



May 29, 2025

The Honorable Pete Hegseth
Secretary of Defense

c/o Col. Keaton B. Askew, Military Assistant to the Executive Secretary
LaU.S. Department of Defense

Via e-mail: Keaton.Askew@sd.mil

Dear Secretary Hegseth:

Thank you in advance for your time. I'm writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals—PETA entities have more than 9 million members and supporters globally—to thank President Donald J. Trump, you and Navy Secretary John C. Phelan for your leadership in terminating all of the Navy's testing on dogs and cats,^{1,2} which will help to ensure that more research is done using human-relevant technology that benefits our troops.

In light of this progress for animals that the Trump administration has implemented, we respectfully request that you initiate a comprehensive audit of *all* contracts, contract indefinite delivery vehicles (IDVs), grants, direct payments, loans, and other awards issued across the entire Department of Defense (DOD), aimed at rooting out waste, fraud, and abuse in cruel and outdated animal experimentation. As an initial step, we ask that you align the DOD research, development, testing, evaluation (RDT&E) and training programs with the larger federal transition away from the use of animals in experimentation, starting with the following:

- 1) **Banning the use of animals in U.S. Navy decompression sickness/illness and oxygen toxicity tests;³**
- 2) **Prohibiting the use of dogs, cats, nonhuman primates, marine animals, and other animals in weapon-wounding tests currently permitted by the U.S. Army;⁴ and,**
- 3) **Disallowing DOD funds currently permitted to support RTD&E and training programs involving animals at foreign institutions.**

¹Bedard P. May 28, 2025. Trump cheered as 'best friend of animals' after research grants nixed. *Washington Examiner*. Accessed May 29, 2025.

<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/washington-secrets/3423973/trump-cheered-best-friend-of-animals-after-research-grants-nixed/>.

²Secretary of the Navy [@SECNAV]. May 27, 2025. [Today it gives me great pleasure to terminate all Department of the Navy's testing on cats and dogs, ending these...] [Post]. X.

<https://x.com/SECNAV/status/1927500765817393569?s=19>

³PETA. PETA to Navy: Ban the Use of Animals in Cruel Decompression Tests. Accessed January 27, 2025. <https://support.peta.org/page/43766/action/1?locale=en-US>.

⁴PETA. Urge the U.S. Army to Shield All Animals From Weapon-Wounding Tests. Accessed January 27, 2025. <https://support.peta.org/page/49917/action/1?locale=en-US>

PEOPLE FOR
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- PETA Switzerland
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The Navy's Decompression Sickness and Oxygen Toxicity Tests on Animals

In 2023, FOX News reported that PETA got the Navy to stop funding "gruesome decompression experiments" on sheep at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, sparing them from spinal cord injury, cardiovascular collapse, and paralysis.⁵ The action followed an appeal to former Navy Secretary Carlos Del Toro from PETA and retired Rear Adm. Marion Balsam, former commander of Naval Medical Center Portsmouth, calling for an end to such animal testing.^{6,7}

While the Trump administration has now banned the Navy's use of dogs and cats in testing, the Navy continues to conduct and fund decompression sickness and oxygen toxicity tests on animals. In these tests, experimenters lock pigs, rats, and other animals in hyperbaric chambers and expose them to crushing levels of atmospheric pressure before they're killed. The tests are useless to humans because of the numerous physiological differences between species.

For example, in public records obtained by PETA,⁸ experimenters at the Naval Medical Research Command sliced open baby pigs, implanted devices in them, and locked them in high-pressure chambers for up to eight days before killing them. Experimenters administered a drug to a pig, inducing a severe escalation in body temperature and muscle contractions before killing the animal. Potentially faulty sedatives may have prolonged the pig's suffering. Another pig thrashed and suffered for up to four hours, apparently due to a negative reaction to a drug, and was ultimately killed. In addition, a rat suffocated to death after an equipment malfunction, and the experimenter failed to report the incident for 23 days.

Furthermore, as detailed below, the Navy has continued to waste *more than \$5.1 million in taxpayer dollars* since 2020 for decompression sickness and oxygen toxicity tests on animals at four universities, as we referenced in our May 16, 2025, letter to you:⁹

Location	Duke University
Federal Award Identification Number	N000142212749 ¹⁰
Funding Office	Office of Naval Research
Dates	September 1, 2022 – August 31, 2025
Obligated Amount	\$844,714.00

⁵Arias P. PETA claims victory for Navy ending 'gruesome' testing on sheep. February 2, 2023. FOX News. Accessed April 23, 2025. <https://www.foxnews.com/us/peta-claims-victory-navy-ending-gruesome-testing-sheep>.

⁶Letter from Pons S. and Balsam MJ. to the Secretary of the Navy Del Toro C. regarding animal testing. June 8, 2022. Accessed May 29, 2025. <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/2022-06-08-letter-to-usn-re-dcs-tests.pdf>.

⁷People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. April 19, 2024. PETA to Navy: Stop using animals in cruel decompression tests. PETA. Accessed May 29, 2025. <https://support.peta.org/page/43766/action/1?locale=en-US>.

⁸Public records release to PETA regarding animal research at the Naval Medical Research Command. Accessed May 29, 2025. <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/nmrc-records.pdf>.

