

Military Records Research Center
FIELD PLAYBOOK





Military Records Research Center Field Playbook

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Version History

Rev #	Revision Description	Section(s) Affected	Implemented By	Revision Date
1.0	Original	All	Hilary Jedlicka	03/02/22
2.0	Updated for PACT Act, Manual Reference updates	Numerous	Brad Lowe	02/2023



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Military Records Research Center (MRRC) Background, Mission, Vision

Background

Beginning in 1989, the U.S. Army Joint Services Records Research Center's (JSRRC) mission was to conduct multi-service military unit records research in support of Veterans' disability compensation claims submitted to Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA).

In 2019, JSRRC discontinued researching requests where Army did not hold and maintain the records, effective September 30, 2020.

Recognizing the criticality of a successful mission transfer to continue properly adjudicating Veterans' disability claims, VBA established a Military Records Research Center (MRRC).

Mission

Provide the timely and accurate delivery of military service departments' verification research for disability claims to VBA Regional Offices.

Vision

Create an internal military records research center that provides world class customer service to ensure our nation's Veterans receive the benefits earned through their service.



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Definitions

Acronym	Definition
MRRC	Military Records Research Center
RO	Regional Office
VA	Department of Veterans Affairs
VBA	Veterans Benefits Administration
JSRRC	Joint Services Records Research Center
VSR	Veterans Service Representative
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
AO	Agent Orange
STR	Service Treatment Record
VBMS	Veterans Benefits Management System
OMPF	Official Military Personnel File
MST	Military Sexual Trauma
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration
OMAR	Official Military Activities Report
RORC	RO Research Coordinator



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References

[M21-1 VIII.i.1.A Developing Claims for Service Connection Based on Herbicide Exposure](#)

[M21-1 VIII.i.1.B Ratings for Disabilities Associated with Herbicide Exposure or Service in the Republic of Vietnam \(RVN\)](#)

[M21-1 VIII.iv.1.A General Information and Development for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder \(PTSD\) Claims](#)

[M21-1 VIII.iv.1.D Evidence Evaluation and Decisions for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder \(PTSD\) Claims](#)

[M21-1 III.ii.2.D.4.b Providing Specific Information in RRC Requests](#)

[M21-1 III.ii.2.D.4.e Following Up on Requests to MRRC](#)

Nautical Herbicide Exposure Centralized Processing Standard Operating Procedure

Records Research Team Standard Operating Procedure

[*PACT Act Implementation Standard Operating Procedure*](#)



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RO Research Coordinator Duties

The RO Research Coordinator (RORC) serves as the RO primary point of contact with the MRRC and as the primary point of contact within the RO for procedures related to stressor corroboration (unrelated to MST or personal trauma). RORCs are authorized to submit stressor and exposure research requests to the MRRC via VBMS.

The RORC reviews claims for PTSD and certain Agent Orange/herbicide exposure claims to confirm all required development has been completed prior to submitting a research request to MRRC. Duties include:

- Determines whether there is enough information available to conduct research, to include the complete personnel file and service treatment records.
- Confirms VBA sanctioned intranet and internet sources have been reviewed, to include the OMAR app.
- Submits RO research requests for stressor verification and land-based herbicide exposure verification.
- Emails the MRRC mailbox at VAVBAWAS/CO/209/MRRC when a pending research request is no longer needed or needs to be cancelled to submit a corrected research request.

The RORC contacts the MRRC when special situations arise.

- For policy related questions and/or feedback related to stressor or exposure research, provide detailed but concise information.
- To request expedited research, provide the reason for the request (see the section [Circumstances Under Which MRRC Requests May Be Expedited](#)).
- Excludes routine follow ups. The status of pending research requests may be ascertained by checking VBMS.

For general questions the RORC can send an inquiry to the MRRC mailbox VAVBAWAS/CO/209/MRRC.

The RORC must also keep up with changes to manual references, attend training such as the quarterly Community of Practice calls, and review training guides provided by MRRC. If not receiving regular emails related to manual updates, you may subscribe to email updates from Compensation Service by clicking here- [Compensation Service Calendar Subscriptions](#).



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Records Research Requests in VBMS

Submitting a Records Research Request

Please see the [VBMS Core Military Records Research Center Workflow Engine](#) Guide for step-by-step instructions on submitting records research requests.

Only users with the RO Research Coordinator role in VBMS can submit research requests. All other users have view only.

Viewing the Status of a Records Research Request

Users can view the status of a request by selecting the Record Research Requests chevron.

Because the status of research requests is readily available in VBMS, it is not necessary to email the MRRC to request the status or to follow up.

All requests that have been submitted for the claim will be listed separately.

TEST CASE File #: 505055055 Veteran Intent To File Claims Doc

110 - Initial Open Claim Check Edit Claim Detail Create DCS Upload Document New Claim SSA Inquiry Manage Evidence

Live Comp < 8 issues

Go to Work Item Days Pending: 83 Date of Claim: 01/31/2020 Status: OPEN Suspense Date: 04/23/2020 App Form: N/A Team Assigned to: N/A Assigned to: N/A

EXPAND CLAIM DETAILS

Contentions List Development Letters Tracked Items Exams Claim Notes Record Research Requests

Create Research Request

- Submitted Request 04/13/2020 - Research Assigned
- Submitted Request 04/22/2020 - Research Assigned

The status can be any of the following:

- *Research Requested* – automatically generated when the requestor submits a records research request that cannot be immediately assigned to a researcher.
- *Research Assigned* – automatically updated when the records research task is assigned to a researcher.
- *Research in Progress* – manually updated when a researcher launches a records research task.
- *Research Extended* – automatically updated when a records research task is extended.



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- *Research Response Provided* – automatically updated when a records research task is completed.
- *Pending Quality Review* – a records research task draft synopsis is awaiting quality review by MRRC staff.
- *Pending Quality Update* – a records research task draft synopsis was returned to the researcher for review and update.
- *Pending DoD Submission* – automatically generated when a research request is pending transmission of a record request to a DoD record repository.
- *Failed DoD Submission* – automatically generated when an automated record request fails to transmit to a DoD record repository (requires MRRC manual intervention).
- *Pending DoD Review* – automatically generated when an automated record request is successfully transmitted to a DoD record repository.
- *DoD Response Received* – manually updated when a response is received from a DoD record repository. (This means MRRC has received a response to a request for records. This does **not** indicate a finalized MRRC response.)

MRRC Responses

Once MRRC finalizes a response to a research request, a document titled *Records Research Center Response* is automatically generated and uploaded to the Veteran's eFolder. The Records Research Response details the incident and MRRC's response. The synopsis section of the document captures findings of the MRRC's research.

Following is a sample MRRC research response document.



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Records Research Response				
Name: [REDACTED]		Type: Stressor		
SSN: [REDACTED]		Status: Response Provided		
Stressor Incident				
Military Branch: ARMY		Tour of Duty Start: 12/09/2001		
Unit Assignment: CO A 2-10 In 3D TNG BDE TR TC		Tour of Duty End: 01/31/2002		
Occupational Specialty: None		Stressor Start: 12/12/2001		
Medals Received:		Stressor End: 12/12/2001		
Stress Creating Experience				
<p>Basic Training We were introduced to weapons such as our rifles we used for BRM, land mines, claymore mines, grenades, etc. I thought I was fine. I was really enjoying my training. Then one day it was like a switch flipped. I began having these horrible nightmares, sometimes daydreams that would distract me from my training or keep me up at night. They began as dreams of myself and then quickly changed to my family members being murdered. I began having thoughts of killing myself because I was so far from them and I was powerless to protect them. I felt helpless. I was referred to mental health and was diagnosed with PTSD while i was still enlisted. I was also placed on suicide watch until I was transferred to a holding unit and discharged. The PTSD was never treated or dealt with. I still to this day have these same dreams</p>				
Any Killed or Injured Individuals				
Last Name	First Name	Rank	Status	Date of Injury/Death
Synopsis				
<p>Military Records Research Center is unable to research this request because a researchable stressor event/incident was not provided. M21-1 IV.ii.1.D.3.I includes minimum information required to search an in-service stressor. If the information is available, please resubmit your request.</p>				

Records Research Task Tracked Items

Records Research Task tracked items are automatically generated for each research request submitted. When MRRC responds to a research request the tracked item is automatically closed with the date the response was received.

