



# NEWS RELEASE

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **DAV Supports Review of Radiation Exposure in Antarctic Veterans**

WASHINGTON—The Disabled American Veterans (DAV) is supporting a request from Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) that the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs evaluate the probability of radiation exposure from a leaking nuclear reactor at McMurdo Station that may have caused cancer in veterans serving there from 1964 to 1973 during Operation Deep Freeze.

“Thousands of service members may have been exposed to radioactive contamination in the air, their water and their food,” said DAV National Commander Wallace E. Tyson. “The experimental, one-of-a-kind nuclear reactor used at McMurdo Station suffered hundreds of reported malfunctions over its lifetime. The same reactor was used to melt snow and desalinate seawater used by the service members stationed there for as long as 13 months at a time.”

In his letter to Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates, Sen. Brown said that veterans stationed at McMurdo have made numerous disability claims to the VA for cancers they suffered, only to be denied. Many died before their cases could be fully decided.

“According to the United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission (USNRC), cancers that may develop as a result of radiation exposure are indistinguishable from those that occur naturally or as a result of exposure to other carcinogens,” said Brown. “We owe it to our veterans to err on the side of caution and support the claims of those whose cancer we cannot legitimately determine was not caused by radiation exposure at McMurdo Station.”

“Our veterans deserve to know if the radiation exposures at McMurdo Station’s nuclear power plant are the source of their cancers. Unless proven conclusively that they are not, the VA should award service connections to veterans suffering from cancer that may have been caused by extended periods of exposure to radiation,” said Commander Tyson. “Veterans also need to know how many of our McMurdo veterans have already died from cancer linked to radiation exposure.”

“We encourage the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs to give priority to the studies in hopes that no more veterans will die without proper review of their disability claims,” he said. “Justice delayed, in this case as much as any others, is justice denied.”

The 1.2 million-member Disabled American Veterans, a non-profit organization founded in 1920 and chartered by the U.S. Congress in 1932, represents this nation’s disabled veterans. It is dedicated to a single purpose: building better lives for our nation’s disabled veterans and their families. For more information, visit the organization’s Web site [www.dav.org](http://www.dav.org).

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