⁹Letter from Wiśniewska M to the Secretary of Defense, Pete Hegseth, asking to end animal testing at DOD. Accessed May 29, 2025. <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/2025-05-16-letter-to-new-sec-def-re-ending-viv.pdf>.

¹⁰Project Grant N000142212749—The role of GABA in susceptibility to oxygen toxicity with repeated hbo2 exposure. Award profile grant summary. USA Spending.gov. Accessed May 29, 2025. https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_N000142212749_1700.

Summary	Experimenter Heath Gasier conducts invasive and deadly procedures on mice. He induces seizures in young mice, subjects them to high-pressure oxygen in hyperbaric chambers, uses electric shocks to force them to run on a treadmill, and ultimately gasses them to death. ¹¹
Location	University of Maryland, Baltimore
Federal Award Identification Number	N000142212818 ¹²
Funding Office	Office of Naval Research
Dates	October 1, 2022 – September 30, 2025
Obligated Amount	\$981,996.00
Summary	Experimenter Stephen Thom has conducted invasive and deadly procedures on more than 2,100 mice in his experiment that involves subjecting the animals to high pressures, restraining them, applying chemicals to their eyes, using high-pressure chambers, inserting probes into their rectums, performing scalp incisions and skull drilling on them, injecting chemicals into their brains, and ultimately bleeding them to death. ¹³
Location	University of California, San Diego
Federal Award Identification Number	N000142312543 ¹⁴
Funding Office	Office of Naval Research
Dates	June 1, 2023 – May 31, 2026
Obligated Amount	\$474,140.00
Summary	Experimenter Peter Lindholm conducted gruesome tests on rats aiming to study nitrogen gas uptake and excretion during simulated diving. He subjected the rats to painful and potentially deadly procedures, including locking the animals in pressure chambers, forcing them to inhale radioactive gas, and electroshocking them if they failed to run on treadmills. In addition, he proposed experiments on sheep without proper approval. ¹⁵

¹¹Letter from Swaminathan S. to President Price V. regarding animal testing at Duke funded by the U.S. Navy. July 20, 2023. Accessed May 29, 2025. <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/2022-07-20-letter-to-duke-re-navy-decompression-viv.pdf>.

¹²Project Grant N000142212818—Neuroinflammation and glymphatic dysfunction in decompression sickness. Award profile grant summary. USA Spending.gov. Accessed May 29, 2025. https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_N000142212818_1700.

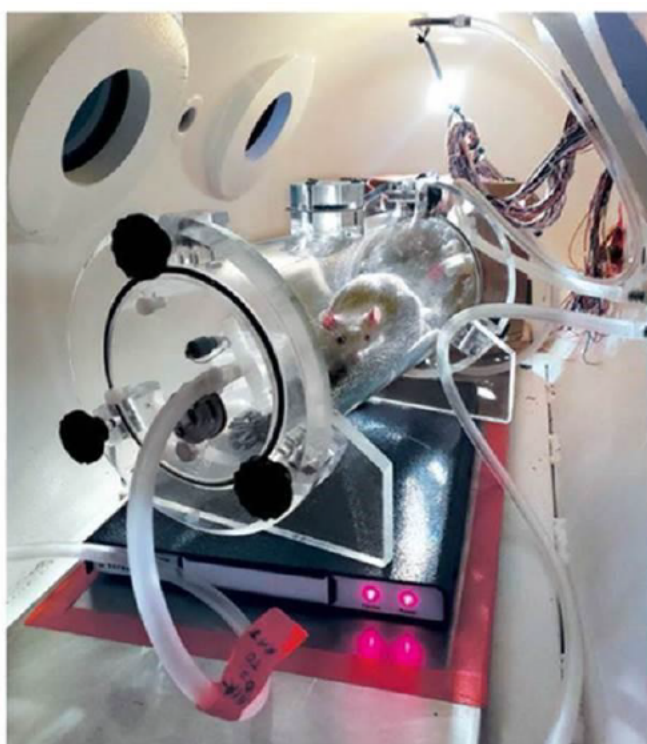
¹³Letter from Swaminathan S. to President Jarrell BE. regarding animal testing at the University of Maryland Baltimore funded by the U.S. Navy. July 20, 2023. Accessed May 29, 2025. <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/2023-07-20-letter-to-u-of-md-re-navy-decompression-viv.pdf>

¹⁴Project Grant N000142312543—Biophysical drivers of decompression tolerance in cell membranes. Award profile grant summary. USA Spending.gov. Accessed May 29, 2025. https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_N000142312543_1700.

¹⁵Letter from Swaminathan S. to President Khosla PK. regarding animal testing at the University of California-San Diego funded by the U.S. Navy. July 20, 2023. Accessed May 29, 2025. <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/2022-07-20-letter-to-ucsd-re-navy-decompression-viv.pdf>.

