In their invited commentary on my article (1), Wegman et al. (2) acknowledge the inadequacies in the studies that have been cited in support of war-related stress as the explanation of persisting illnesses in Persian Gulf War veterans. However, they subtly attempt to leave open the door to the stress theory by reasoning, "The difficulty in studying stress... is no... reason to reject the role of stress in the veterans' illnesses..." (2, p. 705).

On the contrary, the problem with the stress theory of the Gulf War syndrome is not a difficulty in detecting post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). When PTSD is present, the diagnosis is readily made with a structured interview by a trained psychiatrist or psychologist in which the official criteria for PTSD are satisfied and other conditions with which it can be confused (e.g., other psychiatric, neurologic, or neurotoxic disorders) are separated out. As I demonstrate in my review, the problem in regard to investigations into Gulf War syndrome arose from an ill-advised overreliance on nonspecific diagnostic tools (namely, psychometric PTSD scales) in epidemiologic surveys and a failure to employ the definitive diagnostic interview technique until after public positions in favor of the stress etiology had become entrenched.

REFERENCES
