

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 4, 2026

The Honorable Pete Hegseth
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Hegseth,

We write to request a review of the toxic substances present at the Karshi Khanabad (K2) Air Base in Uzbekistan. Nearly 16,000 service members deployed to K2 from 2001 to 2005. These service members have since developed serious health conditions. Yet, the federal government has not provided a consistent explanation of the hazards they encountered, which denies them the answers, care, and benefits they deserve.

Early reviews identified a range of toxic substances at K2. However, follow-up reviews have disputed their toxicity, creating delays and confusion for veterans seeking care. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has acknowledged that conditions at K2 posed immediate and long-term risks to military personnel. VA's ability to recognize radiation-related exposures, however, remains dependent on confirmation from the Department of Defense (DOD). Without an accurate accounting of the toxic substances found at K2 by the Department, VA is unable to ensure veterans who suffer from conditions related to radiation, jet fuels, asbestos, chemical agents, and other toxins receive the benefits they deserve.

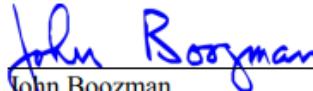
These veterans dispute the federal government's dismissal and denial of the hazards associated with their service. The Army Medical Department Journal previously identified a potential connection between K2 deployment and certain rare cancers associated with radiation exposure. Additionally, evidence submitted to the Federal Register by a former member of the US Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine's environmental assessment team confirms that enriched uranium was found at K2. If true, DOD must acknowledge enriched uranium was found at K2, as it explains the prevalence of cancer-related health conditions among K2 veterans. A complete review by the Department would resolve the differences in records.

We respectfully request the following:

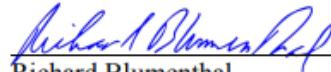
1. Review all sources of information regarding toxic and radiological substances at K2, including health record data, scientific research, and information provided directly by service members.
2. A review of the potential health effects of combined exposure to contaminants found at K2. Previous reviews have focused on the health effects of exposure to each contaminant.

The men and women who served at K2 were among the first service members of the War on Terror and did so under difficult and hazardous conditions. They and their families deserve health care and benefits that account for the risks they encountered. We appreciate your attention to this matter and your continued commitment to those who served.

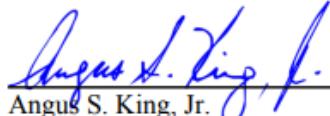
Sincerely,



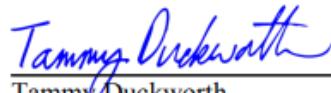
John Boozman
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator