

5/06/2004 Moran Urges VA Committee to Examine Medical Policies for Deployed, Returning Troops

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Washington, D.C. - Congressman Jerry Moran today requested that the House Veterans' Affairs Committee investigate the health care policies regarding the pre- and post-deployment physical examinations of troops returning from service in Iraq, Afghanistan and other overseas deployments. Earlier this spring, the Pentagon began scaling back the medical exams of soldiers returning from Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.

"We have a duty to protect the health of today's active duty soldiers and tomorrow's veterans," Moran said. "At a time when more than a hundred thousand troops are serving in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Department of Defense should not discourage medical exams for soldiers returning home."

In 1997, legislation supported by Moran was enacted into law which required the Department of Defense to provide pre- and post-deployment medical examinations for troops deployed overseas. During previous military engagements, post-deployment medical exams were not routinely given, which hindered the ability of doctors to diagnose illnesses that developed months or years after duty.

While serving as Chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health, Moran conducted numerous hearings to ensure that medical data was being collected from soldiers both before and after their time in combat so they would receive proper treatment for their combat-related injuries. However, a January 2004 memorandum from the Army discouraged the routine post-deployment physical examinations.

"It is important that we continue to review and examine the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs health care initiatives," Moran said. "The Army's recent policy to discourage physical examinations may significantly impair the VA's ability to diagnose and treat the health care needs of future veterans."

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