NOTE: Do not manually close a tracked item for a MRRC request without sending email notification to the MRRC mailbox requesting cancellation of the request.

Duplicate Requests

Duplicate requests are created when an identical request is entered for the same stressor or exposure incident with the same period(s) of time. This can happen as the



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result of a new request submitted in the Record Research Request chevron when there is an existing request under a separate end product (EP) or the same EP.

Currently the MRRC tool in VBMS does not have automated functionality to recognize duplicate requests. Please carefully review the eFolder and the Record Research Requests chevron in VBMS under each open EP for existing MRRC requests prior to entering a new MRRC request. Do not submit duplicate research requests.

Canceling a Research Request

The individual who submitted a Record Research Request can cancel the request within two business days of submission if the request is in a “requested” or “assigned” status.

If it is after the two business day window and you discover a research request was submitted in error or is no longer needed, email a cancellation request to the MRRC mailbox at VAVBAWAS/CO/209/MRRC and include the reason for cancellation. After the cancellation request is reviewed by MRRC staff for validity, an email will be sent directly to the field user who requested the cancellation with instructions to upload a copy of the email response to the corresponding eFolder.

Be sure to provide a specific reason the research request is no longer needed in the email to MRRC. For example:

- The stressor has been verified and research is no longer needed.
- Please cancel. The research request was submitted prematurely prior to receipt of the personnel file.

Please see the [VBMS Core MRRC Workflow Engine User Guide](#) for additional guidance on the process of cancelling a research request.

Correcting a Previously Submitted Request

The individual who submitted a Record Research Request has the ability to edit the request within five business days of submission as long as the request status is assigned or requested.

Please see the [VBMS Core MRRC Workflow Engine User Guide](#) for additional details on the process of editing a request.

If you find an error in a previously submitted request and it is past the five-day window to correct, please send an email to the MRRC mailbox at VAVBAWAS/CO/209/MRRC requesting cancellation of the existing request and then submit a new request with the correct information.



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Characteristics of Effective Research Requests

Submission of high-quality research requests to MRRC will result in actionable responses and facilitate accurate decisions on Veterans' claims. This section provides detailed guidance on submitting both exposure and stressor research requests.

Important: MRRC researchers do not have access to Veterans' VBMS eFolders. Make sure all the information needed to conduct research is provided in the research request. Do not refer to documents in the eFolder. (Ex. Do not ask a researcher to review a 21-0781, or a BVA decision, or Tab A.)

Stressors

Requests for stressor corroboration to MRRC must include the following:

- Detailed description of the claimed event: who, what, when and where.
- The most specific date(s) available, at minimum the month and year, during which the stressful event occurred (MRRC will research a period up to 120 days).
- The Veteran's complete tour dates related to the unit of assignment when the incident occurred.
- The designation of the Veteran's unit of assignment at the time of the stressful event down to the lowest possible level.
- The specific geographic location where the stressful event took place. In the *Unit Location* block in VBMS, provide precise locations such as Fallujah, Iraq, instead of Iraq, or Seoul, Korea, instead of just Korea.
- For Air Force stressors, the Veteran's military occupational specialty (MOS) at the time of the event must be provided.



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Following is an example of a properly completed MRRC stressor research request.

⊖ * Stressor Incident

* Military Branch:	Navy	* Unit Assignment During Stressor:	USS JOHN F KENNEDY CV-67
* Location of Stressor:	MEDITERRANEAN SEA	Military Occupation Specialty:	YEOMAN
* Tour of Duty Start Date:	02/07/2003	* Tour of Duty End Date:	02/14/2004
* Stressor Start Date:	05/15/2003	* Stressor End Date:	07/15/2003
* Stress Creating Experience: THE SHIP CAUGHT FIRE WHILE WE WERE UNDERWAY.			
Medals or Citations Received Due to Incident: (select all that apply)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Air Force Cross <input type="checkbox"/> Air Force Combat Action Medal <input type="checkbox"/> Air Medal "V" Device <input type="checkbox"/> Army Commendation Medal with "V" Device <input type="checkbox"/> Army Superior Service Medal with "V" Device			
<input type="checkbox"/> Other Individuals Injured or Killed during Incident			

Exposures

Exposure research requests to MRRC must include the following:

- Description of circumstances surrounding the exposure.
- The most specific date(s) available, at minimum the month and year, during which the exposure occurred (MRRC will research a period up to 120 days).
- The Veteran's complete tour dates related to the unit of assignment when the exposure occurred.
- The designation of the Veteran's unit of assignment at the time of the exposure down to the lowest possible level.
- The specific geographic location where the exposure event took place. In the *Unit Location* block in VBMS, provide precise locations such as Qui Nhon, Vietnam, instead of Vietnam, or Seoul, Korea, instead of just Korea.



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Below is an example of a properly completed MRRC exposure research request.


⊖ Exposure Incident 10/07/1973 - 10/07/1973

Military Branch: <input style="width: 90%; border: 1px solid #ccc;" type="text" value="Navy"/>	Unit Assignment During Exposure: <input style="width: 90%; border: 1px solid #ccc;" type="text" value="USS Gurke (DD-783)"/>
Location of Exposure: <input style="width: 90%; border: 1px solid #ccc;" type="text" value="Claimed: blue water / Procopio / 12NM service"/>	Name of Ship: <input style="width: 90%; border: 1px solid #ccc;" type="text" value="USS Gurke"/>
Exposure Start Date: <input style="width: 90%; border: 1px solid #ccc;" type="text" value="10/07/1973"/>	Exposure End Date: <input style="width: 90%; border: 1px solid #ccc;" type="text" value="10/07/1973"/>
Circumstances Surrounding Exposure: <input style="width: 95%; border: 1px solid #ccc;" type="text" value="Veteran has verified service aboard the USS Gurke (DD-783) from 10/07/1973 to 03/04/1974 and the ship had verified service in West Pac, however, as of today, the SLT does not place the ship within 12 NM of RVN. As"/>	

Identifying the Complete Unit of Assignment Within the Veteran's OMPF





Providing a Veteran's complete unit of assignment at the time of the stressor or exposure event is crucial to the research process. It can also be one of the more challenging pieces of information to locate when preparing a research request.

The table below provides specific examples of documents in the Veteran's OMPF where the unit of assignment can be found. Double click the PDF to view the example documents.

Branch of Service	Where to Look
Army <div style="text-align: center;">  Example of Army Record of Assignment </div>	<i>DA Form 2-1, Personnel Qualification Record</i> <i>DA Form 2-1</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ is used for both officers and enlisted personnel, and ○ first came into use in January 1973.