Location	University of South Florida
Federal Award Identification Number	N000142312717 ¹⁶
Funding Office	Office of Naval Research
Dates	July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2026
Obligated Amount	\$525,387.00
Summary	Experimenter Jay Dean conducts invasive, painful, and potentially deadly procedures on rats that aim to mitigate oxygen toxicity in the central nervous system. He induces seizures in the animals, without providing them with pain relief, and implants recording devices in their abdomens with wires placed on their backs and necks and electrodes fixed to their skulls. The rats are ultimately killed. ¹⁷

For your reference, here is a photo of one of the doomed animals locked in a hyperbaric chamber at the University of South Florida, where Navy-funded experimenter Jay Dean uses them to supposedly study oxygen toxicity in humans even though superior, human-relevant, animal-free methods are widely available:



¹⁶Project Grant N000142312717—Seizure genesis in CNS oxygen toxicity: animal studies. Award profile grant summary. USA Spending.gov. Accessed May 29, 2025.

https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_N000142312717_1700.

¹⁷Letter from Swaminathan S. to President Law RF. regarding animal testing at the University of South Florida funded by the U.S. Navy. July 20, 2023. Accessed May 29, 2025. <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/2022-07-20-letter-to-usf-re-navy-decompression-viv.pdf>.

Last year, more than 100 Navy veterans joined PETA in writing to top Navy brass urging the military branch to sink these wasteful and irrelevant tests on animals.¹⁸ **Based on the information we have presented, we urge you to ban the Navy's decompression sickness/illness and oxygen toxicity experiments on animals.**

The Army's Weapon-Wounding Tests on Animals

In 2020, the New York Post reported that the U.S. Army Medical Research & Development Command (USAMRDC) quietly overturned decades of precedent by issuing Policy 84,^{19,20} which explicitly permits the use of dogs, cats, monkeys, and marine animals "to inflict wounds upon using a weapon."²¹ Until recently, Policy 84 appeared in question 41 on the USAMRDC's frequently asked questions website (see archived version in footnote).²² Yet apparently, in December 2024, USAMRDC removed any mention of Policy 84 from this website (see current version in footnote),²³ while still keeping language in question 41 that permits animal testing "protocols that involve wounding with a weapon." In response to PETA's Freedom of Information Act request for documents on weapon-wounding tests on animals, the Army during the Biden administration confirmed at least one such test protocol but claimed this is "classified ... in the interest of national defense or foreign policy."²⁴ Additionally, in 2023, according to one former intelligence official and a current U.S. official at that time, DOD had reportedly recently tested pulsed radio frequency sources (a type of directed energy weapon) on primates to try to determine whether their effects could be linked to what the government calls "anomalous health incidents," associated with Havana Syndrome.²⁵

There has already been recent bipartisan interest from Congress in banning DOD's funding of such weapon-wounding tests on animals.²⁶ Additionally, last year, more than 250 Army veterans

¹⁸Letter from Swaminathan S. to the Secretary of Defense Austin LJ III and the Secretary of the Navy Del Toro C. regarding animal testing funded by the U.S. Navy. April 9, 2024. Accessed May 29, 2025. <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/2024-04-09-letter-to-sec-navy-sec-def-re-nmrc-dcs-dci.pdf>.

¹⁹Doombos C. Army secretly allows shooting dogs, cats for research. September 30, 2022. The New York Post. Accessed May 29, 2025. <https://nypost.com/2022/09/30/army-secretly-allows-shooting-dogs-cats-for-research/>.

²⁰Doombos C. Like cats and dogs: PETA, Army in battle over animal wounding research. November 25, 2022. New York Post. Accessed May 29, 2025. <https://nypost.com/2022/10/10/like-cats-and-dogs-peta-army-in-battle-over-animal-wounding-research/>.

²¹PETA. USAMRDC Policy 84, Animal Research and Medical Training Involving Wounding. February 13, 2020. Accessed May 29, 2025. <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/MRDC-Policy-84-Wounding.pdf>.

²²Wayback Machine. USAMRDC ACURO Submission FAQ (archived November 28, 2024). Accessed May 29, 2025. https://web.archive.org/web/20241128172315/https://mrdc.health.mil/index.cfm/collaborate/research_protections/acuro/submission_faq.

²³USAMRDC. ACURO Submission FAQs. February 6, 2025. Accessed April 23, 2025. https://mrdc.health.mil/index.cfm/collaborate/research_protections/acuro/submission_faq.

²⁴Letter from Harris AM to Flaughner K. Response letter to FOIA request. May 2, 2022, Accessed April 10, 2025. <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/2022-07-15-denied.pdf>.

²⁵Seligman L. March 9, 2023. The Pentagon is funding experiments on animals to recreate 'Havana Syndrome'. *Politico*. Accessed May 29, 2025. <https://www.politico.com/news/2023/03/09/pentagon-funding-experiments-animals-havana-syndrome-0008639>.

²⁶U.S. House of Representatives. June 20, 2024. Amendment to Rules Committee Print 118—: None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to purposefully wound dogs, cats, primates, or marine mammals for research purposes [Amendment offered by Mr. Buchanan of Florida; Submitted for consideration as part of the

joined PETA in writing to top leadership of that military branch urging them to ban such cruel and unreliable tests that use weapons to wound dogs, cats, marine animals, and primates, and to no longer permit the wounding of *any* animals with weapons for medical research.²⁷

Notably, there have been precedents for the Army ending abusive and wasteful weapon-wounding tests on animals. For example, in 2023, after hearing from PETA, the U.S. Army ended its brain-damaging weapon-wounding experiment on ferrets more than six months ahead of schedule, sparing these animals from being bombarded with radio waves in attempts to study Havana syndrome in humans.^{28,29} The cruel test had been conducted at Wayne State University in Michigan and bankrolled with \$750,000 in Army funding.^{30,31}

Based on this information, we urge you to rescind USAMRDC's Policy 84, and also ban the use of dogs, cats, nonhuman primates, marine animals, and other animals in weapon-wounding tests currently permitted by the Army.

