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OF ANIMALS

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November 10, 2026

The Honorable Pete Hegseth
Secretary of War
The U.S. Department of War

Via e-mail

Dear Secretary Hegseth:

Thank you in advance for your time. I am writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals—PETA entities have more than 10.4 million members and supporters worldwide—to share the enclosed letter signed by more than 450 U.S. military veterans who are raising serious concerns about the Pentagon's continued reliance on certain cruel and unscientific tests on animals despite nearly nine decades of experiments that have wasted millions of tax dollars without any substantive change in treatments for humans.

Specifically, these veterans, in support of efforts led by PETA[1,2] and members of Congress,[3] are respectfully asking that you end all active and planned decompression sickness and oxygen toxicity experiments on animals in favor of modern, human-relevant research methods.

You may contact me directly at MaggieW@peta.org. Thank you for your consideration of this important issue, and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely yours,

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

Enclosure: Letter from U.S. veterans

cc: The Honorable Elbridge A. Colby
Under Secretary of War for Policy

[1] PETA. (2026, May 6). Letter to Secretary of War re: animal testing [Letter]. Accessed November 4, 2026. https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/2026-05-06-letter-to-secwar-re-animal-testing.pdf.
[2] PETA. PETA to Navy: Ban the Use of Animals in Cruel Decompression Tests. Accessed November 9, 2026. https://support.peta.org/page/43766/action/1
[3] Escobar, V., & Norton, E. H. (2026, September 30). Letter to Secretary of the Navy [Letter]. Accessed November 9, 2026. https://escobar.house.gov/uploadedfiles/letter_to_secnav_sept_30_2026.pdf

Entities:
- PETA Asia
- PETA India
- PETA France
- PETA Australia
- PETA Germany
- PETA Switzerland
- PETA Netherlands
- PETA Foundation (U.K.)

November 10, 2026

The Honorable Pete Hegseth
Secretary of War

Dear Secretary Hegseth:

As veterans, we believe military research should be judged by one clear standard: whether it protects service members, strengthens readiness, and responsibly advances care for today's warfighters. We are writing to urge you to end the Navy's funding of decompression sickness/illness and oxygen toxicity experiments (commonly referred to as 'the bends') on animals that fail to meet that standard and instead subject animals to cruel, irrelevant tests. We understand from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals' May 6, 2026, letter to you that tens of millions of dollars in public funds are supporting animal testing—much of it ongoing—across the Department of War. At a time when military research dollars should be focused on readiness, accountability, and technologies that can meaningfully improve care for service members, these programs warrant immediate scrutiny.

We are particularly troubled by the U.S. Navy's funding of decompression sickness and oxygen toxicity studies, which have subjected animals to pressure-chamber experiments, despite serious limits in their relevance to human physiology. Most recently, a Navy-funded Duke University study forced 40 pigs into diapers and heated diving suits before forcing them to endure simulated deep dives that caused decompression sickness, painful blood vessel blockages, paralysis, hemorrhaging, and, for many animals, death. Similarly, the University of South Florida received more than half a million dollars to subject rats to oxygen-toxicity experiments that induced seizures and required implanted recording devices.

These experiments are only the latest in a decades-long series of Navy-funded animal tests that have failed to produce new treatments for decompression sickness. Research intended to protect divers, aviators, and other service members should rely on methods that are directly applicable to human health—not on animal models with limited relevance to human physiology and clinical outcomes.

Research conducted in the name of service members should be directly relevant to human health and military readiness. Experiments that inflict decompression sickness, oxygen toxicity, seizures, paralysis, hemorrhaging, and death on animals while failing to reliably translate to human outcomes divert resources from advanced simulators, computational models, organoids, organs-on-chips, and other human-relevant technologies that could better serve troops.

We respectfully ask you to prohibit Department of War funds from supporting decompression sickness and oxygen toxicity experiments on animals and instead direct those resources toward superior, human-relevant, animal-free research methods.

V/r,

Carol Emmert
Admiral
U.S. Navy Veteran

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U.S. Army Veteran

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U.S. Air Force Veteran

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Shelley Mahood
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Jonathan Harrison
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John Cykler
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Sergeant Major
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Robbie Wertin
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Melissa Laduke
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Marvin Retsky
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Tracy Ouellette
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Gerarda Bozinko
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Danielle Stein
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David Mezykowski
Sergeant
U.S. Air Force Veteran