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	<p>Prior to January 1973, <i>DA Form 20, Enlisted Qualification Record</i>, and <i>DA Form 66, Officer Qualification Record</i>, were used.</p>
<p>Navy</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  Example of Navy Administrative Remar </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enlisted record of <i>Transfer and Receipts</i>, pages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 12 ○ 32 and ○ 33 • enlisted record <i>Administrative Remarks</i>, pages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 4 through 9 ○ 13 and ○ 34 and • officer record, <i>NAVPERS 1301/51, Officer Data Card</i>, page 35. • Performance Reports
<p>Air Force</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  Example of Air Force Performance Report_l </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enlisted record, <i>AF Form 7, Airman Military Record</i>, pages 36 through 39 • officer record, <i>AF Form 11, Officer Military Record</i>, pages 39 and 40, and • performance reports for both enlisted personnel and officers.
<p>U.S. Marine Corps</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  Example of Marine-Corps record- </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enlistment contracts • discharge papers • <i>MABMC-11 (Discharge Order)</i>, and • service records, pages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 3 ○ 5 through 6 ○ 8 through 9 ○ 12 through 13, and ○ 17.
<p>U.S. Coast Guard</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  Example of USCG Units of Assignments. </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enlisted record • <i>Endorsement on Order Sheet, (DoT Form CG 3312B)</i> • officer record • <i>Service Records Card</i> • <i>DoT Form CG 3301, Enlistment Contract</i> • <i>DoT Form CG 3303, Achievement Sheet</i> • <i>DoT Form CG 3305, Leave Record</i>, pages 3, 5, 6-7, and • <i>DD Form 214</i>.



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Unit Information Required for MRRC Requests

Military records are organized by units. Unit records are further organized by date. Therefore, MRRC must know the unit designation down to the lowest possible level and most specific date(s) of the incidents.

The PDF file below contains helpful job aids for identifying the unit of assignment. There is one each for the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard. After opening the document, page down or scroll through to view all five job aids.



Military
Organization Structu

Army

Provide the full unit designation to the company level, such as HHC, 1st Brigade, 2d Armored Division (instead of 2d Armored Division only), and Company C, 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division.

Navy

Provide the full unit designation and hull numbers for ships, such as USS Franklin D. Roosevelt (CVA-42) instead of USS Roosevelt only. *Reminder: Some ships have the same name but different hull numbers.*

Air Force

At a minimum, provide squadron and group designations, such as 366th Field Maintenance Squadron, 366th Combat Support Group instead of 366th Tactical Fighter Wing only. Providing just the wing is insufficient because there are numerous units under a wing and various unit locations.

Marine Corps

At a minimum, provide battalion and regiment, such as 1st Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment. Marine aviation units are organized Squadron, Group, Wing, such as Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 11 (MALS-11), Marine Aircraft Group 11 (MAG-11), 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing MAW).

Coast Guard

Provide the full unit designation and hull numbers for Coast Guard Cutters such as USCGC Juniper (WLB-201), or Coast Guard Air Station Savannah.



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Circumstances under which MRRC requests may be expedited

MRRC can only expedite research requests under the following limited circumstances:

- Terminal illness
- Homeless
- Over 85 years old
- Extreme financial hardship
- Former POW

Apply the appropriate corporate flash to make sure priority is given to research requests that fall into these categories.

RORCs may also email the MRRC mailbox at VAVBAWAS/CO/209/MRRC to request expedited research for cases that fit one of the above categories.

Classified Record Research Requests

Although a Veteran may state that records related to his or her stressor or exposure event are classified or secret, this is not always accurate or records could now be declassified. Proceed with routine research using available resources to attempt to verify the stressor or exposure event. Performance records are great indicators for identifying classified assignments. Do not submit a research request to MRRC until all available avenues of research have been exhausted.

If a research request is required, do not check the box for “Researcher requires clearance to view classified document.” This is for the use of MRRC staff and researchers only, once it is determined classified research is required.



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Using OMAR, NARA, VBMS, ILER and Google for Stressor Verification

This section provides information on verifying stressor events using OMAR, the NARA website, VBMS, ILER and the internet. It is important to utilize all available resources for stressor verification to avoid unnecessary delay to Veterans' claims. Many stressors can be verified without submitting a research request to MRRC.

OMAR

If a stressor cannot be verified after thorough review of the Veteran's military records, the stressor verification process must include review of the OMAR tool.

Some of the most common stressors reported are casualties/suicides and exposure to military activity such as improvised explosive devices (IEDs), small arms fire, and incoming rocket fire. OMAR is an excellent resource for verifying these types of stressor events.

OMAR training videos may be accessed [here](#).

If you are not able to access OMAR, follow the directions [here](#) to request access.

OMAR contains data on:

- Casualties
- Coast Guard events
- Global War on Terror
 - Afghanistan
 - Iraq
 - Syria
 - Terrorism (events that took place in the United States and other countries not listed above)
- Humanitarian missions, including Somalia and Yugoslav Wars
- Vietnam

OMAR has the option to search by date or date range, branch of service, name, and location, as well as other data points.

The following are two examples of effectively using OMAR to verify commonly reported stressor events:



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OMAR example 1:

The Veteran reports that while deployed to Kabul, Afghanistan during May of 2004, he was exposed to frequent enemy fire and explosions. Review of his personnel file confirms he was deployed to Kabul during May 2004.

By accessing OMAR-Afghanistan, selecting 2004, filtering the date range to May 1, 2004, to May 31, 2004, and the Province to Kabul, we can see there were 120 events.

The screenshot displays the OMAR - AFGHANISTAN 2004 interface. The main area shows a map of Kabul with 120 event markers. A table below the map lists the following data:

Year	Month	Day	Dataset	Dataset Type	City/District	Province	Event Type
2004	May	21	ICEWS	Secondary	Kabul	Kabul	Conduct suicide, car, or other non-military bombing
2004	May	21	ICEWS	Secondary	Kabul	Kabul	Employ aerial weapons
2004	May	21	ICEWS	Secondary	Kabul	Kabul	Use conventional military force
2004	May	21	ICEWS	Secondary	Kabul	Kabul	Use unconventional violence
2004	May	22	ICEWS	Secondary	Kabul	Kabul	Use conventional military force
2004	May	23	ICEWS	Secondary	Kabul	Kabul	Make an appeal or request
2004	May	23	SHAVER	Primary	Bagrami	Kabul	Enemy Action
2004	May	24	ICEWS	Secondary	Kabul	Kabul	fight with small arms and light weapons
2004	May	24	ICEWS	Secondary	Kabul	Kabul	Impose blockade, restrict movement
2004	May	24	ICEWS	Secondary	Kabul	Kabul	Make an appeal or request

The filters sidebar on the right shows the following settings:

- City/District is (All)
- Date is (All)
- Province is (All)
- Event Type is (All)
- City/District is (All)
- Filter type: Basic filtering
- Search: [Empty]
- Select all:
- Bagrami: 3
- Kabul: 114
- Khaki Jabbar: 1
- N/A: 1
- Surobi: 1

Each day of May 2004 there were numerous incidents involving fights with small arms and light weapons, use of unconventional violence, conventional military force, enemy action, and fights with artillery and tanks.

The stressor is corroborated and there is no need to submit a research request to MRRC.

OMAR example 2:

An Army Veteran's stressor is that his friend with last name of Porter committed suicide on January 16, 2002, at Ft. Belvoir while they were assigned to HHC USA INSCOM. Although the Veteran did not provide the full name of the deceased, accessing OMAR-Casualties and filtering the date range to January 2002, the Service field to Army, the Type of Casualty to self-inflicted, and the Casualty Country field to United States



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confirms an individual with the last name Porter died of self-inflicted injuries at Ft. Belvoir while assigned to HHC USA INSCOM. Review of the claimant's personnel records shows he was assigned to HHC USA INSCOM at Ft. Belvoir during January 2002. The stressor is corroborated and there is no need to submit a research request to MRRC.