DOD Funding of Animal Testing at Foreign Institutions

The Animal Care and Use Review Office (ACURO), the Defense Health Agency (DHA) component review office, currently reviews and approves animal testing protocols supported by DOD, *including those conducted at foreign institutions using DOD funds*—as governed by its "ACURO Policy on Work Conducted in Foreign Countries."³²

Given your commitment to "strengthening the military by cutting fiscal fraud, waste, and abuse at DOD while also finding ways to refocus the department's budget,"³³ we urge you to continue taking actions aligned with that vision—including by prohibiting DOD funds from going to fund foreign institutions.

Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2025 (H.R. 8774)]. Accessed May 29, 2025. https://amendments.rules.house.gov/amendments/BUCHAN_114_xml240620093338048.pdf.

²⁷Letter from Wiśniewska M. to the Secretary of the Army Wormuth CE. Regarding weapons wounding tests on animals. November 11, 2024. Accessed May 29, 2025. <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/2024-11-14-letter-to-sec-army-w-army-vets-to-ban-weapons-wounding-on-animals.pdf>.

²⁸Ward A. and Berg M. November 16, 2023. Why bin Laden's letter went viral on TikTok. *Politico*. Please see the section titled DOD Cancels 'Havana Syndrome' Grant. Accessed May 29, 2025. <https://www.politico.com/newsletters/national-security-daily/2023/11/16/why-bin-ladens-letter-went-viral-on-tiktok-00127618>.

²⁹People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. November 16, 2023. Army ends cruel brain-damaging tests on ferrets at Wayne State University. *PETA*. Accessed May 29, 2025. <https://support.peta.org/page/49917/action/1?locale=en-US>.

³⁰Seligman. March 9, 2023. *Politico*.

³¹Seligman, L. March 13, 2023. PETA urges Pentagon to stop 'disturbing' radiation tests on ferrets, monkeys. *Politico*. Accessed May 29, 2025. <https://www.politico.com/news/2023/03/13/peta-urges-pentagon-to-stop-disturbing-radiation-tests-on-ferrets-monkeys-00086661>.

³²U.S. Army Medical Research and Development Command. (n.d.). ACURO policy on work conducted in foreign countries. Accessed May 29, 2025. https://mrhc.health.mil/assets/docs/orp/acuro/ACURO_policy_on_work_in_foreign_countries_final.pdf.

³³Olay M. 2025, February 20. Hegseth addresses strengthening military by cutting excess, refocusing DoD budget. U.S. Department of Defense. Accessed April 9, 2025. <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/article/4072698/hegseth-addresses-strengthening-military-by-cutting-excess-refocusing-dod-budget/>

Below are *just a few* examples of such abusive and wasteful DOD grants and awards that are currently going to foreign institutions:

Location	University of Alberta (Canada)
Award Number	W81XWH-22-1-0801 ³⁴
Funder	Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (part of DOD)
Dates	September 30, 2022 – September 29, 2025
Obligated Amount	\$429,347.00
Summary	Experimenter Toshifumi Yokota uses DOD funds to create a model of cardiomyopathy in muscular dystrophy dogs, in part because he states that “dystrophic dogs exhibit severe cardiomyopathy.” In this study, already very ill animals are forced to endure repeated injections, organ analysis, and cardiac testing.
Location	University of Antofagasta (Chile)
Grant Number	FA95502410248 ³⁵
Funder	United States Department of the Air Force
Dates	August 15, 2024 – August 14, 2027
Obligated Amount	\$173,044.00
Summary	Experimenter David Andrade subjects rats to simulated microgravity using a tail head-down tilt model, which involves suspending rats by their tails to mimic the fluid shift towards the head experienced during spaceflight. He also subjects the animals to insufficient oxygen supply (hypoxia) and excessive oxygen supply (hyperoxia), both of which can cause significant physiological stress. Additionally, he examines muscle dysfunction in the animals promoted by their exposure to simulated microgravity environments.
Location	Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (Israel)
Grant Number	N629092412015 ³⁶
Funder	United States Department of the Navy
Dates	January 5, 2024 – January 4, 2027

³⁴Dimensions (n.d.). Grant: 12942882 – [Evaluation of a Novel T Cell-Derived Peptide for Delivery of Antisense Oligonucleotides to Treat DMD Cardiomyopathy]. Defense Technical Information Center. Accessed May 29, 2025. <https://dtic.dimensions.ai/details/grant/grant.12942882>.

³⁵Dimensions (n.d.). Grant: 14882147 – [Role of Chemoreceptors as Microgravity Sensors- An Approach from Preclinical Model to Human Performance and Spaceflight]. Defense Technical Information Center. Accessed May 29, 2025. <https://dtic.dimensions.ai/details/grant/grant.14882147>.

³⁶Dimensions (n.d.). Grant: 14526254 – [Towards Autonomous Marine Biobots by Direct Brain Stimulation: The Ultimate Conjunction of Artificial Intelligence and Brain Sciences]. Defense Technical Information Center. Accessed May 29, 2025. <https://dtic.dimensions.ai/details/grant/grant.14526254>.

