



-- PRESS RELEASE--

-- FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE --

LABRATS DEMAND JUSTICE AS THE RECENT ENFORCED DISCLOSURE OF MINISTRY OF DEFENCE STATEMENTS/REPORTS CONFIRM:

- **Systemic destruction, loss, and withholding of critical Nuclear Test Veteran medical records. Evidence of ongoing destruction of critical files – including 48 Navy records destroyed as recently as 2025 despite ongoing proceedings and records being “destroyed by burning”.**
- **Evidence of the systemic failure to give servicemen medical tests at the time, despite policies to do so. A staggering 92% of sampled Navy medical files are missing mandated blood tests - underlying negligence in not taking/keeping crucial health tests on UK military personnel OR an intentional cover up.**
- **The MOD’s own documents show that testing was designed as a shield against lawsuits and “unwelcome publicity”, not to protect the men.**
- **UK military personnel were used as ‘Lab Rats’ in the UK Government nuclear testing programme.**
- **LABRATS AND THE NUCLEAR TEST VETERANS’ LEGAL TEAM ECHO ANDY BURNHAM’S CALL TO INITIATE THE VETERANS’ PROPOSAL FOR THE FAST-TRACK ESTABLISHMENT OF A PROGRESSIVE AND EFFICIENT SPECIAL (JUSTICE) TRIBUNAL TO PROVIDE LONG OVERDUE TRUTH AND JUSTICE.**

LONDON, UK, 17 July 2026 — Today, Nuclear Test Veterans, their families, and campaign group LABRATS declare that the Ministry of Defence’s (MOD) newly published reports only further prove obfuscation, cover up, and an underlying - multiple decades-long - conspiracy of administrative erasure, secrecy, and loss of medical evidence.

The government’s own reports admit to a catastrophic failure to preserve the medical histories of the estimated 22,000 servicemen who participated in the UK’s atmospheric nuclear testing programme (1952–1967).

THE SCALE OF THE BETRAYAL: WHAT THE MOD ADMITS

The MOD's "dip samples" of surviving veteran files have exposed a shocking deficit of the very medical records veterans have spent decades begging to see (against the MOD's aggressive challenges to their disclosure applications) and underlines the MOD's wilful/negligent disregard for the health and safety of our military veterans:

- **The Navy Black Hole:** Out of 270 Royal Navy medical records reviewed, **92.59% contained absolutely no evidence** of the pre-deployment blood tests mandated by Admiralty orders.
- **The Army Deficit:** An estimated **1,353 Army veterans** who should have had baseline blood counts have had their records entirely lost or destroyed.
- **The RAF Gaps:** Nearly half (**47.7%**) of the medical records from high-risk RAF units—including the 76 Squadron cloud-samplers—contained no blood test data.

EXPOSING THE "MEDICO-LEGAL" COVER-UP

For decades, the MOD has denied withholding information. Yet, these reports contain damning admissions that the state prioritised protecting itself from lawsuits over protecting the health of its servicemen:

1. **Destroying Evidence in Real-Time:** The MOD admits that **48 Navy medical records were destroyed in 2025** while the records exercise and legal actions were actively underway. Furthermore, the RAF admits to mistakenly destroying files in 2023 using automated "placeholder" dates of birth. A 1957 order required classified Grapple documents "to be destroyed by burning". 1,904 of 21,357 named veterans (9%) could not be matched to any surviving record at all.

2. **"Medico-Legal" Baselines:** Documents reveal that the decision as to whether servicemen were blood-tested turned on legal, political and reputational calculations rather than concerns for their health. The AWRE wanted testing to build a defensible baseline against later claims and to avoid charges of negligence, whereas the Services resisted testing on the basis of cost and claiming the tests were "worthless" and "immoral". In July 1958, AWRE's Roy Pilgrim explicitly stated the goal was **"to avoid subsequent claims and legal battles and even more important the consequential unwelcome publicity."**

3. **Deliberate Secrecy:** The Army Historical Branch admits that during Operation Grapple, **"because of security anxieties... even the official records of events were very sketchy."**

4. **The Pension Trap:** The MOD admits that when veterans filed war pension claims, their original medical files (F.Med 4 envelopes) were routinely extracted by the War Pensions Directorate and **never returned**, permanently depleting their primary records.