OMAR - CASUALTIES

5

Number of Casualties

Date of Casualty

Type of Casualty

Casualty Country/Water

This data is not all-inclusive. If you cannot verify a stressor using OMAR, submit a Records Research Center or other request as directed in the M21-1.

Service

Last Name

First & Middle Name

DATASET	DATASET_TYPE	Year	Month	Day	LAST_NAME	FIRST_MIDDLE_NAME	AGE	GENDER	PAY_GRADE	RANK	MOS
v2_510389	DCAS_1950-2005_FILE	Primary	2002	January	13	[REDACTED]	24	M	E04	SPC	INFANTRYMAN [11B]
v2_510395	DCAS_1950-2005_FILE	Primary	2002	January	16	PORTER	31	M	E06	SSG	TELECOMMUNICATIONS OPERATOR-MAINTAINER [7
v2_510400	DCAS_1950-2005_FILE	Primary	2002	January	17	[REDACTED]	24	M	E01	PV1	SIGNAL SUPPORT SYSTEMS SPECIALIST [B1U]
v2_510416	DCAS_1950-2005_FILE	Primary	2002	January	21	[REDACTED]	24	M	O02	1LT	
v2_510421	DCAS_1950-2005_FILE	Primary	2002	January	22	[REDACTED]	18	M	E03	PFC	INFANTRYMAN [11B]

VBMS

When the name of a casualty or an injured service member is available, conduct a search of VBMS for an eFolder belonging to that individual.

Search the name by going under More Search Options, Advanced Search, and then completing the name fields.

If the search successfully locates an eFolder, review the folder for a *DD1300 Report of Casualty*, accident report, death certificate or other official documentation of the stressor event.

When the stressor can be corroborated through official military records, an MRRC research request is not needed.

Note: Generally, documents that cannot be disclosed to the claimant may not be considered. Be sure to redact any PII prior to uploading supporting documents to the claimant Veteran's file.



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National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)

The NARA website located at www.archives.gov is another useful tool for verifying stressor events.

After accessing the website:

- Click on *Research Our Records*
- Under *Other Online Research Tools*, select *Access to Archival Databases*, which then opens a screen with the heading *Browse by Category*, which gives several options.
 - Selecting *Casualties* takes you to the following screen:

Genealogy/ Personal History: Casualties

9 series, listed chronologically

Series and Files	No. of Records
Records of Military Personnel Who Died as a Result of Hostilities During the Korean War, created, ca. 1977 - 11/1979, documenting the period 1/1/1950 - 2/7/1957 - Record Group 330	33,642
Korean Conflict Casualty File, 1/1/1950 - 2/7/1957	33,642
Records on Korean War Dead and Wounded Army Casualties, created, 1950 - 1970, documenting the period 2/13/1950 - 12/31/1953 - Record Group 407	109,975
Korean War Casualty File, 2/13/1950 - 12/31/1953	109,975
Defense Casualty Analysis System (DCAS) Extract Files, created, ca. 2001 - 4/29/2008, documenting the period 6/28/1950 - 5/28/2006 - Record Group 330	94,794
Korean War Extract Data File, as of April 29, 2008, 6/28/1950 - 3/10/1954	36,574
Vietnam Conflict Extract Data File, as of April 29, 2008, 6/8/1956 - 5/28/2006	58,220
Defense Casualty Analysis System (DCAS) Files, created, ca. 2001 - 3/16/2009, documenting the period 6/28/1950 - 12/31/2006 - Record Group 330	137,677
Defense Casualty Analysis System (DCAS) Public Use File, 1950-2005, 6/28/1950 - 5/28/2006	135,795
Defense Casualty Analysis System (DCAS) Public Use File, 2006, 1/1/2006 - 12/31/2006	1,882
Records of Repatriated Korean War Prisoners of War, created, 1978 - 1980, documenting the period 7/5/1950 - 10/6/1954 - Record Group 15	4,447
Repatriated Korean Conflict Prisoners of War, 7/5/1950 - 10/6/1954	4,447
Records of American Prisoners of War During the Korean War, created, 1950 - 1953, documenting the period 1950 - 1953 - Record Group 319	4,714
[Korean War Data File of American Prisoners of War], 1950 - 1953	4,714
Records on Military Personnel Who Died, Were Missing in Action or Prisoners of War as a Result of the Vietnam War, created, 1/20/1967 - 12/1998, documenting the period 6/8/1956 - 1/21/1998 - Record Group 330	58,965
Combat Area Casualties Current File, 6/8/1956 - 1/21/1998	58,193
Combat Area Casualties Returned Alive File, 5/1/1962 - 3/22/1979	772



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A commonly used option is highlighted above. Selecting the search button opens the screen that follows.

AAD TOOLS Print Bookmark/Share Help

Search this Series

[Advanced Search](#)

Series Description

There are 2 Files for this series in AAD :

- Defense Casualty Analysis System (DCAS) Public Use File, 1950-2005, 6/28/1950 - 5/28/2006 [\(info\)](#)
- Defense Casualty Analysis System (DCAS) Public Use File, 2006, 1/1/2006 - 12/31/2006 [\(info\)](#)

Title: Defense Casualty Analysis System (DCAS) Files, created, ca. 2001 - 3/16/2009, documenting the period 6/28/1950 - 12/31/2006

After selecting the appropriate search button based on the date of the casualty, the following screen opens:

Fielded Search

File unit: Defense Casualty Analysis System (DCAS) Public Use File, 1950-2005, 6/28/1950 - 5/28/2006
in the Series: Defense Casualty Analysis System (DCAS) Files, created ca. 2001 - 3/16/2009, documenting the period 6/28/1950 - 12/31/2006 - Record Group 330 [\(info\)](#)

You may wish to [View the FAQs](#) for this series.

Search this file

[Advanced Search](#)

Enter values below to search within fields.

Field Title	Enter Values
MEMBER NAME	with all of the values <input type="text"/> Sample Values
MEMBER SERVICE CODE	Select from Code List
MEMBER BIRTHDATE	equals <input type="text"/> Sample Values
HOME OF RECORD CITY	with all of the values <input type="text"/> Sample Values
HOME OF RECORD STATE CODE	Select from Code List
CASUALTY COUNTRY/OVER WATER CODE	Select from Code List
INCIDENT OR DEATH DATE	equals <input type="text"/> Sample Values
WAR OR CONFLICT CODE	Select from Code List
CASUALTY CATEGORY	Select from Code List
INCIDENT CATEGORY	Select from Code List



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This screen allows for search by name, date, branch of service, as well as other options.

Also under *Research Our Records* is an option titled *Research Military Records*, which opens a screen with options by branch of service. Of note is that many Navy deck logs are available here.

This website is considered a primary source of information. When a stressor event can be verified using data found here, an MRRC research request is not needed.

ILER

ILER can be used to help verify service locations. If there is an ILER entry, it can provide City/Location and name of Base Camp along with corresponding dates, which can help narrow down a specific area and time frame to research and/or help confirm service in hostile location for fear-based stressors. The *Individual Deployment History* can be reviewed to identify the locations in which the Veteran served.

ILER may also contain a description of duty/work assignment and other data points which can help to substantiate aspects of a claimed stressor event.

Internet Search

Some events and casualties can be verified by simply conducting an internet search using names of individuals involved, or the type of event along with the date or location, or some other combination of factors. Examples of the types of events you may be able to locate online include a helicopter crash, airplane collision, Coast Guard rescue of a merchant ship, or a shooting at a base.

Official records are the most reliable source of stressor verification. However, any stressors that are confirmed using .gov or .mil websites do not require research by MRRC. Accessing www.usa.gov and utilizing the search function there will bring up only .mil and .gov items.

