

The Sound of **Silence** Project™

Fighting for Cold War Veteran Nuclear Weapons Technicians

Subject: Project Update – The Sound of Silence Project | Your Voice Can Change Everything

From: Rick Workman

Founder & Director: The Sound of Silence Project

Date: April 25, 2025

This update includes project news and a Call to Action for all Cold War-era veteran Nuclear Weapons Technicians, their families, and supporters.

The term Nuclear Weapons Technician is used as a generic reference to military veterans who served in the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps, under a variety of related job titles, ratings, specialty codes, and military occupational specialties (MOS).

We need your voice—today.

Intro & Background

I'm Rick Workman, founder/director of The Sound of Silence Project. I began this journey on December 25, 2021, to help correct an injustice: Cold War-era military technicians who maintained live nuclear weapons—in direct support of the U.S. nuclear deterrent—were unknowingly exposed to dangerous ionizing radiation without restriction nor informed consent; and used toxic chemicals without appropriate personal protective equipment. Many are suffering or have passed without Department of Defense acknowledgment nor Veterans Affairs (VA) support. We aim to change that.

Distribution Note

This message is being sent individually to about 150 people and provided to the Navy Nuclear Weapons Association, the Air Force Nuclear Weapons Technician Association, and an ad hoc Army Nuclear Warrant Officer group, with a request to distribute widely.

Call to Action

If you, and a reasonable number of the active members of these associations **contact Congress now**, and local media, we may see swift passage of the proposed legislation.

Key Updates

Disabled American Veterans (DAV) Support

DAV officially supports The Sound of Silence Project, after unanimously passing a resolution at their 2024 National Convention. DAV can testify in congressional hearings where we will also provide verbal and written testimony.

► U.S. Senate: Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto (NV)

- Cortez Masto's Washington, D.C. staff began collaborating with us in mid-2024.

- A formal Senate version of our proposed draft bill was completed by the Senate Legislative Counsel (SLC) for the 118th Congress but was temporarily held due to the session slowdown. Efforts continue for the (current) 119th Congress.
- After modifications based on our recent meetings, final edits are in progress through the Senate Legislative Counsel. We remain highly confident in the Senator’s continuing support.

► **House of Representatives: Rep. Jack Bergman (MI), and the House Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs (DAMA)**

- In August 2023, veteran/constituent Howard Smale began a series of communications with Rep. Bergman’s staff and provided documents from The Sound of Silence Project.
- On April 26, 2024, Frank Garza, Army CWO3 (retired), Jim Little, Navy CWO4 (retired), and I attended a meeting with Bergman’s DC team and members of the House Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs (DAMA). The DAMA Staff Supervisor expressed eagerness to advance our proposed bill and requested numerous documents, which we developed and provided. It took approximately twenty-one days to conduct research, coordinate with other veterans, develop, and provide those documents.
- July 17, 2024 – The DAMA Staff Director emailed me stating “regular order” legislative hearings would not be held until 2025. The message included: “*VA is conducting its own studies, and undergoing its own process that was authorized by PACT Act, to add new presumptive, including based on radiation.*” [sic] VA’s reported “actions” were consistent with suggestions in a stern December 6, 2023, letter to then-VA Secretary McDonough from three U.S. Senators, signed in direct support of veteran Nuclear Weapons Technicians.

The letter included in part: “***It is morally unacceptable to deny veterans benefits based on these unreliable and incomplete records, given what we now know about radiation exposure that we didn’t during the Cold War era.***” Note: Any such help that may have been anticipated from the VA did not come to fruition. No surprise.

- Communications from Rep. Bergman’s DC office stalled without explanation. Nothing has been withdrawn, and we are hopeful about progress expected soon. It is a long, grinding process—but we are not slowing down. I was informed last week that another congressman, who expressed his support, is expected to meet Rep. Bergman to enquire about his status. We’re now pursuing additional avenues in parallel to ensure success.

► **Proposed Executive Order (EO) submitted to the White House, March 26, 2025**

- Proposed Executive Order (v1.3 3-26-25): “*Releasing Cold War Period Veteran Nuclear Weapons Technicians From Secrecy Requirements*”; and “*Acknowledging Occupational Ionizing Radiation and other Toxic Exposures During the Cold War Period, September 2, 1945 – December 26, 1991.*” A 4,000 character summary (maximum allowed) was submitted through the White House comment site. A complete copy of the EO and Letter of Introduction and Explanation was provided through a promising source.

How You Can Help Immediately

Please contact your members of Congress without delay:

- Your **Representative**
- Your **Two U.S. Senators**

We recommend contacting in-state offices first. These local teams often have more time and may escalate the issue to DC staff.

Start with a phone call or walk-in visit. Ask for a follow-up and offer to provide documentation. If asked, share my name and contact information.

Avoid relying solely on their website forms. These are often routed through AI-driven filters or canned responses that fail to grasp the real issue.

At any time in the process, please do not hesitate to contact me or give them my information and any of the documents included in The Sound of Silence Project website.

If you're a Cold War-era Nuclear Weapons Technician—or a loved one—it's easy to think, "*There are thousands of others. They'll handle this.*"

But here's the truth:

Thousands have already died in silence.