LABRATS RESPONSE

1. The Scandal of Missing and Destroyed Records

The government's records exercise reveals it to have been a sham process (cynically released so as to be buried from public censure during World Cup fever) and officially confirms what veterans have known for decades: the medical files they desperately need to prove their cases are incomplete, missing, or gone forever due to government incompetence/purposeful intention.

- The report admits that while policies required pre-deployment blood testing to establish health baselines, **"some blood testing records are indeed absent."**

- Shockingly, the MOD admits that in some cases where vital testing should have taken place, it never did, or **"records were destroyed through administrative error."**
- Campaigners reject the government's attempt to normalise this disaster by claiming it is "consistent with the condition of other personnel and medical records from the time." For men exposed to thermonuclear detonations, these records were a matter of life and death.

2. The Injustice of the War Pension Tribunals

Campaigners point out the cruel irony: the MOD has spent years aggressively challenging and defeating veterans' claims while simultaneously admitting today that the actual, physical medical records of these men are "complex," "inconsistent," and frequently missing or destroyed.

ENFORCED DISCLOSURE OF DOCUMENTS AND INFORMATION RELATING TO THE BURIED 2014 AWE REPORT SHOWING CONTAMINATION ON CHRISTMAS ISLAND

Running alongside the medical-records scandal is a second body of material the MOD has now been forced to disclose: a chain of connected documents relating to the buried 2014 AWE report which shows elevated radiation readings on Christmas Island.

Numerous and serious concerns arise from this material. LABRATS and the veterans' legal team are examining these documents in detail, and a further dedicated press release will follow.

STATEMENT FROM CAMPAIGN REPRESENTATIVES:

"To be told, nearly 75 years after the UK became a nuclear power, that our records are 'absent' due to 'historic policy' and 'administrative error' is a slap in the face to every veteran and descendant who has suffered. They admit they destroyed records. They admit they didn't test men when they should have. Yet, they still claim there was 'no intentional concealment.'

The MOD has created a bureaucratic black hole. They lost or destroyed our medical baselines, used hypothetical models to defeat our pension claims in court, and now expect us to be grateful for a report that offers nothing but excuses. This is not transparency—it is the administrative erasure of our service and our suffering. We are deeply disappointed, but we are not defeated. We will continue to fight for the full, unvarnished truth and the justice our veterans deserve before the last of them is gone."

"They sent us into nuclear fire, watched us get sick, and then burned the paper trail to avoid paying us compensation" said a spokesperson for the campaign. *"This report is not an administrative oops—it is the anatomy of a cover-up. We will not rest until those responsible are held to account."*

STATEMENT FROM JASON MCCUE, LAWYER FOR THE NUCLEAR TEST VETERANS

"For seventy years, nuclear test veterans have been lied to, stonewalled and left to die waiting for the truth. The latest statement by the Minister is merely another piece in the sham jigsaw presented by the MOD to construct a puzzle to avoid responsibility for the harm they caused to our military veterans and hide the true shameful picture that the Vets were purposely used as guinea pigs within our nuclear testing programme."

Two years ago, we gave Keir Starmer an effective way out to finally end the injustice - through a Special 'Justice' Tribunal - and to end the cancer to the UK of this continuing cover up. After 74 years, it is the only sensible way to compel evidence, expose what happened and pay these men the reparations they are owed - without protracted litigation and further huge expense to the taxpayer. Starmer didn't listen and prevaricated through backing this latest sham exercise. Andy Burnham listened and agreed in Parliament this week that the Special Tribunal is the answer. Now we need to get cracking on the most efficient tribunal model and deliver it."

I sincerely welcome that Andy Burnham has signalled that he seeks to end this injustice through our proposed Special Tribunal. We have prepared outline models - that Starmer's government simply ignored whilst more veterans passed away in the interim - which could be ready to go in a matter of a few months. We stand ready to work with government to establish the best model for the vets, the MOD, the UK public, and our country's reputation for justice."

- ENDS -

Media Contact:

Alan Owen

LABRATS

info@labrats.international