Other VBA Sanctioned Resources

The Compensation Service Intranet [Rating Job Aids-PTSD website](#) contains a listing of additional helpful websites, along with links to those sites.

The Compensation Service Intranet [Stressor Verification-General Information website](#) contains several helpful resources including, but not limited to, access to military records such as some Army unit histories, Navy command histories, Marine Corps command chronologies, Air Force operational histories, and a link to Coast Guard Incident Investigation Reports. See also the [Job Aids/Helpful Links](#) section at the end of this playbook for additional resources.



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Stressors

Stressor Verification Review Procedure: VSR

VSRs play an important role in the stressor verification process. VSRs are responsible for making sure all development is complete and can often verify stressors using readily available resources, eliminating the need for an MRRC research request.

The following steps must be completed prior to referring a research request to a RORC or submitting a research request to MRRC.

Note that only RORCs are authorized to submit stressor research requests to MRRC.

Step 1

Has the Veteran already been granted service connection for PTSD?

Yes - No stressor verification is needed. (Exception: PTSD was granted prematurely or in error.)

No - Proceed to step 2

Step 2

Have the Veteran's complete military records, both service treatment and personnel, been requested, received and reviewed?

Yes - Proceed to step 3

No - Request the records. Proceed to step 3 after the records are received.

Step 3

Was the Veteran diagnosed with PTSD in service?

Yes - If a Veteran has an in-service diagnosis of PTSD and the stressor is related to that period of service, no additional stressor verification is needed.

No - Proceed to step 4

Step 4

Is the Veteran's stressor related to:



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- fear of hostile military or terrorist activities; or
- combat (See [M21-1 VIII.iv.1.A.3.h](#) for the list of combat decorations); or
- experience as a prisoner of war (POW); or
- duties as a drone aircraft crew member?

No - Proceed to step 5

Yes - Is the stressor consistent with the circumstances, places, and type of service shown in the Veteran's military records?

- Yes - No additional stressor verification is needed. (Exception: For fear-based stressors, if examination results contain a mental diagnosis other than PTSD, a verified stressor will then be needed.)
- No - Proceed to step 5

Step 5

Is complete information available in the claims folder regarding the stressor? The minimum information required to research a stressor is:

- a stressor that would be documented
- the geographic location where the incident took place
- the date(s), month and year minimum, the stressful event occurred (MRRC will research up to a 120-day period)
- the complete unit of assignment at the time the event occurred
- If provided by the Veteran, the name and unit of any casualty.

No - Complete development for stressor details if this has not been done previously. If development is complete but the information received is incomplete, decide the claim based on the evidence of record.

Yes - Proceed to step 6

Step 6

Research available resources, including, but not limited to the following: (detailed information on effectively utilizing these resources can be found in the Playbook section titled *Using OMAR, NARA, VBMS, ILER and Google*).

- Veteran's claims folder-statements, personnel file, service treatment records
- OMAR (VSRs are not required to search OMAR, but may do so)
- NARA website



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- Internet search-.gov and .mil websites are considered primary sources of information
- VBMS eFolder search
- VBA approved sites on the Rating Job Aids-PTSD intranet site

Was stressor verification successful?

Yes - Upload to the Veteran's eFolder any supporting evidence not already of record.

No - Make a VBMS note documenting all sources reviewed and refer the claim to a RORC for review.

When to Refer a Case to a RO Research Coordinator

VSRs may refer a case requiring stressor verification to a RORC when:

- all development is complete; and
- the stressor cannot be verified in the Veteran's military records or through research of available resources; and
- the minimum information needed to allow for additional research listed in step five above is of record in the Veteran's eFolder.

If development is complete and the minimum information required for additional research is not available, the case should not be referred to an RORC and an MRRC research request should not be submitted. The claim will be decided based upon the evidence of record.

Updating VBMS for Routing a Case to a RO Research Coordinator

If the case meets the criteria for referral to an RORC, update VBMS as follows to ensure proper routing of the claim:

- Establish a tracked item by selecting RO Research Coordinator Review from the COMPMGT drop down menu; and
- add the MRRC Request special issue.



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Stressor Verification Review Procedure: RO Records Research Coordinator

RORCs provide a second set of eyes on the stressor verification process. They ensure all required development is complete, the stressor is one which would be documented in military records, and all available avenues of research have been pursued. After all available means of research have been exhausted, RORCs are authorized to submit stressor research requests to MRRC.

Step 1

Has all required stressor development been completed?

No - Complete stressor development or return to VSR to complete depending on RO policy. Take no further action to verify the stressor until development is complete.

Yes - Proceed to step 2

Step 2

Is complete stressor information available in the claims folder?

The minimum information required to research a stressor is:

- a stressor that would be documented
- the geographic location where the incident took place
- the date(s), month and year minimum, the stressful event occurred (MRRC will research up to a 120-day period)
- the complete unit of assignment at the time the event occurred
- if applicable, a detailed description of the casualty event. The name and unit of assignment of any casualties is helpful, but not required to proceed with research. However, if the information is of record, the name and unit must be provided to MRRC in any research request.

Yes - Proceed to step 3

No - The claim will be decided based on the evidence of record. A MRRC research request should not be submitted.

Step 3

Research available resources, including but not limited to the following (See the section titled [Using OMAR, NARA, VBMS, ILER and Google](#) for detailed information on utilizing



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these resources. See also the section titled [Job Aids/Helpful Links](#) for additional resources):

- Personnel file and STRs
- OMAR
- Internet search
- eFolder
- NARA

Can the stressor be conceded?

Yes - Upload any supporting evidence not already of record to the Veteran's eFolder. Edit the subject line of the documents used to concede the stressor with the nature of the stressor and the page number. No additional research is needed.

No - Document all stressor research in a VBMS note and proceed to Step 4

Step 4

Submit a stressor research request in VBMS. See the section titled [Characteristics of Effective Research Requests](#) for guidance on submitting a high-quality request.

Remember that researchers do not have access to the VBMS eFolder. The only information available to researchers is what you provide in your research request. Be detailed, complete, and thorough. MRRC will return any research request identified as invalid or incomplete. A new research request must then be submitted.

- ✓ Include the details of the stressor event: who was involved, what happened, and how it happened. Include all relevant details provided by the Veteran.
- ✓ Review your Stress Creating Experience narrative prior to hitting the submit button. Ask-Does this make sense? Is it clear what exactly I am asking to be researched?
- ✓ For Air Force Veterans the Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) is required.
- X Do not include more than one stressor event in a research request. When research is needed for more than one stressor event submit separate research incidents.
- X Do not copy and paste the stressor event from the Veteran's statement into the Stress Creating Experience field. Only provide the facts of the event. Any statements regarding how the event affected the Veteran or feelings about the event should be left out of the research request.
- X Do not refer to tabbed documents in the eFolder.
- X Do not ask the researcher to review VA Form 21-0781, *Statement in Support of Claim for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*.



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Step 5

Mark the RO Research Coordinator Review tracked item as Received and remove the MRRC Request special issue indicator.

Stressor Events That Should Not Be Submitted to MRRC

MRRC can only verify objective events that would be documented in military records. MRRC cannot verify subjective events, such as what someone saw, heard, or felt.

Fear

Stressors related to fear of hostile military or terrorist activity are not routinely submitted to MRRC for research.

- The location and type of service a Veteran performed can be determined by reviewing the Veteran's military personnel records.
- For a Veteran with a mental diagnosis other than PTSD which requires stressor verification, stressor events related to hostile military activity can frequently be verified using OMAR. See the section titled [Using OMAR, NARA, VBMS, ILER and Google](#).

