



FOR PUBLIC RELEASE

*Torchlight Initiative, Colorado Springs, CO (15 March 2024)*

The U.S. Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine (USAFSAM) published a press release on 13 March 2024 regarding their recent townhall from February. The Torchlight Initiative has sought to provide feedback and Registry data to USAFSAM regarding their ongoing study from day one. Our organization continues to have many concerns about this study and the way it is proceeding. This statement addresses some of these concerns:

- Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) were found in many Missile Alert Facilities (MAFs), in direct contrast to earlier Air Force statements that PCBs were no longer in the facilities. Their statements also highlight the lack of scientifically based cleanup procedures in the past.
- As confirmed by USAFSAM, their current conclusions represent an “incomplete capture of cancer data” and only contains TRICARE medical records in electronic form from 2001-2020. They did not include paper records that require manual entry. USAFSAM has not incorporated data from the Department of Defense (DoD) Cancer Registry, the Veterans Affairs (VA) Cancer Registry, the National Death Index, and other pooled registries that pull data from across individual State cancer registries. For example, their current data would not capture someone who separated from the Air Force and sought civilian medical care. Additionally, the VA has denied medical coverage for many of our members, so their records may never be included in the USAFSAM study. Torchlight’s self-reported Registry data, which is more comprehensive and inclusive of current diagnoses, shows different conclusions than USAFSAM. We have shared our data with USAFSAM, but it doesn’t appear they included it in their study.
- USAFSAM acknowledges their epidemiological study is incomplete. Given USAFSAM’s incomplete data and analysis, their public statements about disease prevalence are premature. Some servicemembers and their families may view their statements to be disrespectful. Please review their memo titled *Missile Community Cancer Study (MCCS)*

*Epidemiology Study Brief Report (Phase IA) 6 March 2024* in its entirety before making conclusions about their inconclusive findings.

- USAFSAM acknowledges an increased number of breast and prostate cancers among the missile community but undermines this conclusion by suggesting increased detection capabilities in the DoD and VA might be the cause. To be clear, the cause could also be toxic exposures during missile service. That the data mirrors the veteran community at-large, is potentially a reflection of the DoD historically complying with EPA standards at lower rates than their civilian counterparts.
- USAFSAM published soil, air, and water sampling conducted at the MAFs. These studies only demonstrate the quality of the conditions today, not the conditions under which most of our members served. For example, we have learned through our research that reverse osmosis systems were installed in the MAFs sometime in the past decade. Water sampling in USAFSAM's study was conducted from faucets in the MAFs, which would have gone through significant filtration prior to testing. USAFSAM, to our knowledge, has not reviewed historical water sampling of the ground water used by the MAFs. Past bioenvironmental reporting by the Air Force, however, revealed concerns over water contamination by pesticides and other toxins.
- The Torchlight Initiative requested access to historical water testing data. We were preliminarily denied these records.
- USAFSAM surveyed over 80,000 records of those who served across the missile enterprise. The data does not account for the fact that different career fields served in different facilities, with varying exposures based on the type of facility (ex: MAFs vs. Launch Control Centers (LCCs) vs. Launch Facilities (LFs)). Those serving in LCCs may have been exposed to PCBs at higher rates than those serving in MAFs. Those serving in missile maintenance would have been exposed to other toxic compounds used to maintain the weapon systems at higher rates than those in the LCCs.
- USAFSAM is working to standardize the records documentation process that uses a service member's Individual Longitudinal Exposure Record (ILER). Our members continue to report their ILERs do not contain any such documentation.

We will continue to engage with USAFSAM to bring our concerns to light. We will also continue conducting our own research and requesting records that help paint a complete picture.