Diana Brunswig-Bosso
Sergeant
U.S. Army Reserve Veteran

Timothy Allen
Sergeant
U.S. Marine Corps Veteran

Albert Russo
Sergeant
U.S. Marine Corps Veteran

Dana Speir
Sergeant
U.S. Space Force Veteran

Mesha Aurianivar
Sergeant
U.S. Air Force Veteran

Larry Hibler
Sergeant
U.S. Army Veteran

Lorraine Hastings
Sergeant
U.S. Marine Corps Veteran

Atty. Timothy Provis
Sergeant
U.S. Air Force Veteran

Peter Sadlier
Sergeant
U.S. Marine Corps Veteran

Douglas E. Frazer
Sergeant First Class
U.S. Army Veteran

Kenneth Krupowicz
Sergeant First Class
U.S. Army Veteran

Kimberly Promutico
Second Lieutenant
U.S. Army Veteran

Richard Forrest
Sergeant
U.S. Air Force Veteran

Peter Syre
Sergeant
U.S. Air Force Veteran

Joseph Suarez
Sergeant
U.S. Air Force Veteran

Roberta Rayburn
Sergeant
U.S. Army Veteran

Nina Sampson
Sergeant
U.S. Army Veteran

Nilda Gutierrez
Sergeant
U.S. Army Veteran

S. B.
Sergeant
U.S. Army Reserve Veteran

Paul Hager
Sergeant
U.S. Marine Corps Veteran

Margaret Bennett
Sergeant
U.S. Marine Corps Veteran

Robert Mammon
Sergeant
U.S. Army Veteran

Carl Cording
Sergeant
U.S. Air Force Veteran

Gregory Geiger
Sergeant
U.S. Air Force Veteran

James Eley
Sergeant
U.S. Air Force Veteran

David Thele
Sergeant
U.S. Army Veteran

Rev. Allan B. Jones
Senior Airman
U.S. Air Force Veteran

Gordon Kanan
Sergeant
U.S. Marine Corps Veteran

Paul Hill
Sergeant
U.S. Army Veteran

Alan Michels
Sergeant
U.S. Army Veteran

Alexi Burgess
Sergeant
U.S. Army Veteran

Robert Clark
Chief Storekeeper
U.S. Navy Veteran

Robert Tucker
Seaman
U.S. Navy Veteran

Norm Wilmes
Specialist Four
U.S. Army Veteran

Phil Bracco
Specialist Four
U.S. Army Veteran

Peter Bailey
Specialist Four
U.S. Army Veteran

Joseph Albin
Specialist Five
U.S. Army Veteran

Robert Ralph
Specialist Three
U.S. Army Veteran

Charles Coddington
Specialist Four
U.S. Army Veteran

Linda Meeks
Specialist Four
U.S. Army Veteran

Bruce Greenberg
Specialist Four
U.S. Army Veteran

Edward Rengers
Specialist Four
U.S. Army Veteran

Sonia Renfro
Specialist Four
U.S. Army Veteran

Eric Daniels
Specialist Four
U.S. Army Veteran

Peter Baum
Specialist Five
U.S. Army Veteran

Karen Wegner
Specialist Five
U.S. Army Veteran

Robert Bursick
Specialist Five
U.S. Army Veteran

Bill Matturro
Specialist Five
U.S. Army Veteran

Harvey Butter
Specialist Five
U.S. Army Veteran

Tom Nash
Specialist Five
U.S. Army Veteran

Herman Spinelli
Specialist Five
U.S. Army Veteran

Victor Oliva
Specialist
U.S. Army Veteran

Michael Barry
Specialist Five
U.S. Army Veteran

Vincent Petta
Specialist Five
U.S. Army Veteran

Jeffrey Burnley
Specialist Four
U.S. Army Reserve
Veteran

Kathleen Raneri
Specialist Five
U.S. Army Veteran

Karen Lavee-Myers
Specialist Five
U.S. Army Veteran

Jerry Banks
Specialist Five
U.S. Army Veteran

Tony Trinca
Specialist Four
U.S. Army Veteran

Steve Stales
Specialist Five
U.S. Army Veteran

Angela Williamson
Specialist
U.S. Army Veteran

Craig Stowell
Specialist
U.S. Army Veteran

James Fife
Specialist Four
U.S. Army Veteran

Wendy Parham
Specialist Five
U.S. Army Veteran

Bob Tintle
Specialist Five
U.S. Army Veteran

Donald Crowley
Specialist Four
U.S. Army Veteran

Sydney Rader
Sergeant
U.S. Marine Corps Veteran

Albert Manetti
Sergeant
U.S. Army Veteran

Arnaldo Rodriguez
Staff Sergeant
U.S. Army Veteran

Steve Dixon
Staff Sergeant
U.S. Army Veteran

Lisa Michaud
Staff Sergeant
U.S. Army Veteran

Jody Biesche
Staff Sergeant
U.S. Army Reserve
Veteran

Patrick Murphy
Staff Sergeant
U.S. Army National Guard
Veteran

Diane Peterson
Staff Sergeant
U.S. Air Force Veteran

Steve Evans
Staff Sergeant
U.S. Air Force Veteran

Robert Tomlinson
Staff Sergeant
U.S. Air Force Veteran

Robert Manolescu
Staff Sergeant
U.S. Air Force Veteran

Angelo Fuentes
Staff Sergeant
U.S. Air Force Veteran

John R. Carlin
Staff Sergeant
U.S. Marine Corps Veteran

Janelle George
Staff Sergeant
U.S. Air Force Veteran

Peggy Crowl
Staff Sergeant
U.S. Army Veteran

Arnold Goldstein
Staff Sergeant
U.S. Army Veteran

Bill Robinson
Sonar Technician First
Class
U.S. Navy Veteran

James Stover
Yeoman First Class
U.S. Navy Veteran

Rebecca Dodge
Yeoman First Class
U.S. Navy Veteran

Aaron Brunelle
Chief Yeoman
U.S. Navy Veteran

C. Virginia Lee
Captain
U.S. Public Health Service
Commissioned Corps
Veteran

Chris Honsberger
Captain
U.S. Army Veteran

Audrey Urbano
Lieutenant Commander
U.S. Public Health Service
Commissioned Corps
Veteran

Katie Koser
Seaman
U.S. Navy Veteran

Samuel Nutter
Sergeant
U.S. Army Veteran

Steve Grimes
Petty Officer Second Class
U.S. Navy Veteran