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An Update on Project 112 and SHAD: A Lesson from the Past

By Congressman Bob Filner (D-CA)

In this time of war, it is prudent that we double our efforts to ensure that our nation is willing and able to protect our currently deployed troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. To that end, it is imperative that we learn from the past—and one of the great lessons from that past is the lesson of Project 112 and SHAD.

Project 112 was a Department of Defense (DOD) program operating from 1962-1974. SHAD (Shipboard Hazard and Defense), a part of the larger Project 112, was a series of tests to determine the vulnerability of U.S. warships to attacks with chemical and biological agents (other Project 112 tests were on land). Animals were involved in some, but not all of the tests. Although service members were not test subjects, they were on board the ships during the tests, conducted by the Deseret Test Center at Ft. Douglas, Utah.



134 tests were planned, and 50 were conducted. 19 were SHAD tests, and the others were land-based in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, the Marshall Islands, Puerto Rico and Panama. Many of the tests used simulants and some used biological or chemical agents. So far, nearly 6,000 veterans have been identified as having been involved.

The illnesses now occurring among many of these veterans seem to be more than coincidence. Larry Ginter, who served on the USS Power, had five bypasses before the age of 57. A fellow sailor on the USS Power, Jim Druckemiller, had his first of several heart attacks at age 37. Jim Cast, who served on the USS Herbert J. Thomas, has chronic respiratory pulmonary infections.

Jack B. Alderson, who served on the Project SHAD Technical Staff, became aware in the past several years of these and many other health problems of SHAD personnel, mainly respiratory and cancer. He, himself, developed cancer, and although he does not claim that it was brought about by SHAD, it emphasized to him the concerns of others. He began to pursue getting answers to the questions SHAD raised. The response he received from the DOD was that he was a part of Autumn Gold, not SHAD. However, the Autumn Gold final report was dated May 1964, five months before he reported for duty. Believing that he was being stonewalled, he turned to Congressman Mike Thompson of California for help.

Not until 2000, after years of insistent urging for information by Congressman Thompson and by our veterans, did the DOD begin to actively pursue declassification of relevant medical information from Project 112 tests. This search for 40-year old documents has shown that record keeping during the Cold War was atrocious.

Once again, I must commend our veterans for their diligence in bringing this matter to the fore. Once again, our veterans had to advocate on their own behalf to get the government to release information about harmful exposures to understand their own health issues and assert the legitimacy of their claims for compensation. I also commend my colleague, Congressman Thompson, for his urgent calls for action on this issue.

The General Accounting Office (GAO), the Congressional investigative arm, has just concluded their recent investigation of Project 112 and SHAD, as required by Congress. They concluded that the DOD, in their Task Force Report in June 2003, appears to have accurately identified all major chemical and biological tests associated with Project 112. However, GAO stated that there likely are service members and civilians potentially exposed who have not been identified and recommended that the DOD needs to continue to collect and provide information on potentially-exposed personnel.

Congressman Thompson plans to introduce legislation that will establish a panel of independent investigators to ensure that all information is released. He has stated that the GAO report shows that the Pentagon may be keeping life or death information from veterans who may have been the subject of tests.

In a separate action, the Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) is proceeding with a civil lawsuit against individuals at DOD who improperly and without a legal basis prevented the release of information about the deliberate exposure of American military service members to chemical and biological warfare agents, simulants that may have been dangerous, and highly toxic decontamination agents. These unwarranted actions denied veterans the right to know what agents they were exposed to and in what dosages. This has the effect of preventing these veterans from receiving the veterans benefits to which they are legitimately entitled.

We need to diligently pursue all avenues to find each and every veteran who was affected by Project 112 and SHAD testing and to provide them with appropriate treatment and benefits. Further, we need to ensure that steps are being taken to prevent and to improve the documentation of potentially harmful exposures during the current wars. The lives of our veterans depend on our diligence.

Chaplain Deploys to Serve Jewish Personnel in Afghanistan

By Lt. Col. Susan H. Meisner, U.S. Army, JWV Post 10

The Combined Forces Command – Afghanistan Chaplain's office sent out a brief e-mail: A Rabbi was coming for the Jewish High Holidays.

The Rabbi was Chaplain (Capt.) Avrohom Horovitz who led services last month in Bagram for Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year) and in Kandahar for Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement). His presence in Kabul between the holidays—and in the theater—was a boost to Jewish servicemen and women.

Kabul Army Education Center Counselor Sheila Dickerman said the Rabbi's presence led to "a reconnection and rediscovery of my roots." For Dickerman, originally from Honduras, Jewish life centered on the home; attending Jewish services in the Kabul Compound chapel was a special experience for her.

While Dickerman serves in theater as a government civilian, additional Jewish personnel serving in the Kabul area with non-governmental organizations and private businesses also joined the military for religious services.



Said Army Lt. Col. Dan Mishket, “The chaplain’s arrival revived a small, dormant Jewish spirit in Kabul. His presence resulted in Jews from around the city—both military and civilian—coming together to celebrate the High Holidays, address spiritual needs and enjoy a common bond with others with similar beliefs.”

While in Kabul, Horovitz, Dickerman, Chaplain’s Assistant Spec. Deborah Harris, interpreter Jaffer Asadi, and this writer took an impromptu visit to the Kabul Synagogue. The synagogue, in downtown Kabul near the shopping district, is home to the last known Jews—both of them—in Afghanistan.

Zablon Sementov, who was at home that day, is a businessman who left Afghanistan for Israel but later returned; his family still lives there.

Yitzhak Levy, who was away the day we visited, also has family in Israel.

The two men do not speak. According to Sementov, he cannot forgive Levy for converting to Islam under Taliban pressure. Sementov refused to convert and spent several years in prison for his defiance.

The Rabbi passed Sementov some Jewish mementoes—including the yarmulke (prayer cap) on his head—and together they poured over “The Israel Review of Arts and Letters,” which features a chapter on Jews in Afghanistan. In addition to Kabul, the cities of Herat, Balkh, Meymaneh and Mazar e-Sharif, among others, once had Jewish populations.

Sementov brought fruit out for his visitors and then offered a tour of the synagogue and its grounds.

“Afghan Jews in America are providing the money to refurbish the synagogue,” said Horovitz. While there is much work yet to be done, the two sanctuaries sport fresh paint and the grounds are in generally good repair. Jewish artifacts abound, from a mezuzah (sacred scroll) affixed to a doorpost, to latticework on the windows and iron railings around the balconies, all in the shape of Jewish stars.

Horovitz also accompanied Ministry of Defense and Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan officials, Soldiers and guests on a day-trip to Gardez for the Afghan National Army’s second Regional Command Opening. The four ANA Regional Commands (the others are in Kandahar, Mazar e-Sharif and Herat) have extended the authority of the national government throughout Afghanistan. “Seeing how much the U.S. military and the other many coalition forces are bringing hope, democracy, freedom and happiness to the Afghan people who suffered so much under the Taliban,” has made his trip significant, said Horovitz.

Horovitz, chaplain for the 3rd Battalion, 4th Air Defense Artillery Regiment of the 82nd Airborne Division, was born in the United Kingdom and moved to Jerusalem when he was 10 years old. He served in Brooklyn, N.Y. and in Miami as a Rabbi and teacher. He joined the Army in 1997, serving at Fort Stewart, Ga., and Fort Bragg, N.C., and deployed to Egypt in 1999, Afghanistan and Uzbekistan in 2002, and Kuwait and Iraq in 2003.

[Editor’s Note: A picture of Rabbi Horovitz conducting High Holiday services in Afghanistan can be found on the cover of the October 2004 issue of the Veteran.]

An I.D. Bracelet Comes Home - 60 Years Later

By Herbert Kaufman, Post 529

This is a story of a miracle created through persistence, loyalty and a strong dose of luck.