See [M21-1 VIII.iv.1.A.3.k Establishing a Stressor Related to fear of Hostile Military or Terrorist Activity](#) for additional information.

MST and most personal trauma

Follow the procedures in [M21-1 VIII.iv.1.B.1 General Development for PTSD Claims Related to Personal Trauma](#).

MRRC does not routinely research MST and most personal trauma stressors. Per [M21-1 VIII.iv.1.B.2.g](#), these types of incidents should only be referred to an RORC when the claimed events are of a nature that would otherwise warrant MRRC research.

Events that almost happened and mistreatment of enemy prisoners

Some reported stressor events are impossible to verify and should not be referred to MRRC for research. If, after requesting/obtaining pertinent facts from the Veteran, it is obvious that verification simply is not feasible, the claim will be decided based on the evidence of record. A research request should not be submitted to MRRC.

MRRC cannot verify:

Mistreatment of enemy prisoners.

Events that almost happened. For example:



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- I drove over a land mine, but it didn't explode.
- The barber who cut my hair at the local barber shop was later found to be an enemy sniper.
- I almost shot a child.
- I came close to going off a cliff while driving a tank.

See [M21-1 VIII.iv.1.A.3.p Stressors That Cannot Be Verified](#).

Stressors for pre-discharge claims

Stressor verification requests for pre-discharge claims should generally not be sent to the MRRC. Individuals who file a claim while on active duty will receive examinations in service. An in-service diagnosis of PTSD is sufficient to grant on a direct basis without stressor verification. Examination results showing no PTSD diagnosis would also make stressor verification unnecessary.

Claimants filing PTSD claims that meet Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) requirements are not required to provide a stressor statement, such as VA Form 21-0781.

See [M21-1 X.i.6.B.3.g PTSD, including MST, Development Requirements](#).



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Exposure

General Information on Herbicide Exposure Research

MRRRC researches claims of exposure to herbicides/Agent Orange. To provide timely service to Veterans, all readily available avenues of herbicide exposure verification must be researched prior to submitting a request to MRRRC.

In every case, the complete personnel file and service treatment record must be requested, received (or all efforts to obtain the records exhausted), and reviewed for potential concession of exposure prior to submitting a research request to MRRRC.

If the disability claimed is not eligible for presumption and scientific or medical evidence linking the condition to herbicide exposure has not been received, send the claimant a letter using the development paragraph *AO-Current disability, nexus, qualifying service*. Exposure verification is not required unless/until such evidence is received.

Requests for verification of exposures other than herbicides must not be submitted to MRRRC. See the section titled [Exposure Events that Should not be Referred to MRRRC](#) for guidance on verifying exposures other than herbicides/Agent Orange.

On August 10, 2022, the President signed *Public Law (PL) 117-168*, Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2022, or the Honoring our PACT Act of 2022 (hereafter referred to as “PACT Act”). The PACT Act expanded locations associated with herbicide exposure. The table below lists all locations and dates associated with herbicide exposure.

Locations and Timeframes Associated with Herbicide Exposure

Location/Circumstances	Dates
Vietnam in-country	January 9, 1962, to May 7, 1975
Blue Water Navy	January 9, 1962, to May 7, 1975
In a unit determined by VA or the Department of Defense to have operated in the Korean DMZ	September 1, 1967, to August 31, 1971
Thailand at any United States or Royal Thai base	January 9, 1962, to June 30, 1976



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Laos	December 1, 1965, to September 30, 1969
Cambodia at Mimot or Krek, Kampong Cham Province	April 16, 1969, to April 30, 1969
Guam or American Samoa, or in the territorial waters thereof	January 9, 1962, to July 31, 1980
Served on Johnston Atoll or on a ship that called at Johnston Atoll	January 1, 1972, to September 30, 1977

The PACT Act SOP, available on the [PACT Act Information Page](#), provides that development, research and documentation of herbicide exposure in all land-based locations will be conducted by any claims processor at any RO. Nautical herbicide exposure continues to be the responsibility of centralized processing sites.

The PACT Act Information Page contains the latest policy guidance, job aids and answers to frequently asked questions.

Reviewing Service Records for Proof of Service in a Presumptive Herbicide Location

Certain documents within the claims folder may show proof of duty or visitation in a qualifying location.

Review	For
All certified DD Forms 214	Entries such as foreign service in a qualifying location; or a separating station/last duty assignment in a qualifying location
Military personnel records, including the DA Form 20, <i>Enlisted Qualification Record</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verification of service locations • Any travel or flight orders • Any statements in performance evaluations related to travel or flights, and • Any TDY orders
STRs and dental records	Treatment in the qualifying location with particular attention to Army Post Office (APO) or Fleet Post Office (FPO) numbers, which may be associated with a presumptive location.



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	<p>For a list of APO-FPO address numbers during the Vietnam era, see the document titled <i>General 1942-2002 APO-FPO Files</i> located in the General Information Folder on the Stressor Verification website located here.</p> <p>The listing begins on page 4998.</p>
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Note: There are no medals whose receipt confirms service in a recognized herbicide presumptive location.

When you can verify land-based herbicide exposure, make sure the evidence used to support the determination is uploaded to the eFolder and edit the subject line of the relevant document(s) using the format: [location of exposure], pg. [number].

Reviewing the eFolder for Evidence of Nautical Service

Evidence that may imply nautical service includes:

Service records noting service

- On a ship
- With a Naval Air Squadron, or
- In a Marine Corps battalion assigned to a ship, or
- Statements submitted in support of previous claims.

If the only potential qualifying service is nautical service, the claim must be referred to centralized processing for research of nautical service. To route the claim:

- Add a VBMS note that the claim requires verification of qualifying nautical service
- Add the Blue Water Agent Orange special issue.

When to Submit a Research Request to MRRC for Land-Based Herbicide Exposure:

If, after review of all available evidence and resources, service in a land-based area associated with herbicide exposure cannot be verified, and complete information regarding the claimed exposure event is of record, submit a research request to MRRC.

Complete information is defined as:

- ✓ the unit of assignment
- ✓ the specific geographic location
- ✓ the circumstances under which the Veteran was exposed
- ✓ a 120 day or less timeframe.



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If any of this information is not of record and development is complete, *do not submit a research request to MRRC*. The claim will be decided based on the evidence of record.

Important:

Researchers do not have access to the Veteran's eFolder. Do not ask the researcher to review evidence in the eFolder (ex. See Tab A). Include all relevant details of the claimed exposure event in the Circumstances of Exposure narrative field when creating a research request.

Provide the specific circumstances of the claimed exposure. How was the Veteran exposed to herbicides?

For example, "Veteran states he was exposed to AO while delivering mail from Camp Casey to units stationed on the DMZ," is a researchable request, whereas simply stating "AO exposure" is not.

Specify the geographic location of the exposure event.

For example, "Da Nang, Vietnam" rather than "Vietnam".

Provide the complete unit of assignment.

See the section titled [Identifying the Complete Unit of Assignment Within the Veteran's OMPF](#) for a detailed explanation on determining the unit of assignment.

Thailand

Under the PACT Act there is a presumption of herbicide exposure for Veterans who served in Thailand at any United States or Royal Thai base on or between January 9, 1962, to June 30, 1976.

Evidence of a specific military occupational specialty (MOS) or duties on the perimeter of the base is no longer required as of the effective date of the PACT ACT, August 10, 2022.

The presumption of exposure extends to Veterans serving on a ship that called at a Thailand coastal base during the qualifying period, but does not extend into the territorial waters.

