



News Release

BYRON L. DORGAN
CHAIRMAN

For Immediate Release
Wednesday
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FOR MORE INFORMATION:
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2:00 PM, Monday, August 3:

SENATE DPC TO EXAMINE ARMY'S RESPONSE TO EXPOSURE OF TROOPS IN IRAQ TO DEADLY CHEMICAL

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) --- The U.S. Senate Democratic Policy Committee will conduct a congressional oversight hearing, Monday, August 3, to examine whether the U.S. Army responded appropriately to the exposure of hundreds of U.S. troops to a deadly carcinogen at a water injection facility in Iraq.

The 2:00 PM hearing will be held in Room 628 Dirksen Senate Office Building.

Witnesses will include National Guard members from Indiana, Oregon and West Virginia who were exposed to sodium dichromate at Qarmat Ali, a water injection facility in 2003. Also scheduled to testify is one of the world's leading experts on health risks associated with exposure to sodium dichromate.

Military contractor KBR had the contract for cleaning up Qarmat Ali, which provided water to Iraq oil pipelines and which was critical to the U.S. effort to restore the Iraqi economy after the invasion.. Sodium dichromate was found throughout the site. In some places it was several inches thick and filled the air during frequent windstorms.

KBR's role in the exposure of troops was examined at a June 20, 2008, DPC hearing which found multiple failures to take action to protect troops. The August 3 hearing will examine whether the Army responded appropriately to KBR's actions, including whether the Army followed up with exposed soldiers to ensure they were tested, monitored, and received potentially life-saving medical treatment.

"Our previous hearing found KBR's failures to be widespread and serious," Dorgan said. "Now, we want to know whether the Army held KBR accountable and acted quickly to protect soldiers when KBR failed to do so. Did the Army tell soldiers the truth about the exposure and its health consequences? After the exposure, did the Army properly test and monitor the soldiers who were exposed and make sure they received the treatment they need?"

Details follow:

WHO: Senators: Byron Dorgan (D-ND), Chairman; Evan Bayh (D-IN); Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI); and others.

Witnesses: Russell Kimberling, former Indiana National Guard member; Rocky Bixby, former Oregon National Guard member; Russell Powell, former West Virginia National Guard member; Herman Gibb, Ph.D., expert on health risks associated with exposure to sodium dichromate.

WHAT: Congressional oversight hearing

WHERE: Room 628 Dirksen Senate Office Building

WHEN: 2:00 PM, Monday, August 3, 2009

WHY: To examine the appropriateness of the Army's response to the exposure of U.S. troops to a deadly carcinogen in Iraq by military contractor KBR.

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