Obligated Amount	\$299,850.00
Summary	Experimenter Ohad Ben-Shahar invasively manipulates goldfish by mounting “computational systems” on their head. These computational devices are used “to read and process information from tiny sensors (e.g., a camera), make behavioral decisions using on-board AI decision-making software, and implement these behaviors using direct brain stimulation to selected areas in the goldfish brain.” One of the goals is to spend the DOD’s money to “exploit the reward centers in the fish brain to manipulate its behavior ...”
Location	James Cook University (Australia)
Award Number	W81XWH-22-1-0556 ³⁷
Funder	Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (part of DOD)
Dates	July 15, 2022 – January 14, 2026
Obligated Amount	\$599,984.00
Summary	Experimenter Geoffrey P. Dobson uses DOD funds to produce “30% [total body surface area] thermal injury ... in male and female Sprague-Dawley rats ... via 8-sec skin contact with scalding 96°C water.” He also inflicts massive and “[u]ncontrolled hemorrhage” in the animals by surgically removing half of their liver lobes.

Federal Agencies Under Trump Administration Are Shifting Away From Animal Testing

Last month, U.S. agencies announced historic plans to phase out animal testing, in alignment with PETA’s Research Modernization NOW strategic framework for modernizing research toward human-relevant methods,³⁸ creating an opportunity for DOD to follow suit:

- The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced on April 10, 2025, a "groundbreaking step to advance public health by replacing animal testing in the development of monoclonal antibody therapies and other drugs with more effective, human-relevant methods," in an effort to "improve drug safety and accelerate the evaluation process, while reducing animal experimentation, lowering research and development (R&D) costs, and ultimately, drug prices."³⁹

³⁷Dimensions (n.d.). Grant: 12942939 – [Small-Volume ALM Therapy for Resuscitation and Stabilization Following Combined Burn Injury and Hemorrhagic Shock]. Defense Technical Information Center. Accessed May 29, 2025. <https://dtic.dimensions.ai/details/grant/grant.12942939>.

³⁸PETA. Research Modernization NOW. November 2024. <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Research-Modernization-NOW-Biomedical.pdf>

³⁹US FDA. FDA Announces Plan to Phase Out Animal Testing Requirement for Monoclonal Antibodies and Other Drugs. April 10, 2025. <https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-announces-plan-phase-out-animal-testing-requirement-monoclonal-antibodies-and-other-drugs>

- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced on the same day, April 10, 2025, that it is "wholly committed to getting the agency back on track to eliminating animal testing," referencing the agency's prior commitment "to reducing testing on mammals by 30% by 2025 and to eliminate it completely by 2035."⁴⁰
- The National Institutes of Health (NIH) announced a major new initiative on April 29, 2025, "to expand innovative, human-based science while reducing animal use in research."⁴¹

A Call for Collaboration Toward Better DOD Medical Research and Less Waste

PETA's scientific team is eager to collaborate with DOD to identify validated, non-animal technologies—such as high-fidelity human-patient simulators, advanced computational models, and human tissue-based platforms—that deliver high-quality data at lower cost and save animals' lives across the board. By emulating forward-thinking reforms recently adopted under the Trump administration by NIH, FDA, EPA, and most recently the Navy, the DOD can enhance care for our troops, prevent needless animal suffering, and demonstrate responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars.

You can contact me at MaggieW@peta.org. Thank you for considering this important issue, and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Maggie Wiśniewska, Ph.D.
Science Policy Advisor - International Laboratory Methods Division
Laboratory Investigations Department

cc: Kelly Bulliner Ross
Executive Secretary
Immediate Office of the Secretary of Defense
(ExecSecMA2@sd.mil; kellybholly@yahoo.com)

⁴⁰The Washington Times. Zeldin to pursue new ban on animal testing at EPA. April 10, 2025. <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2025/apr/10/epa-chief-lee-zeldin-eyes-ban-animal-testing/>

⁴¹NIH. NIH to prioritize human-based research technologies. April 29, 2025. <https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/nih-prioritize-human-based-research-technologies>



May 29, 2025

The Honorable John Phelan
Secretary of the U.S. Navy
c/o Sara Grove, Director of External Engagements
Office of the Secretary of the Navy

Via e-mail: sara.grove@navy.mil

Dear Secretary Phelan:

Thank you in advance for your time. I'm writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals—PETA entities have more than 9 million members and supporters globally—to thank President Trump, you, and Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth for your leadership in terminating all of the U.S. Navy's testing on dogs and cats,^{1,2} which will help to ensure that more research is done using human-relevant technology that benefits our troops.

In light of this progress for animals that the Trump administration has implemented, we respectfully request that the comprehensive audit you ordered includes *all* contracts, contract indefinite delivery vehicles (IDVs), grants, direct payments, loans, and other awards issued across the entire Department of the Navy, aimed at rooting out waste, fraud, and abuse in cruel and outdated animal experimentation. As an initial step, we ask that you align the U.S. Navy research, development, testing, evaluation (RDT&E) and training programs with the larger federal transition away from the use of animals in experimentation, starting with the following:

- 1) Banning the use of animals in U.S. Navy decompression sickness/illness and oxygen toxicity tests,³ and**
- 2) Disallowing U.S. Navy funds that are currently permitted to support RTD&E and training programs involving animals at foreign institutions.**

The Navy's Decompression Sickness and Oxygen Toxicity Tests on Animals

In 2023, FOX News reported that PETA got the Navy to stop funding "gruesome decompression experiments" on sheep at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, sparing them from spinal cord injury, cardiovascular

¹Bedard P. May 28, 2025. Trump cheered as 'best friend of animals' after research grants nixed. *Washington Examiner*. Accessed May 29, 2025.