When the claimant or the evidence of record does not provide the approximate dates, location, and nature of the alleged exposure, send a subsequent development letter if this has not already been done.



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Cases with potential Thailand nautical service must be referred for centralized processing. See the [Nautical Herbicide Exposure](#) section for additional information.

When to Submit a Research Request to MRRC for Land-Based Herbicide Exposure in Thailand

Step 1

Have the complete personnel file and service treatment records been requested (or all efforts to obtain them exhausted) and reviewed?

- Yes - Do the Veteran's records show service in Thailand at any United States or Royal Thai base on or between January 9, 1962, to June 30, 1976?

If yes, land-based herbicide exposure is verified and no additional research is needed.

If no, proceed to step 2.

- No - Request the records. Do not submit a research request at this time. Proceed to step 2 only after the records have been received and reviewed and there is no evidence of qualifying service.

Step 2

Is sufficient information of record in the eFolder to permit research by MRRC?

Sufficient information includes:

- ✓ The complete unit of assignment
- ✓ A 120 day or less time period
- ✓ The geographic location of the exposure event and
- ✓ The circumstances under which the Veteran was exposed to herbicides.
- No – Is development complete?
 - Yes - The claim will be decided based upon the evidence of record. Do not submit a research request to MRRC.
 - No – Send the *AO-Current disability, nexus, qualifying service* paragraph in a subsequent development letter. Repeat these steps after allowing the claimant time to respond.
- Yes - Refer the case to a RORC to submit a MRRC research request.



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Korea DMZ

The presumption of herbicide exposure is extended to any Veteran who served in a unit determined by VA or the Department of Defense to have operated in the Korean DMZ between September 1, 1967, and August 31, 1971.

Exposure verification must be attempted by following the steps below prior to submitting an exposure research request to MRRC for a claim of herbicide exposure on the Korean DMZ.

VSR responsibilities

- Request the complete personnel file and STRs (or exhaust all efforts to obtain them).
- When the claimant or the evidence of record does not provide the approximate dates, location, and nature of the alleged exposure, send a development letter if this has not already been done.

Exposure verification must then be attempted using the following the steps below prior to submitting an exposure research request to MRRC for a claim of herbicide exposure on the Korean DMZ.

Review the complete personnel file and the chart below:

Did the Veteran serve in a recognized unit between September 1, 1967, and August 31, 1971?

Major Command Assignment	Unit/Military Entity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combat Brigade of the 2nd Infantry Division, or • 3rd Brigade of the 7th Infantry Division <p>Note: Although the units are listed as subunits of either the 2nd or 7th Infantry Divisions, they generally operated independently and may have been attached to either infantry division.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st Battalion, 12th Artillery • 1st Battalion, 15th Artillery • 1st Battalion, 9th Infantry • 1st Battalion, 17th Infantry • 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry • 1st Battalion, 31st Infantry • 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry • 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry • 1st Battalion, 72nd Armor • 1st Battalion, 73rd Armor • 2nd Battalion, 9th Infantry • 2nd Battalion, 17th Infantry • 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry • 2nd Battalion, 31st Infantry • 2nd Battalion, 32nd Infantry • 2nd Battalion, 38th Infantry • 2nd Battalion, 72nd Armor • 2nd Squadron, 10th Cavalry • 3rd Battalion, 23rd Infantry



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Major Command Assignment	Unit/Military Entity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3rd Battalion, 32nd Infantry • 5th Battalion, 38th Artillery • 6th Battalion, 37th Artillery • 7th Battalion, 17th Artillery • 54th CBRE Detachment • 6th Aviation Platoon, or • 239th Aviation Company. <p>Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 6th Aviation Platoon was deactivated on April 15, 1969, and incorporated into the 239th Aviation Company. • Service in the Korean DMZ for members of the 6th Aviation Platoon or 239th Aviation Company is limited to helicopter crewmen, which generally consisted of pilots, crew chief, and door gunner(s). A factual finding must still be made as to the nature of the Veteran's service in determining whether herbicide exposure is established.
Division Reaction Force	4 th Squadron, 7 th Cavalry.
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2nd Military Police Company, 2nd Infantry Division • 2nd Engineer Battalion, 2nd Infantry Division • 13th Engineer Combat Battalion • United Nations Command Security Battalion-Joint Security Area (UNCSB-JSA) • Crew of the USS Pueblo, or • 25th Chemical Company, 2nd Infantry Division.

Yes - Herbicide exposure is conceded and an MRRC research request should not be submitted.

No - Do available records and the claim provide details of the Veteran's Korean service?

Required details are:



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- ✓ The location in Korea where the exposure occurred.
 - ✓ The circumstances under which the Veteran was exposed to herbicides.
 - ✓ A time frame of 120 days or less.
 - ✓ The Veteran's unit of assignment at the time of exposure.
- No - Decide the claim based on the evidence of record. A research request should not be submitted to MRRC.
 - Yes - Refer the claim to a RORC to submit an exposure research request to MRRC.

Nautical Herbicide Exposure

Effective January 1, 2020, centralized processing teams made evidence-based determinations regarding eligible RVN service, including qualifying Blue Water Navy (BWN) service.

Effective January 1, 2023, any claims processor at any RO may research and document herbicide exposure at land-based locations, but nautical herbicide exposure remains the responsibility of the centralized processing teams.

Centralized Processing Team Responsibilities

The actions that must be taken by centralized processing teams to verify nautical herbicide exposure are specified in the *Nautical Herbicide Exposure SOP*.

The centralized processing team must review:

- eFolder
- Ship locator tool
- The approved military sites listed in the SOP.

If the available resources do not establish qualifying nautical service, the centralized processing team will refer the claim to the RRT for additional research.

Records Research Team Responsibilities

The RRT is responsible for ensuring proper development is complete and for researching deck logs and other VBA approved tools to attempt to verify qualifying service.

When qualifying service cannot be established through available resources, the RRT is responsible for submitting a research request to MRRC. The specific actions that must be taken by RRT prior to submitting a research request are detailed in the *Records Research Team Standard Operating Procedure*.



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MRRC Research Requests for Nautical Herbicide Exposure

When research of all available resources is complete and an MRRC research request is needed, please abide by the following guidelines.

Entering multiple ships

Veterans often have service on more than one ship. Each ship should be entered as a separate research request. Do not combine multiple ships into one request.

Entering exposure research requests for Veterans who served in a squadron

For Veterans who served in a squadron and research is required for both the squadron and the ship, enter one research request but with two separate incidents, one for the ship and one for the squadron. Provide a detailed narrative regarding the research needed in the Circumstances Surrounding Exposure field.

Requests which need supplemental updates or corrections

If you find a previously submitted research request was incomplete or incorrect, submit a new research request with the correct information. Next, send an email to the MRRC mailbox at VAVBAWAS/CO/209/MRRC asking for the original request to be cancelled and explaining that a corrected request has been entered. MRRC staff will close the incorrect request.



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Exposure in other locations

Allegations of exposure to herbicides in locations other than those listed in the table on pages 34-35 are verified on a factual basis.

- Request the complete personnel file and STRs (or exhaust all efforts to obtain them).
- When the claimant or the evidence of record does not provide the approximate dates, location, and nature of the alleged exposure, send the VBMS AO-Exposure General Notice paragraph if this has not already been done.

Once the required development has been completed, attempt exposure verification using the steps below prior to submitting an exposure research request to MRRC.

Step 1

Research the date(s), location(s) and circumstances of claimed exposure using the [Herbicide Tests and Storage Outside Vietnam](#) lists provided by DoD.

Step 2

Did the DoD lists confirm herbicides were used as claimed?

