

**Preserving Veteran Status and Benefits for Those Who Have Served in Theaters of Operations
(13: VBA/14: VHA)
Resolution No. 23-16**

WHEREAS, service in any theater of operations potentially exposes service members of all services to exposure to health hazards; and

WHEREAS, service in the Vietnam era included service in the offshore waters (the “Blue Water Navy”) and service in other locations in support of Vietnam; and

WHEREAS, thousands of Sailors served along the coast of Vietnam providing support ranging from gunfire to providing air cover and bomb support over Vietnam; thousands of Airmen stationed in Thailand prepared aircraft and flew missions over Vietnam; and thousands of Soldiers and Marines fought in nearby Laos and Cambodia; and

WHEREAS, in more recent contingency operations such as Desert Storm, and again in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, service members were exposed to chemicals, toxins, heavy metals and other hazardous materials from burn pits and other sources that were spread through airborne drift, waterborne runoff and contact with materials long after exposed equipment was contaminated; and

WHEREAS, distinguishing types of service versus presence in a theater of operations does not mitigate exposure;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Reserve Officers Association, d.b.a. Reserve Organization of America, urges Congress, the Department of Defense, and the Department of Veterans Affairs to retain current and expansive definitions of service in any theater of operations thus ensuring that individuals are recognized for their service and remain eligible for service-connected benefits regardless of the manner of exposure, whether on land, sea, or air.

Renewed by the National Convention: 1 Oct. 2023

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Source: ROA Headquarters Staff