Many more still intend to remain silent—even after thirty to seventy years later.

Who among us will speak up? Who will stand up (metaphorically)?

Too many are still waiting for someone else to go first.

The estimate we provided to members of Congress for the total number of Nuclear Weapons Technicians who served during the Cold War is 30,830.

Far too many have already passed.

Thousands more are living with cancers and other diseases linked to radiation and toxic exposures from their service.

But this isn't just about numbers.

This is about courage.

This is about taking a stand.

You and your loved ones helped prevent nuclear war. Now it's time to fight for your own recognition, for benefits you earned and deserve.

You don't need to carry the weight of thousands. You just need to be one voice.

One voice reaching out to your Representative.

One voice contacting your Senators.

One voice breaking the silence.

Your story—or the memory of your loved one—could be the key to unlocking a legacy of truth and accountability.

Just do the work of one: Contact your Representative and both U.S. Senators now.

Elevator Speeches (snippets) – For Calls, Emails, or In-Person Visits

- ◆ Throughout the Cold War (1947–1991), military Nuclear Weapons Technicians (NWTs) in the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps, worked directly on live nuclear weapons—disassembling, replacing components, assembling, maintaining, and transporting them under strict secrecy.
- ◆ NWTs’ tasks required direct physical contact, placing hands and arms on and inside the nuclear weapon, head near or inside the openings, and legs and torsos pressed against weapon exteriors; exposing them to dangerous ionizing radiation emitted through weapon surfaces or from exposed weapon components.
- ◆ These veterans were unknowingly exposed to ionizing radiation—alpha, beta, gamma, and neutron—the last two being continuously emitted through the surfaces of live weapons and components. There was no on/off switch.
- ◆ Ionizing radiation (IRAD) impacts the immune system, damages DNA cells in our body, and kills cells. The IRAD damage inside DNA cells and proteins can cause mutations to occur, and those mutations can result in cancers and other diseases or illnesses. Mutated DNA can be passed to offspring through the reproductive process, potentially leading to genetic disorders, congenital defects, and/or cancer.
- ◆ NWTs working near multiple nuclear weapons—in maintenance facilities, storage structures, aboard ships or aircraft, or in submarines—were subjected to compounded exposure from three-dimensional (3D) ionizing radiation fields. This exposure significantly increased risks of biological damage.
- ◆ NWTs virtually worked without dosimetry, monitoring, restrictions, nor informed consent:
 - The Air Force, for example, first acknowledged ionizing radiation emissions through the surfaces of live nuclear weapons with the introduction of the Air Force Nuclear Weapons Intrinsic Radiation Safety Program, Air Force Regulation (AFR) 122-28, October 29, 1990.
 - Army Field Manual FM 55-204, Air Transport of M454 (155 mm) Atomic Projectile by US Army Aircraft (November 1980, IC 2 January 24, 1988) stated: *Personnel dosimetry (film badge) is not required for personnel engaged in operations prescribed in this manual nor do the operations require keeping a record of exposure times. However, do not stay within 1 meter of the M454 projectile any longer than is needed to accomplish each operation.*"
 - Navy dosimetry programs for nuclear weapons were limited and intermittent. Monitoring did not always cover all potential types of ionizing radiation exposures. Results of dosimeter and film badge analysis during the Cold War-era remain significantly suspect.
- ◆ NWTs were discouraged from asking questions about radiation exposure (and toxic chemical use without adequate protection). Bound by secrecy oaths, they could not discuss their duties—not with physicians, not with VA officials, not even with their families.
- ◆ The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and Title 38, U.S. Code (Veterans’ Benefits), do not identify the duties of a Nuclear Weapons Technician as a “Radiation-Risk Activity” nor a “Toxic Exposure Risk Activity”. Consequently, we are not considered a “Radiation-Exposed Veteran” nor a “Toxic Exposed Veteran”.

They have still not been formally released from those secrecy requirements.

Institutional Betrayal

The Department of Defense continues to deny the true extent of these exposures—providing false “radiation dose estimations” when required by the VA, essentially blocking veterans from receiving VA benefits. This silence reflects one of the darkest chapters in U.S. military history, where secrecy far outweighed the lives of those who maintained our nation’s most dangerous weapons.

We ask for accountability and justice. The silence must be broken.

More Information

Website: <https://TSOSProject.com>

Members of Congress list: See "Congress" tab

Project Documents – **See “Documents” tab**. Recommended initial review:

- Ionizing Radiation Exposures to Nuclear Weapons Techs v3.2. 22 March 2025 (pdf)
 - Toxic Chemical Exposures to Nuclear Weapons Technicians v2.3, 19 March 2025 (pdf)
 - Proposed Executive Order and Intro/Explanation – March 26, 2025 (pdf)
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Questions and Information Sharing

Please don’t hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Also, please share the information in this document with local print, radio, and TV media; and with fellow veterans, family members, additional elected officials, and other interested people.

— Rick Workman Founder & Director, The Sound of Silence Project

Alternate email: admin@tsosproject.com

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