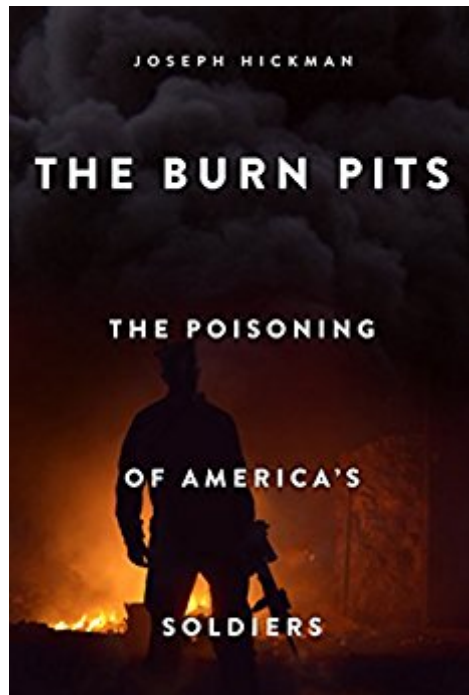




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# **The Burn Pits: The Poisoning Of America's Soldiers**



## Synopsis

Thousands of American soldiers are returning from the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan with severe wounds from chemical war. They are not the victims of ruthless enemy warfare, but of their own military commanders. These soldiers, afflicted with rare cancers and respiratory diseases, were sickened from the smoke and ash swirling out of the "burn pits" where military contractors incinerated mountains of trash, including old stockpiles of mustard and sarin gas, medical waste, and other toxic material. Based on thousands of government documents, over five hundred in-depth medical case studies, and interviews with more than one thousand veterans and active-duty GIs, *The Burn Pits* will shock the nation. The book is more than an explosive work of investigative journalism; it is the deeply moving chronicle of the many young men and women who signed up to serve their country in the wake of 9/11, only to return home permanently damaged, the victims of their own armed forces' criminal negligence.

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## Customer Reviews

SSG Hickman, well done! We have never met, but you've done an amazing job, unflinchingly telling our story. In 2004 I wondered why the captured Sarin Nerve Agent weapons we were loading onto C-17's in Baghdad never made the news. I wondered why I was plagued with rashes and why my short term memory was so messed up after I got back from the desert. Later on I wondered why I met so much resistance from VSO's and the VA when I wanted to file a claim after I was diagnosed with a very rare and lethal form of cancer. Joe Hickman asks these same questions I was asking myself. He has gone even further and dug up lots of answers to them. Nothing in this book can change what happened. But reading our story, told so brilliantly, fills me with gratitude that it is being told. Great work! Thank you Joe!!!

The U.S. government, from Dick Cheney to Hillary Clinton, told blatant lies about the Iraqi government creating chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons in 2002, despite having been informed of the fact that Iraq was doing no such thing. U.S. leaders lied about ties between Iraq and terrorists that they also knew did not exist. Then the U.S. military attacked and invaded Iraq, in the process heavily bombing old sites of Iraqi chemical weapons from the 1980s, many of those weapons having been provided by the United States. In large part because of the U.S. origin of the old Iraqi chemical weapons, the U.S. kept quiet about them during the new war. Another reason for the official silence was that, during the 2003 U.S. destruction of Iraq, many of those old weapons were seized by fledgling terrorist groups. The war had done exactly what it had been justified as being needed to prevent; it had given WMDs to terrorists. The geniuses running the U.S. military set up U.S. bases at the sites of old chemical weapons piles, dug giant burn pits into the ground, and began burning the military's trash -- monumental quantities of trash, something like The Story of Stuff on steroids. They burned hundreds of tons of trash every day, including everything you can think of: oil, rubber, tires, treated wood, medicines, pesticides, asbestos, plastic, explosives, paint, human body parts, and . . . (wait for it) . . . nuclear, biological, and chemical decontamination materials. The burn pits poisoned Iraq, together with depleted uranium weapons, napalm, white phosphorous, and various other horrors, creating unprecedented epidemics of birth defects, and killing untold masses of Iraqis. The burn pits also poisoned tens of thousands of U.S. troops, many of whom have died as a result, including very likely the son of the current U.S. vice president. The burn pits profited Halliburton, the company of the previous U.S. vice president. The burn pits were no secret, although bases sometimes stopped the burning during VIP tours. Typically, huge clouds of smoke filled the air and created immediate breathing difficulties and sicknesses. Soldiers knew which colors of smoke were most dangerous and discussed it as they discussed an enemy.

