

# ROA launches campaign to address toxic exposure for 9/11 Pentagon patriots

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES,  
September 11, 2024 /

EINPresswire.com/ -- Today, the Reserve Organization of America announced a new legislative campaign focused on ensuring that those who served at the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, and were required to return for duty as early as the following day, receive the care and recognition they deserve for toxic exposures sustained during and after the attacks.



The human cost of that tragic day was immense, with nearly 3,000 lives lost, including first responders and civilians.

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*ROA executive director, Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Jeffrey Phillips, U.S. Army*

The immediate aftermath of 9/11 led to prolonged military engagements in the Middle East, further escalating the toll with nearly one million deaths and significant health challenges for U.S. service members.

Service members endured intense combat, resulting in numerous casualties and a range of physical and mental health issues. Veterans returned home with not only visible injuries but also invisible scars, including PTSD, depression, and traumatic brain injuries. Among these hidden burdens are toxic exposures, which have been linked to a growing

incidence of chronic illnesses, cancers, and other health problems.

The PACT Act, enacted in 2022, marked a significant step forward by formally recognizing toxic exposures in the Post-9/11 era and initiating a federal response. Since its passage, the Department of Veterans Affairs has approved over one million claims and administered more than five million toxic exposure screenings.

ROA proudly supported the PACT Act. However, there are still service members and veterans not protected, contradicting ROA's commitment to leave no veteran behind. One such group includes

those who were at the Pentagon on 9/11 and were compelled to return for duty as early as the next day.

As the Pentagon smoldered and emergency response efforts were underway, then-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld mandated that service members and Pentagon staff resume their duties amid the chaos. This decision exposed these patriots to toxic substances released by the fires, jet fuel, and debris, significantly increasing their risk of long-term health issues.

ROA recently spoke with retired Air Force Lt. Col. Susan Lukas, who shared her firsthand experience from that day and how her health has been impacted since.

“At first, we weren’t thinking about our health. We were just grateful to be alive,” said Lukas. “For years, I didn’t realize my health issues were related to the 9/11 Pentagon attack. This was partly because I was relying on military doctors who did not recognize us as a cohort for toxic exposure. It’s no exaggeration to say that every action I take is aimed at overcoming the health challenges posed by my time at the Pentagon on and after 9/11.”

In response, ROA’s executive director, retired Army Maj. Gen. Jeffrey Phillips, affirmed the organization’s commitment to addressing this critical issue.

“We owe it to our service members and veterans to provide the best possible protections against toxic substances and hazardous materials,” Phillips stated. “While the PACT Act represents significant progress, ROA will continue to advocate until all veterans exposed to toxic substances, including those who served at the Pentagon on 9/11, receive the recognition and care they deserve. Our campaign will push for expanded coverage and support to ensure that no toxic-exposed veteran is left behind.”

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