



# News Release

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## **SENATORS CHALLENGE ARMY STUDY'S CONCLUSIONS ON U.S. TROOP EXPOSURE TO DEADLY CARCINOGEN IN IRAQ**

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) --- Two U.S. Senators are taking issue with the conclusions of an Army investigation into the exposure in Iraq of hundreds of U.S. soldiers to sodium dichromate, a deadly carcinogen.

Senators Byron Dorgan (D-ND) and Evan Bayh (D-IN) released a letter Thursday they sent to Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Pete Geren, Secretary of the Army, saying briefings their offices have received on a study they requested have raised additional questions.

Dorgan chaired a hearing in the Senate Democratic Policy Committee in June 2008 on the exposure at the Qarmat Ali water injection facility in Iraq. Bayh represents many of the soldiers, members of the Indiana National Guard, who were exposed. Soldiers from Oregon, South Carolina and West Virginia were also exposed.

Dorgan and Bayh said the Army's evidence and their own investigations indicate that exposure of the troops appears to be more severe than the Army and contractor KBR have acknowledged.

They also asked Gates and Geren to explain how the Army could pronounce itself "satisfied" with its oversight of KBR, and the response by KBR and the Army to the exposure, given the following:

- Some soldiers, exposed to the deadly chemical in the spring and summer of 2003, still have not been informed by either the Army or KBR that they were exposed.
- For months, KBR failed to identify the presence of the chemical, even though it was required to conduct an "environmental risk assessment;" and even though it received a United Nations report in the spring of 2003 that stated there was sodium dichromate at the site.
- According to the Army's own timeline, nearly three months passed after the initial detection before KBR began testing at the site. KBR waited two more weeks to start to start remediation of the site, and protective gear was not provided to soldiers until nearly a month after that.
- Indiana National Guard personnel were not told of the exposure until they saw KBR employees using PPE (personal protective equipment) at the site.

"It looks like conclusions were made, without regard to the facts," Dorgan said. "We owe our soldiers much more than that. Given the well documented and serious failures at the site, I don't understand how the Army can claim KBR acted appropriately.

Senator Evan Bayh said, "I am still unsatisfied with the information provided by the Army about their response to the exposure of U.S. service members to sodium dichromate at the Qarmat Ali water injection facility in Iraq. We are asking again for a complete account of how our service members were exposed to these conditions and what went wrong. If there's criminal negligence, people must be held accountable. If there was a lack of oversight by Army Corps of Engineers, people ought to be fired. I also have many unanswered questions about KBR's role in the original exposure and contamination and believe the company needs to be held to account for its behavior in this incident. We have a moral obligation to the men and women who were put in harm's way. We need to make sure to never find ourselves in this situation again. Most importantly, we have to identify those service members who were exposed to sodium dichromate and other lethal chemicals and make sure they get the kind of long-term care and treatment they deserve."