Yes - No additional verification is needed. A research request should not be submitted to MRRC.

No - Is sufficient information of record in the eFolder to permit research by MRRC?

Sufficient information includes:

- ✓ The complete unit of assignment
- ✓ A 120 day or less time period
- ✓ The geographic location of the exposure event and
- ✓ The circumstances under which the Veteran was exposed to herbicides.

- No - The claim will be decided based upon the evidence of record. Do not submit a research request to MRRC.
- Yes - Refer the case to a RORC to submit a MRRC research request.

Note: If the Veteran is claiming exposure at more than one location or while assigned to different units, a separate research request must be submitted for each location or unit.



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Important: Researchers do not have access to the Veteran's eFolder. The only information available to base research on is what you provide in the research request. Be sure to provide specific, detailed information. Do not refer to tabbed documents in the eFolder (ex. See Tab A).

Exposure events that should not be referred to MRRC

MRRC only researches herbicide/AO exposure.

MRRC does not research the following exposure events. Please refer to the associated manual reference and the [PACT Act Implementation SOP](#) for proper procedures. The procedures in the PACT Act Implementation SOP take precedence where they differ from the M21-1.

- C-123 Aircraft involved in Operation Ranch Hand [M21-1 VIII.i.1.A.2.a](#)
- Radiation [M21-1 VIII.iii.4.A and B](#)
- Asbestos [M21-1 VIII.iii.7.B](#)
- Mustard Gas/Lewisite [M21-1 VIII.iii.3.A](#)
- Camp Lejeune Contaminated Water [M21-1 VIII.iii.8.A](#)
- Other Environmental Toxin/Substance [M21-1 VIII.iii.9](#)
- Burn Pits [M21-1 VIII.iii.9](#)



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Training

MRRRC is committed to providing training and support to RORCs in effectively verifying stressor and exposure events using available resources and, when required, submitting high quality research requests.

TMS Courses

The following training is currently available in TMS:

RO Research Coordinator Training: TMS 4616228

December 2021 RO Research Coordinator Training Call: TMS 4620337

March 2022 RO Research Coordinator Training Call: TMS 4624328

September 2022 RO Research Coordinator Training Call: 4634343

December 2022 RO Research Coordinator Training Call: TMS 4637913

Important: To be designated as a research coordinator, one must complete RO Research Coordinator Training TMS 4616228.

Quarterly Calls

The MRRRC will conduct quarterly training calls with RORCs. The purpose of the calls is to address questions, trends and provide guidance. Suggestions for call topics may be submitted to the MRRRC mailbox VAVBAWAS/CO/209/MRRRC.

An email invitation will be sent out to RORCs in advance of each call. The calls are recorded and made available in TMS. The first call was held December 2021.

RORC Community of Practice Microsoft Teams Channel

The RORC Community of Practice is a Microsoft Teams Channel for RORCs to collaborate and share best practices for verifying stressor and exposure incidents. MRRRC staff will periodically share information and post helpful resources.

Please note: Claim specific questions should not be posted on the RORC Community of Practice Teams Channel.



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The following action items should be completed prior to requesting access:

- New RORCs must be journey level VSR - prior record research experience preferred (e.g., prior Joint Services Records Research Center (JSRRC) Coordinator, Military Records Specialist (MRS), or Supervisory Recommendation).
- Each RORC must complete the training course RO Research Coordinator (TMS # 4616228, 1.75 hours duration). The course is assigned to new RORCs by Training Managers at their respective ROs.
- Update the Common Security Employee Manager (CSEM) to designate each RORC with the role of "Research Coordinator." This will allow RORCs to submit record research requests in VBMS.
- RO management must update the Workforce Information Tool (WIT) identifying RORCs. The WIT allows an RORC designation under the special teams field. Once an employee completes the training, the RO must update the WIT indicating RORC designation along with a note showing the completion date of the RO Research Coordinator training (TMS # 4616228).
 - Note: The RORC CoP team relies on WIT as a metric to add and remove RORCs from the team. If WIT is not updated, it can delay addition to the CoP channel.

To request access, RO leadership should send an email to the MRRC mailbox with the new RORCs name and confirming completion of required training. Once WIT confirmation has been completed, RORCs will receive notification of team addition and RO leadership will receive a confirmation response.

In Process Reviews (IPRs)

MRRC staff will conduct IPRs on research requests and provide feedback to RO Research Coordinators. IPRs are nonpunitive. They are designed to correct deficiencies, identify training opportunities and provide mentoring.



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Contacting MRRC

RORCs are encouraged to contact the MRRC through the MRRC mailbox VAVBAWAS/CO/209/MRRC .

Please note requests for the status of pending research requests should not be sent to the MRRC mailbox or to District Analysts. The status of pending research requests can be checked in VBMS.



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Job Aids/Helpful Links

Listed below are links to websites along with brief descriptions of the information that may be found. These may be useful in the process of verifying stressors or corroborating exposure events, thereby eliminating the need to submit a MRRC research request. This list is not intended to be all inclusive.

Control + click to open attached links.

Link/Site	Description
Stressor Verification Site - General	Compensation Service Intranet site. Of note is that under the branch tabs on the left-hand side of the website are actual unit records for some Army, Navy, Coast Guard, Marine and Air Force units (Records are not all inclusive.)
Official Military Activities Report	Contains casualty information as well as data useful for verifying stressors. See the OMAR section of this playbook for more detailed information.
Helpful Website Links	Compensation Service Intranet site, Rating Job Aids-PTSD. Contains links to several sources that may be used for stressor verification.
Rating Job Aids - PTSD - PTSD Combat and Noncombat Information (va.gov)	Compensation Service Intranet Site with Combat and non-combat definitions; Combat and noncombat Traumatic Stressors/Events; and Combat Pay/Imminent Danger/Hostile Fire Pay
Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships (DANFS)	General histories for American Naval Fighting Ships – Naval History and Heritage Command
U.S. Navy Judge Advocate General	JAG Investigations. Contains records released to the public.



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Nationwide Gravesite Locator	Search for burial locations of Veterans and their dependents in VA National Cemeteries, state Veterans cemeteries and various other Department of Interior and military cemeteries.
Pearl Harbor Casualty List	Comprehensive list of the names of civilian and military personnel killed in the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.
Korean War	National Archives casualty files divided by state, containing selected descriptive data about U.S. military personnel who died as a result of combat duty.
Vietnam War	National Archives casualty files divided by state, containing selected descriptive data about U.S. military personnel who died as a result of combat duty.
Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Person Office	Site maintained by the Department of Defense. A new feature on this site is the online version of Personnel Missing - Korea (PMKOR) , available for download in both ASCII and Adobe Acrobat PDF formats. This report is the result of many staff years of research in government and private archives, both American and foreign.
Acronym Finder	This site provides a searchable database of more than 5 million acronyms/abbreviations and their meaning. Covering all subjects, the database collection focuses on computers, technology, government, telecommunications, and military acronyms with an emphasis on DoD, Air Force, Army, Navy and Coast Guard acronyms.
Navy Deck Logs Available in the National Archives Catalog	Online Navy deck logs from Vietnam era.



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Coast Guard Incident Investigation Reports	The Online Incident Investigation Report search provides information regarding maritime incidents investigated by the U.S. Coast Guard. These published reports are limited to reportable marine casualties closed after October 2002. Additional reports, those closed prior to November 2002, may be added in the future.
Naval Aviation Histories (navy.mil)	Dictionary of American Naval Aviation Squadrons – Volume 1 and 2.
Ship Histories (navy.mil)	Ship Command Operations Reports (not all inclusive)
Military Abbreviations	Military terminology and jargon