

# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

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**AGM** Annual General Meeting and Respite Week

Here referring to the annual meeting of the GWVA, which provides an opportunity for members to meet, socialise and share information about GWS and the illness movement.

**BATS** Biological Agent Treatment Set

Preventative medication issued in the event of an attack by a biological weapon. Although it has been widely stated that no UK troops took BATS, a few veterans claim to have taken them.

**BFT** Basic Fitness Test

Physical fitness is a major aspect of military life and is constantly assessed. This test is the fundamental measure of fitness and must be passed by all recruits before they are accepted into the forces. All soldiers must also pass this test yearly. The test is designed to test aerobic power and muscular endurance. It comprises a 1.5 mile run, press-ups and sit-ups, all against the clock.

**BSS** Burning Semen Syndrome

The experience reported by some veterans and their wives where their semen is described as burning (causing a rash) the woman when it comes in contact with her skin.

**CFS** Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

A chronic disorder of unknown cause characterised by fatigue, pain and cognitive disorders. Debilitating fatigue is the main symptom and the cause remains unknown.

**DoD** The US Department of Defence

**DU** Depleted Uranium

Used in projectiles and tank armour and/or organophosphate insecticides.

**FM** Fibromyalgia

A systemic condition of generalised pain, often with other associated symptoms, such as sleep disturbance, irritable bowel syndrome and chronic fatigue. The defining symptoms of fibromyalgia are chronic, widespread pain and tenderness to light touch. Veterans often use this term to describe joint and muscle pain.

**FSS** Functional Somatic Syndromes

A number of illnesses that cannot be identified by physical signs, whose scientific status and medical basis remain unclear. This group of illnesses include: ME/CFS, total allergy syndrome, MCS, food hypersensitivity, GWS, fibromyalgia and sick building syndrome.

**GVMAP or MAP** Gulf Veterans' Medical Assessment Programme

Part of St Thomas' Hospital, London; the GVMAP was established in 1993 by the MoD in response to the non-specific symptoms popularly termed GWS, in order to respond to veterans' health complaints. Any Gulf veteran is entitled to attend, whereupon they are interviewed about Gulf War exposures, health concerns and any other relevant issues. They are subjected to a full physical examination by one of the clinicians and given a battery of tests (see Appendix Three).

**GWS** Gulf War Syndrome

The term used to describe illnesses and symptoms experienced by veterans of the 1991 Gulf War. It is the popular term used by veterans, reflecting their belief that their illness is a unique organic condition caused by Gulf War exposures.

**GWVA** The Gulf War Veterans' Association<sup>1</sup>

One of the main Gulf veterans' association in the UK; it is seen as more controversial than the others.

**IBS** Irritable Bowel Syndrome

An illness characterised by recurrent abdominal pain and diarrhoea, sometimes alternating with periods of constipation.

**MCS** Multiple Chemical Sensitivity

A multi-system illness resulting from contact with, or proximity to, a variety of substances. Sufferers often report a sensitivity to certain chemicals and other substances such as petrol, smoke, pollen and pet fur.

1. This is a pseudonym.

**ME** Myalgic encephalomyelitis

The name given to an epidemic which occurred among the staff of the Royal Free Hospital in London in 1955. The conclusion was that the illness – characterised by headaches, malaise, dizziness, nausea and limb pain – was caused by a virus. This name has continued to be used for post-viral fatigue and is another term, more popular in the UK, for CFS.

**MoD** Ministry of Defence

The overarching body that is in charge of the UK armed forces.

**MUPS** Medically Unexplained Physical Symptoms

Symptoms reported by a patient that cannot be linked to an organic cause.

**NAPS** Nerve Agent Pre-treatment Tablets

The drugs issued for troops as protection against organophosphate-based nerve agents. Also known by the active ingredient in NAPS: Pyridostigmine bromide (PB).

**NBC Suit** Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Suit

The full-body suits used for protection against possible nuclear, biological or chemical attacks. The suits were often donned due to a perceived threat. Also called a “Noddy suit”.

**NCO** Non-commissioned Officer

Military ranks above Private, but below Lieutenant. An enlisted member of the armed forces appointed to a rank conferring leadership over other enlisted personnel, but who is not an officer. They are the junior management of the military. In the British Armed Forces, NCOs are divided into two categories: Junior NCOs (lance corporals, corporals and lance sergeants) and Senior NCOs (sergeants, staff sergeants and colour sergeants).

**Non-deployed Veteran**

A veteran who was serving at the time of the Gulf War, but was not sent to the Gulf. Some of these veterans claim to have GWS, believing that they were made ill because of contact with Gulf War exposures. Some say they were inoculated in preparation for war and others suggest they came in contact with substances like depleted uranium when they worked on returning machinery.

**OPs** Organophosphates

A family of chemicals that affect nerve signal transmission by a molecule called N-acetylcholine, which operates throughout the nervous system in many species. OPs have toxic effects due to their capacity to bind to and inhibit the enzyme acetylcholinesterase (ACE). OPs that block insect ACEs but have a lesser effect in humans are used in pesticides. Those that affect humans have been developed as nerve gasses.

**Options for Change**

The move to downsize the military which occurred soon after the Gulf War. This course of action involved redundancies and contracting some duties out to civilians.

**PB** Pyridostigmine bromide

The active ingredient in NAPS; a drug that acts on the nervous system. It has been routinely used to treat *myasthenia gravis*, a disease of nerve/muscle junctions.

**PTI** Physical Training Instructor

Individuals in the military whose role is to train soldiers in physical exercise and fitness.

**PTSD** Post-traumatic Stress Disorder

Often confused with GWS, but a different condition. A psychiatric condition codified in DSM-III in 1980 which is thought to be the product of indelible traumatic memory. Symptoms include flashbacks, difficulty in sleeping, nightmares, hypervigilance, avoidance phenomena, memory problems and concentration difficulties.

**RAMC** Royal Army Medical Corps

The regiment (part of the larger Army Medical Services) whose role is to promote effective medical services for the Army. Part of its role is to contribute to the fighting strength of the Army. It is responsible for the evacuation and treatment of the sick and wounded in war.

**RBL** Royal British Legion

The largest and best-known veterans' association. Although they have been involved in the GWS discussion, they do not specifically focus on the illness. The RBL maintains an interest in GWS and hosts quarterly meetings: "The RBL Gulf Group Meeting" brings together veterans, scientists, doctors, MPs and advocates. During my fieldwork the RBL

also organised and hosted a two-day US Congressional meeting at the House of Lords to discuss GWS and raise the profile of the illness.

**Squaddie**

UK slang for a low-ranking soldier.

**TA** Territorial Army

A part-time volunteer reserve force. These soldiers often have other careers and are required to commit to 30 days: usually one evening a week, one weekend a month and two weeks a year.