

# Epidemiologic Study on the Health of Veterans Who Served at Fort McClellan, 1979–1999

## Frequently Asked Questions

### *Why are the National Academies conducting this study?*

This is a congressionally requested study stemming from section 801 of the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2022 (PACT Act, Public Law 117–168). In response to section 801, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) asked the National Academies to undertake a study on this topic as part of the National Academies' ongoing work advising VA on military environmental exposures.

### *Why is this study only looking at 1979 to 1999? The PACT Act states that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs should conduct an epidemiologic study on the health trends of veterans who served at Fort McClellan at any time between January 1, 1935, and May 20, 1999.*

Unfortunately, based on an initial feasibility assessment commissioned by VA from another contractor, there is an absence of comprehensive, digitized personnel or health records for many veterans who may have served at Fort McClellan since 1935. As the most complete information is available for veterans who served or trained at Fort McClellan since 1979, VA asked the National Academies to conduct an epidemiologic study on veterans who served at Fort McClellan from 1979 to 1999.

### *Will populations other than veterans who served at Fort McClellan be considered in this study?*

No. This study is limited to veterans who served at Fort McClellan (in accordance with section 801 of Public Law 117–168) from 1979 to 1999. This does not include civilians who may have lived in the adjacent community of Anniston, Alabama, during the study's time frame, nor current residents of Anniston or the Fort McClellan community. However, the committee will identify comparator groups for both the health status survey and the mortality analysis, which might include other veteran populations or members of the public.

### *What types of hazardous substances were at Fort McClellan?*

Once the committee is formed, it will review the available information on potential exposures at Fort McClellan. More information can be found on this VA website: <https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/fort-mcclellan>.

### ***How will the study work?***

The expert committee will develop and conduct a health status survey of veterans who served at Fort McClellan, Alabama, from 1979 to 1999 and a separate mortality analysis of decedent Fort McClellan veterans who served during the same period based on a roster of veterans provided by VA. The committee will also use a variety of additional methods to inform its deliberations and report, including calls for public comment, targeted reviews of scientific literature, and input from other experts. Ultimately, the committee's findings will be published in a report, which will be delivered to VA and made available to the public.

It is important to note that under its statement of task, the committee will not make recommendations. The goal is to provide VA with information on the health status of veterans with military service at Fort McClellan from 1979 to 1999 and a mortality analysis of decedent veterans who served during the same period in accordance with section 801 of Public Law 117-168.

Click here to learn more about the National Academies' [study process](#).

### ***How will the results of this study be used? When will the report be released?***

The written report will include findings from the health status survey and mortality analysis. It will undergo a rigorous external peer-review process and is anticipated to be made publicly available in the fall of 2028. While VA and other agencies or organizations are not obligated to use or respond to National Academies' report findings, they often are used to inform VA policies. The expert study committee and staff will proactively share the report findings with stakeholder audiences, including VA, congressional policymakers, and veterans groups.

### ***How is the committee chosen?***

The process of identifying and selecting volunteers to serve as committee members is complex, as the National Academies strive to involve volunteers with differing expertise; consider balanced viewpoints; and include a variety of perspectives. In addition to their expertise, committee members must be free of conflict of interest, meaning they cannot benefit from the study's findings. As such, to avoid the perception of bias or conflicts of interests, veterans who served at Fort McClellan will not be part of the committee membership; however, the committee will specifically seek input and expertise from the population of Fort McClellan veterans in other ways, including as invited speakers, via public verbal comment or written comment, and potentially as report reviewers. Additionally, committee members serve as individual experts, not as representatives of organizations or interest groups. Learn more about the National Academies' [committee composition and balance, conflicts of interest, and independence policies and procedures](#).

For this study, the staff received many qualified nominees with expertise in survey design, environmental epidemiology, biostatistics, occupational health, toxicology, clinical medicine, and veterans' health. Nominations were solicited through a public call for experts and from sources including the membership of the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering, and the National Academy of Medicine; relevant organizations and associations; and other interested parties. Sponsors may offer suggestions but do not select committee members.

### *How can I engage with this committee?*

Any members of the public may submit written statements or materials via email any time at [FortMcClellanStudy@nas.edu](mailto:FortMcClellanStudy@nas.edu). All submissions will be shared with the committee and placed in the study's public access file. Please do not send medical records or personally identifiable information. The committee will also engage in calls for public comment and invite Fort McClellan veterans and veteran service organizations to provide input. [Sign up for emails](#) from the National Academies for updates on the study, calls for public input, information-gathering sessions, and the final report.

Visit [nationalacademies.org/Fort-McClellan](https://nationalacademies.org/Fort-McClellan) or scan the QR code to learn more.



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