<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/washington-secrets/3423973/trump-cheered-best-friend-of-animals-after-research-grants-nixed/>.

²Secretary of the Navy [@SECNAV]. May 27, 2025. [Today it gives me great pleasure to terminate all Department of the Navy's testing on cats and dogs, ending these...] [Post]. X. <https://x.com/SECNAV/status/1927500765817393569?s=19>

³PETA. PETA to Navy: Ban the Use of Animals in Cruel Decompression Tests. Accessed January 27, 2025. <https://support.peta.org/page/43766/action/1?locale=en-US>.

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- PETA Germany
- PETA Switzerland
- PETA Netherlands
- PETA Foundation (U.K.)

collapse, and paralysis.⁴ The action followed an appeal to former Navy Secretary Carlos Del Toro from PETA and retired Rear Adm. Marion Balsam, former commander of Naval Medical Center Portsmouth, calling for an end to such animal testing.^{5,6}

While the Trump administration has now banned the Navy's use of dogs and cats in testing, the Navy continues to conduct and fund decompression sickness and oxygen toxicity tests on animals. In these tests, experimenters lock pigs, rats, and other animals in hyperbaric chambers and expose them to crushing levels of atmospheric pressure before they're killed. The tests are useless to humans because of the numerous physiological differences between species.

For example, in public records obtained by PETA,⁷ experimenters at the Naval Medical Research Command sliced open baby pigs, implanted devices in them, and locked them in high-pressure chambers for up to eight days before killing them. Experimenters administered a drug to a pig, inducing a severe escalation in body temperature and muscle contractions before killing the animal. Potentially faulty sedatives may have prolonged the pig's suffering. Another pig thrashed and suffered for up to four hours, apparently due to a negative reaction to a drug, and was ultimately killed. In addition, a rat suffocated to death after an equipment malfunction, and the experimenter failed to report the incident for 23 days.

Furthermore, as detailed below, the Navy has continued to waste *more than \$5.1 million in taxpayer dollars* since 2020 for decompression sickness and oxygen toxicity tests on animals at four universities, as we referenced in our May 16, 2025, letter to you.⁸

Location	Duke University
Federal Award Identification Number	N000142212749 ⁹
Funding Office	Office of Naval Research
Dates	September 1, 2022 – August 31, 2025
Obligated Amount	\$844,714.00
Summary	Experimenter Heath Gasier conducts invasive and deadly procedures on mice. He induces seizures in young mice, subjects them to high-pressure oxygen in hyperbaric chambers,

⁴Arias P. PETA claims victory for Navy ending 'gruesome' testing on sheep. February 2, 2023. FOX News. Accessed April 23, 2025. <https://www.foxnews.com/us/peta-claims-victory-navy-ending-gruesome-testing-sheep>.

⁵Letter from Pons S. and Balsam MJ. to the Secretary of the Navy Del Toro C. regarding animal testing. June 8, 2022. Accessed May 29, 2025. <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/2022-06-08-letter-to-usn-re-dcs-tests.pdf>.

⁶People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. April 19, 2024. PETA to Navy: Stop using animals in cruel decompression tests. PETA. Accessed May 29, 2025. <https://support.peta.org/page/43766/action/1?locale=en-US>.

⁷Public records release to PETA regarding animal research at the Naval Medical Research Command. Accessed May 29, 2025. <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/nmrc-records.pdf>.

⁸Letter from Wiśniewska M to the Secretary of Defense, Pete Hegseth, asking to end animal testing at DOD. Accessed May 29, 2025. <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/2025-05-16-letter-to-new-sec-def-re-ending-viv.pdf>.

⁹Project Grant N000142212749—The role of GABA in susceptibility to oxygen toxicity with repeated hbo2 exposure. Award profile grant summary. USA Spending.gov. Accessed May 29, 2025. https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_N000142212749_1700.

	uses electric shocks to force them to run on a treadmill, and ultimately gasses them to death. ¹⁰
Location	University of Maryland, Baltimore
Federal Award Identification Number	N000142212818 ¹¹
Funding Office	Office of Naval Research
Dates	October 1, 2022 – September 30, 2025
Obligated Amount	\$981,996.00
Summary	Experimenter Stephen Thom has conducted invasive and deadly procedures on more than 2,100 mice in his experiment that involves subjecting the animals to high pressures, restraining them, applying chemicals to their eyes, using high-pressure chambers, inserting probes into their rectums, performing scalp incisions and skull drilling on them, injecting chemicals into their brains, and ultimately bleeding them to death. ¹²
Location	University of California, San Diego
Federal Award Identification Number	N000142312543 ¹³
Funding Office	Office of Naval Research
Dates	June 1, 2023 – May 31, 2026
Obligated Amount	\$474,140.00
Summary	Experimenter Peter Lindholm conducted gruesome tests on rats aiming to study nitrogen gas uptake and excretion during simulated diving. He subjected the rats to painful and potentially deadly procedures, including locking the animals in pressure chambers, forcing them to inhale radioactive gas, and electroshocking them if they failed to run on treadmills. In addition, he proposed experiments on sheep without proper approval. ¹⁴

¹⁰Letter from Swaminathan S. to President Price V. regarding animal testing at Duke funded by the U.S. Navy. July 20, 2023. Accessed May 29, 2025. <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/2022-07-20-letter-to-duke-re-navy-decompression-viv.pdf>.

