exposed to depleted uranium from the beginning of the Persian Gulf War; and

WHEREAS, More than 100,000 veterans of that war have registered with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs' Persian Gulf War Registry with medical complaints ranging from chronic fatigue, skin rashes, chronic headaches, memory loss, muscle and joint pain, neurological disorders, sleep disturbances, respiratory troubles, digestive ailments, cardiovascular problems, abnormal weight loss, menstrual disorders, fertility problems, miscarriages, and birth defects; and

WHEREAS, Responding to requests from veterans and their families and organizations such as the National Gulf War Resource Center, the Depleted Uranium Education Project, the Military Toxics Project, and Swords to Plowshares conducted several indepth investigations of Persian Gulf War exposures to depleted uranium that was fired from United States military tanks and aircraft, and have publicly demanded that a complete, comprehensive, and independent investigation into all potential causes of "Gulf War Syndrome" begin immediately; and

WHEREAS, Their investigation concluded that the United States Department of Defense has engaged in a deliberate attempt to avoid responsibility for consciously allowing the widespread exposure of



hundreds of thousands of United States and allied coalition servicemen and servicewomen to more than 630,000 pounds of armor-piercing depleted-uranium penetrators released by United States tanks and aircraft during the Persian Gulf War; and

WHEREAS, Based on available information, as many as 400,000 Persian Gulf War veterans may have been contaminated by inhaling or ingesting depleted-uranium dust during combat operations, equipment-recovery operations on test-firing ranges, and postwar battlefield tours; and

WHEREAS, After Operation Desert Storm, the Department of Defense has intentionally understated the number of known veterans who were exposed to depleted uranium in friendly fire incidents, during recovery operations, as a result of the July 1991 Doha, Kuwait munitions fire, and through contact with contaminated areas and equipment; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense's action regarding depleted-uranium exposures has been characterized as a blatant disregard for existing laws and regulations, which means that the future use of depleted-uranium ammunition has taken precedence over the need (1) to protect American troops from exposure to depleted uranium, and (2) to provide medical care to servicemen and servicewomen who have developed serious health problems due to that exposure; and

WHEREAS, The failure by the Department of Defense to train military personnel about depleted uranium puts men and women unnecessarily at risk in the event of the accidental or intentional release of depleted uranium from munitions; and

WHEREAS, Particularly at risk are personnel in combat units in the Persian Gulf, Bosnia, and Korea; and

WHEREAS, Since 1991, the course of research, investigation, and medical care for veterans exposed to depleted uranium has been sidetracked by the deliberate efforts of the Pentagon to downplay both the scope and severity of Persian Gulf War depleted-uranium exposures; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, by the Assembly and Senate of the State of California, jointly, That the Legislature proclaims its concern that the United States government has not fully met its moral obligation to attend to the health-care and family-support needs of its Persian Gulf War veterans suffering from the various health effects caused by, among other things, exposure to spent depleted-uranium ammunition; and be it further

Resolved, That the Congress is encouraged to immediately investigate whether United States Armed Forces currently deployed in the Persian Gulf region have been trained about depleted-uranium safety measures, have been issued appropriate protective equipment, and have been provided with radiometers to detect depleted-uranium contamination; and be it further



Resolved, That the Congress is encouraged to fund a nongovernmental organization or agency, with no ties to the Department of Defense, the Department of Energy, or the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, to conduct a thorough investigation of all Persian Gulf War hazardous exposures, including depleted uranium, and that this investigation should review and make recommendations to the Congress concerning research on the health effects of depleted uranium and current or planned antiarmor alternatives to depleted-uranium penetrators; and be it further

Resolved, That the Department of Defense is requested to send letters to all Persian Gulf War veterans who many have been exposed to depleted-uranium-contaminated areas and equipment confirming that exposure; and be it further

Resolved, That the Congress is encouraged to provide all Persian Gulf War veterans, their families, and civilians who have known or suspect exposures to depleted uranium, if they develop the known health effects of internal or external exposure to depleted uranium, with immediate medical care and disability benefits; and be it further

Resolved, That the Department of Defense is encouraged to do all of the following:

(1) Immediately begin training all military personnel, regardless of occupational specialty, about the use of depleted-uranium munitions and safety procedures required during contact with contaminated personnel or equipment.

(2) Expand its hazardous and toxic chemical training programs to all United States Armed Forces personnel.

(3) Expand research on the health effects of depleted uranium, especially on inhaled and ingested particle matters; and be it further

Resolved, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies of this resolution to the President and Vice President of the United States, to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and to each Senator and Representative from California in the Congress of the United States.

