

HE FOUGHT THE TALIBAN



NOW, HE FIGHTS THE VA

VA to Burn Pit victims: Delay, Deny and Hope You Die

What are burn pits? Throughout Iraq and Afghanistan, American military bases operated (and some still operate) massive open-air firepits for waste disposal. Trash is dumped in, doused in jet fuel and set on fire. Large bases like Joint Base Balad in Iraq burned hundreds of tons of waste per day, producing thick smoke that often blanketed residential facilities.

What do they burn? Anything and everything. Blood-stained uniforms, car parts, ammunition, asbestos, human waste, paints, chemicals, unexploded IEDs, human and animal corpses, DEET-soaked tents, plastics...

But... isn't that bad for you? Yes, yes it is. You've probably heard about the terrible health challenges suffered by 9/11 responders, due to the toxic dust and smoke from materials that burned or were pulverized in the attacks. The military effectively gave "9/11 Syndrome" to hundreds of thousands of US service members, to save money on trash disposal.

Burn pit smoke may contain chemicals such as dioxins, arsenic, carbon monoxide, benzene, heavy metals, VOCs, particles and God only knows what else. Thousands of previously-healthy troops continue to develop lung disease, blood clots, cancers, fibroids and other ailments after exposure to burn pit smoke.

Between Agent Orange, Gulf War Syndrome and now burn pits, we seem to have a persistent habit of poisoning generation after generation of our troops.

At least they're getting treated, right? You must be new around here. The Veterans' Administration's approach to health care is known among disabled veterans as "Delay, Deny and Hope You Die" (also the title of a highly-recommended recent documentary on the topic). Getting adequate treatment or disability compensation from the VA often turns into a soul-crushing, Kafkaesque appeals process that can run into decades before the veteran sees a dime. The VA will stop at virtually nothing to avoid paying out - they've even been known to shred claims and "lose" paperwork that was hand-delivered to their offices.

The VA routinely denies claims based on blatant lies (claiming symptoms presented too late to qualify for disability even though the diagnosis paperwork literally says the opposite) and obscenely low-balls disability ratings to minimize payouts. More than once, veterans have killed themselves outside VA hospitals in despair.

Why haven't I heard about this? There's been reporting about burn pits in major media: the New York Times, the Guardian, the New Republic & others. Unfortunately, it's never quite reached critical mass and broken through into public consciousness.

The burn pits have at least been shut down... have they? They were in operation at least as late as 2016, and recently separated service members report a number of burn pits still in operation.

What can I do? Contact your representatives! Talk to people & spread awareness! It took until 2011 to pass the Zadroga Bill that helped 9/11 responders get the care they deserved. Our veterans deserve no less!

Sources: Available online at <https://newhavensundayvigil.wordpress.com>

Since 1999, the New Haven Sunday Vigil has been held here every week from 12-1pm at Broadway, Park and Elm Streets in New Haven, CT, to emphatically say NO to the state of permanent, ongoing war against the world being waged by our government and its allies- a war which is terrorizing the planet and destroying lives in order to consolidate enormous power and wealth in the hands of a very few people.

Distributed at the New Haven Sunday Vigil on April 22, 2018.

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<https://newhavensundayvigil.wordpress.com>

Sources:

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