¹¹Project Grant N000142212818—Neuroinflammation and glymphatic dysfunction in decompression sickness. Award profile grant summary. USA Spending.gov. Accessed May 29, 2025. https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_N000142212818_1700.

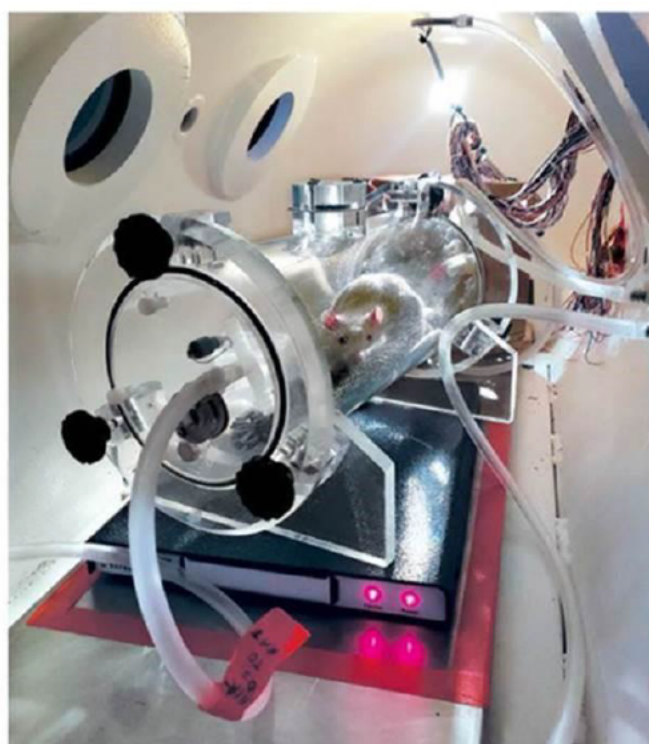
¹²Letter from Swaminathan S. to President Jarrell BE. regarding animal testing at the University of Maryland Baltimore funded by the U.S. Navy. July 20, 2023. Accessed May 29, 2025. <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/2023-07-20-letter-to-u-of-md-re-navy-decompression-viv.pdf>

¹³Project Grant N000142312543—Biophysical drivers of decompression tolerance in cell membranes. Award profile grant summary. USA Spending.gov. Accessed May 29, 2025. https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_N000142312543_1700.

¹⁴Letter from Swaminathan S. to President Khosla PK. regarding animal testing at the University of California-San Diego funded by the U.S. Navy. July 20, 2023. Accessed May 29, 2025. <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/2022-07-20-letter-to-ucsd-re-navy-decompression-viv.pdf>.

Location	University of South Florida
Federal Award Identification Number	N000142312717 ¹⁵
Funding Office	Office of Naval Research
Dates	July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2026
Obligated Amount	\$525,387.00
Summary	Experimenter Jay Dean conducts invasive, painful, and potentially deadly procedures on rats that aim to mitigate oxygen toxicity in the central nervous system. He induces seizures in the animals, without providing them with pain relief, and implants recording devices in their abdomens with wires placed on their backs and necks and electrodes fixed to their skulls. The rats are ultimately killed. ¹⁶

For your reference, here is a photo of one of the doomed animals locked in a hyperbaric chamber at the University of South Florida, where Navy-funded experimenter Jay Dean uses them to supposedly study oxygen toxicity in humans even though superior, human-relevant, animal-free methods are widely available:



¹⁵Project Grant N000142312717—Seizure genesis in CNS oxygen toxicity: animal studies. Award profile grant summary. USA Spending.gov. Accessed May 29, 2025.

https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_N000142312717_1700.

¹⁶Letter from Swaminathan S. to President Law RF. regarding animal testing at the University of South Florida funded by the U.S. Navy. July 20, 2023. Accessed May 29, 2025. <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/2022-07-20-letter-to-usf-re-navy-decompression-viv.pdf>.

Last year, more than 100 Navy veterans joined PETA in writing to top Navy brass urging the military branch to sink these wasteful and irrelevant tests on animals.¹⁷ **Based on the information we have presented, we urge you to ban the Navy's decompression sickness/illness and oxygen toxicity experiments on animals.**

The Navy's Funding of Animal Testing at Foreign Institutions

The Animal Care and Use Review Office (ACURO), the Defense Health Agency (DHA) component review office, currently reviews and approves animal testing protocols supported by DOD, *including those conducted at foreign institutions using the Navy's funds*—as governed by its "ACURO Policy on Work Conducted in Foreign Countries."¹⁸

Given Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth's commitment to "strengthening the military by cutting fiscal fraud, waste, and abuse at the Navy while also finding ways to refocus the department's budget,"¹⁹ we urge you to continue taking actions aligned with that vision—including by prohibiting the Navy's funds from going to fund foreign institutions.

