

The Honorable Pete Hegseth  
Secretary of Defense  
United States Department of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

May 6, 2025

Secretary Hegseth,

Between 2001 and 2005, the United States Army and Air Force used Karshi-Khanabad Air Base (also known as K2 or Camp Stronghold Freedom) as a base of operations and launch point during the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan. During this period, many servicemembers kept private records of the hazardous conditions of the base while others have come before Congress to testify on these conditions. Years later, countless veterans have reported cases of cancer and other deadly health conditions following their service at K2. However, for years, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has denied care to many of these veterans. Many of them have already lost their lives.

In 2020, the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee's Subcommittee on National Security confirmed that the 15,000 U.S. servicemembers deployed to K2 Air Base between 2001 and 2005 were exposed to multiple cancer-causing toxic chemicals and radiological hazards, including petrochemicals, volatile organic compounds, depleted uranium, burn pits, and elevated levels of tetrachloroethylene. Five years later, many of these veterans are still waiting to get their claims covered. This is unacceptable.

In December of 2020, a bipartisan bill, introduced by myself and Rep. Stephen Lynch (D-MA), entitled the [\*K2 Veterans Toxic Exposure Accountability Act\*](#), was included in the Fiscal Year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). This bill instructed the Department of Defense to conduct a study and report on the toxic exposure experienced by the servicemembers who served at Karshi-Khanabad Air Base (K2), also known as Camp Stronghold Freedom, in Uzbekistan between 2001-2005. Congress mandated the report be completed within 180 days; it has been over four years.

According to our [amendment in Sec 751](#) of the FY 2021 NDAA titled "Study on exposure to toxic substances at Karshi-Khanabad Air Base, Uzbekistan," "The Secretary of Defense shall conduct a study on exposure to toxic substances by members of the Armed Forces deployed to Karshi-Khanabad Air Base, Uzbekistan, at any time during the period beginning on October 1, 2001, and ending on December 31, 2005." Because this study has yet to be completed (as far as Congress is aware), many K2 veterans are still waiting to receive much needed care. This is

unjust. There were repeated warnings at Camp Stronghold Freedom that servicemembers were being exposed to toxins, and yet their health and safety were ignored by the Pentagon leadership of that day.

**We respectfully request that you answer the following questions by July 11, 2025.**

1. Did the Pentagon conduct an assessment regarding the conditions of K2 “during October 1, 2001, and ending on December 31, 2005, including an identification of any toxic substances contaminating the Air Base during such period” per Sec 751(a)(1)(2)(A)?
2. Did the Pentagon conduct an “epidemiological study of the health consequences of members of the Armed Forces deployed to the Air Base at any time during such period” per Sec 751(a)(1)(2)(B)?
3. Did the Pentagon conduct an “assessment of any association between exposure to toxic substances identified under subparagraph (A) and the health consequences studied under subparagraph (B)” per Sec 751(a)(1)(2)(C)?
4. According to Sec 751(a)(1)(2)(b), “Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the House of Representatives and the Senate a report on the results of the study under subsection.”
  - a. Did the Secretary of Defense submit this report? If not, why?
5. If the above K2 assessment, epidemiological study, and assessment of service-related illnesses were not completed, when can the Committees on Armed Services of the House of Representatives and the Senate expect to receive these reports?

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We are honored to do our part for our nation’s patriots and their families who have dealt with the fallout of this oversight for years. Hopefully, with your help, we can ensure this never happens again to the brave Americans willing to go wherever they are needed to fight for this country.

Sincerely,

Mark E. Green, MD  
Member of Congress

Stephen F. Lynch  
Member of Congress