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VA in the News

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HEALTH CARE FOR VETERANS

ABC News discusses the high cost of health care for veterans with emphasis given to care provided the non-service connected.

ABC News, 1/17/87 pp 1-2

VA LOAN GUARANTY BENEFIT IS NOT VALUELESS

OPCA staffer stresses value of home loan program in letter to the editor.

Washington Times, 2/19/87 p.3

U.S. ACTS TO PREVENT DRUG-TEST CHEATING

The government, trying to prevent cheating by federal employes on drug tests, will announce an extraordinary set of guidelines today that include rigid monitoring of employes, testing temperatures of urine samples and placing blue dye in designated federal toilets.

Washington Post, 2/19/87 p.4

AGENT ORANGE STUDY STYMIES CDC

A \$70 million effort to link Agent Orange to diseases among Vietnam veterans is stalemated at the CDC despite some scientific breakthroughs, according to a recently published series of letters.

Federal Times, 2/23/87 p.5

VET HEALTH CARE CUTS DECRIED

The nation's largest organization for enlisted military personnel has joined the chorus voicing opposition to the Reagan administration's proposed spending cuts for some veterans medical treatment.

Light, San Antonio, Texas
2/5/87 p.6

VA FEARS IMAGE BY VETS

Too many veterans perceive they can no longer have their medical needs met at the Asheville VAMC. That's the concern of officials at the hospital, who want to get out the message that veterans in the 17-country region served by the center should continue coming there for treatment.

Times, Asheville, N.C.
2/11/87 p.7

FY'88 BUDGET PROPOSAL TO CUT FUNDS FOR VETERANS CARE

The Reagan administration's proposed FY 1988 budget could break a long-standing promise of free lifetime health care to at least one segment of the U.S. veteran population.

American Hospital Assoc. News
1/19/87 p.8

VA MEDICAL TEAMS SCREEN VETS WEEKLY IN WIDE DISTRICT

Medical teams from the Livermore VAMC are hitting the road to serve patients in the hospital's vast district under a new health screening program.

Valley Times, Livermore, Calif.
1/12/87 p.9

VETS DESERVE BEST OF CARE

Editorial disagrees with proposed cuts in veterans medical care and with proposed fees for retirees using military facilities.

Express-News, San Antonio, Texas
2/1/87 p.10

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Agent Orange Study Stymies CDC

By Susan Kellom

A \$70 million effort to link Agent Orange to diseases among Vietnam veterans is stalemated at the Centers for Disease Control despite some scientific breakthroughs, according to a recently published series of letters.

The collection of letters "provides a historical picture of the conduct of the Agent Orange study as well as its current status," Sen. Alan Cranston, D-Calif., said when he submitted the letters to the *Congressional Record*.

The correspondence was sent from the CDC, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Office of Technology Assessment and the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs.

The study, mandated six and a half years ago by Congress to explore allegations about exposure of U.S. troops to the dioxin-

based herbicide sprayed in Vietnam, came to a halt a year ago when Congress' OTA raised questions about the CDC methodology.

OTA spotted an "inability to reliably distinguish ground troops with high probabilities of exposure from those with low exposure probabilities," John Gibbons, the agency's director, wrote in an Oct. 31, 1986, letter to Congress.

Gibbons suggested in the same letter a new refinement in analytical chemistry — a technique for measuring small amounts of dioxin in the blood — could provide the basis for distinguishing a highly exposed group of veterans from one with little or no exposure.

Members of the CDC project working on this technique still predict the actual study will not resume before July.

"Some of us are getting a little anxious . . . it's time to get on

with something," said Charles Joekel, executive director of Disabled American Veterans' Washington headquarters.

The letters show a breakthrough in which CDC scientists, using analytical chemistry, found it is possible to detect dioxin 15 years after exposure in those who had been highly exposed.

"We're convinced the use of blood as a measurement is valid," said Robert Diefenbach, a member of the CDC Agent Orange project.

Joseph Zengerle, a former assistant Secretary of the Air Force and a private attorney in Washington involved in veterans affairs, argued Congress does not need to wait to get an exact science. "It is futile to wait for one more study," he told *Federal Times*. "It's time Congress took a step, 12 years after the war."