Below are *just a few* examples of such abusive and wasteful Navy grants and awards that are currently going to foreign institutions:

Location	Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (Israel)
Grant Number	N629092412015 ²⁰
Funder	United States Department of the Navy
Dates	January 5, 2024 – January 4, 2027
Obligated Amount	\$299,850.00
Summary	Experimenter Ohad Ben-Shahar invasively manipulates goldfish by mounting "computational systems" on their head. These computational devices are used "to read and process information from tiny sensors (e.g., a camera), make behavioral decisions using on-board AI decision-making software, and implement these behaviors using direct brain stimulation to selected areas in the goldfish brain." One of the goals is to spend taxpayer money

¹⁷Letter from Swaminathan S. to the Secretary of Defense Austin LJ III and the Secretary of the Navy Del Toro C. regarding animal testing funded by the U.S. Navy. April 9, 2024. Accessed May 29, 2025. <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/2024-04-09-letter-to-sec-navy-sec-def-re-nmrc-dcs-dci.pdf>.

¹⁸U.S. Army Medical Research and Development Command. (n.d.). ACURO policy on work conducted in foreign countries. Accessed May 29, 2025. https://mrhc.health.mil/assets/docs/orp/acuro/ACURO_policy_on_work_in_foreign_countries_final.pdf.

¹⁹Olay M. 2025, February 20. Hegseth addresses strengthening military by cutting excess, refocusing DoD budget. U.S. Department of Defense. Accessed April 9, 2025. <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/article/4072698/hegseth-addresses-strengthening-military-by-cutting-excess-refocusing-dod-budget/>

²⁰Dimensions (n.d.). Grant: 14526254 – [Towards Autonomous Marine Biobots by Direct Brain Stimulation: The Ultimate Conjunction of Artificial Intelligence and Brain Sciences]. Defense Technical Information Center. Accessed May 29, 2025. <https://dtic.dimensions.ai/details/grant/grant.14526254>.

	to “exploit the reward centers in the fish brain to manipulate its behavior ...”
Location	Italian Institute of Technology (Italy)
Award Number	N000142312083 ²¹
Funder	United States Department of the Navy
Dates	January 1, 2023 – December 31, 2025
Obligated Amount	\$298,720.00
Summary	Experimenter Letizia Zullo used invasive techniques to dissect and experiment on the arms of live octopuses.

Federal Agencies Under Trump Administration Are Shifting Away From Animal Testing

Last month, U.S. agencies announced historic plans to phase out animal testing, in alignment with PETA’s Research Modernization NOW strategic framework for modernizing research toward human-relevant methods,²² creating an opportunity for the Navy to follow suit:

- The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced on April 10, 2025, a "groundbreaking step to advance public health by replacing animal testing in the development of monoclonal antibody therapies and other drugs with more effective, human-relevant methods," in an effort to "improve drug safety and accelerate the evaluation process, while reducing animal experimentation, lowering research and development (R&D) costs, and ultimately, drug prices."²³
- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced on the same day, April 10, 2025, that it is "wholly committed to getting the agency back on track to eliminating animal testing," referencing the agency’s prior commitment "to reducing testing on mammals by 30% by 2025 and to eliminate it completely by 2035."²⁴

²¹Dimensions (n.d.). Grant: 13201184 – [Proprioception in Motion: Role of Muscle Proprioceptive Inputs in Arm Movements]. Defense Technical Information Center. Accessed May 29, 2025. <https://dtic.dimensions.ai/details/grant/13201184>.

²²PETA. Research Modernization NOW. November 2024. <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Research-Modernization-NOW-Biomedical.pdf>

²³US FDA. FDA Announces Plan to Phase Out Animal Testing Requirement for Monoclonal Antibodies and Other Drugs. April 10, 2025. <https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-announces-plan-phase-out-animal-testing-requirement-monoclonal-antibodies-and-other-drugs>

²⁴The Washington Times. Zeldin to pursue new ban on animal testing at EPA. April 10, 2025. <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2025/apr/10/epa-chief-lee-zeldin-eyes-ban-animal-testing/>

- The National Institutes of Health (NIH) announced a major new initiative on April 29, 2025, "to expand innovative, human-based science while reducing animal use in research."²⁵

A Call for Collaboration Toward Better Navy Medical Research and Less Waste

PETA's scientific team is eager to collaborate with the Navy to identify validated, non-animal technologies—such as high-fidelity human-patient simulators, advanced computational models, and human tissue-based platforms—that deliver high-quality data at lower cost and save animals' lives across the board. By emulating forward-thinking reforms recently adopted under the Trump administration by NIH, FDA, EPA, and most recently the DOD, and the Navy can enhance care for our troops, prevent needless animal suffering, and demonstrate responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars.

You can contact me at MaggieW@peta.org. Thank you for considering this important issue, and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Maggie Wiśniewska, Ph.D.

Science Policy Advisor - International Laboratory Methods Division
Laboratory Investigations Department

²⁵NIH. NIH to prioritize human-based research technologies. April 29, 2025. <https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/nih-prioritize-human-based-research-technologies>