Numerous burn pits turned hundreds of previously healthy U.S. troops into invalids. But the burn pits at six particular bases caused the most severe illnesses and the most deaths. They caused, among other things, numerous cases of constrictive bronchiolitis, which could only have resulted from exposure to mustard gas -- a chemical weapon left over from a program the United States had supported when it existed and used as an excuse for war when it didn't. I'm reminded of a ship that sits at the bottom of the Mediterranean. In 1943, German bombs sank a U.S. ship at Bari, Italy, that was secretly carrying a million pounds of mustard gas. Many of the U.S. sailors died from the poison, which the United States dishonestly claimed to have been using as a "deterrent," despite keeping it secret. The ship is expected to continue leaking the gas into the sea for centuries. The earth and water of Iraq have been similarly poisoned, as have U.S. soldiers. The Pentagon made crystal clear in Iraq, as most everywhere else, that it cares not a damn for the people or the natural environment of the places it attacks, and that it cares even less for the troops it uses to do so. But if you imagine that the Pentagon has reserved its concern for the civilian inhabitants of the Fatherland, don't look too closely into the open-air burns still happening in the United States. The U.S. military is the third-largest polluter of U.S. waterways, top producer of superfund disaster sites, and top consumer of petroleum. At least 33,480 U.S. nuclear weapons workers who have received compensation for health damage are now dead. Where it is blocked by legal regulations effectively enforced, the military shows restraint; where it isn't, it doesn't. In Virginia, the military very responsibly throws dead soldiers into a landfill rather than burning them. Either method communicates equally well just how much the military cares. Halliburton, for its part, is as happy to deal death at home as abroad. Residents of Duncan, Oklahoma, have sued Cheney's cash machine for poisoning the ground water with ammonium perchlorate. Government investigators also concluded that Halliburton was, in part, to blame for the BP oil spill that flooded into the Gulf of Mexico in 2010. Joseph Hickman's new book, *The Burn Pits: The Poisoning of America's Soldiers*, collects the evidence, including from similar incidents during the first Gulf War that were known before the first 2003 burn pit was dug and lit. Hickman gives us stories of young healthy men who headed off to Iraq believing the lies, believing that the U.S. government that is now begging Russia to stop attacking terrorists because the U.S. wants to overthrow yet another government -- believing that this U.S. government had good intentions in attacking Iraq. These poor souls went to Iraq hoping to protect people from horrible suffering, and ended up inflicting horrible suffering on people including themselves. They come home, develop cancer, get stonewalled by the VA, and die dreaming of what it might have been to have health and the wealth needed to attend college. Their American Dream was cut short by the militarized American Fantasy. Joe Biden supported a war that

very likely killed his son by means of burn pits. He then chose not to run for president because of his grief. His decision not to run received more media coverage than several months of the campaign of Senator Bernie Sanders who had voted against the war. But did Biden lift a finger to hold Halliburton or the military or the Congress accountable? Not that I've heard. Hickman describes the burn pits, and analogous poisons from past wars like Agent Orange in Vietnam, as "recklessly endangering the health of our fighting men and women." The only trouble with this is the fact that all war, all "fighting," consists of recklessly endangering the lives of the vast bulk of the victims (the Vietnamese, Iraqis, etc.) and of the U.S. troops. There's nothing non-reckless about any war. Perhaps distant drone pilots are not endangered in the typical way, but then look at how they're mocked within the Air Force. If troops weren't endangered, people wouldn't treat them with reverence and describe them -- as Hickman does -- as somehow "serving" their country, even while the facts he includes in his book speak otherwise. The U.S. Supreme Court has held since 1950 that members and former members of the military cannot sue over injuries received on the job. It may, however, still prove possible to win compensation from Halliburton. If so, you can probably chalk up another assist to Chelsea Manning who leaked evidence that the military had knowledge of the dangers when it created the burn pits, knowledge that General David Petraeus blatantly lied about in response to a Congressional inquiry. It now appears that the 2003- war on Iraq not only created ISIS, but armed it with mustard gas, thereby proving, I guess, that Saddam Hussein could indeed had given WMDs to terrorists had he just been as evil as the U.S. military.

Hugely important, well documented, and very well written. If you truly "support our troops", this book will become a textbook! Don't look for it in a military PX or Exchange store, however. The Pentagon won't allow it on their book store shelves, lest their troops become enlightened about how they are being poisoned and ignored. Like the Agent Orange scandal of the Vietnam era, this story gives the army's advertising slogan "An Army of One" a most ominous and disturbing meaning.

Before encouraging your newly graduated sons and daughters to join the military, I highly recommend reading this book so they know who they are "working" for when they enlist. What this book has demonstrated for me is that the military industrial complex (the DOD, the VA, corporations like Haliburton, and former-CEOs-now-politicians) have learned nothing from the Agent Orange and Gulf War poisonings, mostly because of a total lack of accountability and putting profits ahead of people. Your trust and confidence in these institutions will be shaken after reading it. With that said, this is an easy and necessary read for any American who truly cares about the well-being of

America's veterans. You will be outraged before you finish the first chapter. Joseph Hickman has done a great service by documenting his findings here and gives the reader much to explore on their own after finishing the book. The controversy surrounding burn pits is far from over.

This book is a must-read for anyone who calls themselves a Patriot and who loves this country and who believes we owe it to our soldiers to make good on the promises we make them. Imagine offering your life to serve your country, then getting exposed to a chemical soup 24/7 (in some cases) that you can't escape. Everyone around you makes jokes and the culture is to not complain so you don't. Then months or years later when your lungs start to bleed and you can't remember your wife's name or who those little kids are that live in your house you're told by the V.A. it had nothing to do with the lithium smoke, the plastics and asbestos and paint vapors and ash you'd been breathing for your entire tour of duty. Then when the tumors start crushing your windpipe and damaging your kidneys the V.A. says, "Must've been something else, so we're not going to bother taking care of you." If everyone knew in advance how little care a returning soldier gets, and how difficult the V.A. makes it for them, I doubt we'd have much of an armed forces at all.

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