The centerpiece of this tale is an I.D. bracelet that belonged to a WWII hero named Joseph William “Bud” Kopman, a 22-year-old fighter pilot and lieutenant from Detroit who died during the war. His friend, Jack Levinsky (Levins), a 21-year-old seaman from New York City, who himself earned a Purple Heart among other ribbons of honor, carried the bracelet around for 60 years hoping to return it to Bud’s family.



Jack overcame bureaucracy and discounted nay-sayers everywhere he turned as he searched for the Kopmans. Both Bud and Jack were Jewish—which gave them a sense of camaraderie and comfort during the war, where tough days and nights of fighting were the norm. So Jack was determined to find Bud’s family to cherish the I.D. bracelet after so many years of loss.

Finally in May 2004, Jack got his wish, closing a chapter in the lives of those who love Bud, when he located Bud’s sister who was just a teenager when her brother died.

Jack, who came from a family of 10, had enlisted in the Navy following Pearl Harbor. After training, he served in the North Atlantic on the USS Santee CVE, an oil tanker converted into a baby aircraft carrier. Next Jack was assigned to Air Group 13 on the USS Franklin—a CV Essex carrier serving in the Pacific with a crew of over 1,000 men, including Bud, who was trained as a hellcat fighter pilot.

Bud gave “fighter protection” to the many planes in the squadron, while making “milk runs” (bombing missions). He had been a student at the University of Michigan, when his entirely Jewish fraternity, Phi Epsilon Pi, closed its doors in January 1942 so its young men could enlist in the armed forces.

Jack and Bud saw a lot of action, as their ship was often under attack by kamikazes. Yet, both were lucky, escaping danger, until the fateful day of October 16, 1944. That morning, Bud was getting ready for a mission to escort bombers over the Philippines. As a gesture of good luck, Jack gave his mezuzah to Bud to wear around his neck; he, in return, gave Jack his Navy I.D. bracelet. On the back were Bud’s name, Navy wings and serial number.

Unfortunately, the mission was anything but routine. The Navy pilots encountered aggressive Japanese planes, and fighting ensued. The entire ship heard the battle unfold on ship, as the PA system was turned on. They knew Bud shot down two of the attackers, and heard him begin shooting others on his tail, when the pilots began to run out of fuel.

Bud had been trained for emergency landings on the open sea, where wheels must be lowered and flaps and canopies pulled open. But despite a perfect belly-landing on the ocean, Bud’s canopy closed and jammed upon descent, trapping him inside. A search party was dispatched, but Bud was never to be found. Jack mourned for his lost friend. About 150 personnel were lost that day. Back home, Ann and Saul Kopman received a telegram that parents of those in the armed forces always dread. Their son was missing in action. Later, a letter from Bud’s squadron commander retold the day’s events and praised the young man’s heroism. Without a body to bury, there was no real closure for the family—just questions and memories. They were completely unaware that Jack was looking for them so he could return the bracelet and share his memories.

A year ago, Jack was vacationing in Palm Beach, when in the course of a conversation with a computer-savvy friend, Beverly Robbins of Bedford, NY, he mentioned his frustration with the search. Beverly volunteered to help and three months later sent Jack an obituary that detailed the death of Saul Kopman, Bud’s father, in Arizona. It mentioned that

Saul's daughter, Babs Kaufman, lived in Detroit. From there, it was just a matter of locating the phone number. The search was in its final chapter. The bracelet was about to come home.

In the summer of 2004, Babs, received an unexpected and life-altering phone call from Jack. Babs was overcome! After all these years, something of Bud's had come to light and with it, the unforeseen opportunity to hear about his last days. Following the first contact, Jack mailed the bracelet to her by overnight UPS. When Babs opened the envelope, she called Jack immediately, saying, "Bless you, bless you, bless you!"

Babs was anxious to meet Jack and thank him in person. At an evening filled with stories and memories, laughter and tears, the two families commemorated Bud's bravery. Jack presented Babs with photos of her fighter pilot brother and his comrades to keep as mementos. He also had a plaque created with all of Bud's medals.

Indeed, Bud's legacy has now joined two families together in a friendship that is expected to continue well into the next generation. And his I.D. bracelet is on his sister's wrist, where it belongs forever.