



News Release

BYRON L. DORGAN
CHAIRMAN

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Follow up report is delayed:

DORGAN: DOD IG REPORT CONFIRMS PENTAGON DROPPED THE BALL ON CHEMICAL EXPOSURE OF U.S. TROOPS IN IRAQ

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) --- U.S. Senator Byron Dorgan (D-ND) said Friday a preliminary report of an investigation by the Department of Defense Inspector General confirms that the Pentagon dropped the ball in responding to the exposure of hundreds of U.S. troops to a deadly chemical in Iraq. Those failures left some exposed soldiers unaware that they had been exposed to the deadly chemical and without follow up health monitoring and treatment. Monitoring tests performed on other soldiers who were informed of their exposure were so inadequate that the agency that performed them now admits they have a “low level of confidence” in those tests.

A second and more detailed Inspector General’s report, originally scheduled to be released this month, has now been moved back to the end of the year, a development Dorgan said he finds “disappointing.”

The Senate Armed Services Committee and Dorgan requested IG investigations after he chaired hearings by the Senate Democratic Policy Committee (DPC), in June 2008 and August 2009. The hearings revealed that troops from Indiana, Oregon, South Carolina, and West Virginia were exposed to sodium dichromate, a known and highly potent carcinogen at the Qarmat Ali water treatment facility in Iraq. The DPC hearings revealed multiple failures by the contractor, KBR, and the Army’s failure to adequately monitor, test, and notify soldiers who may have been exposed of the health risks they may now face.

The IG is releasing two reports on its investigation, The first report was released in September. The second, expected to be a more detailed response to specific DPC concerns, was originally slated for release by late October. But the Department of Defense Inspector General now states a draft of that report won’t be available until the end of the year.

The first report provides no indication -- seven years after the exposure -- that the Army ever notified seven soldiers from the Army’s Third Infantry Division who secured the Qarmat Ali facility during hostilities that they had been exposed. It also confirms that the Army’s assessment of the health risks associated with exposure to sodium dichromate for soldiers at Qarmat Ali are not very reliable. In fact, the organization that performed these assessments, the U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventative Medicine (CHPPM), now says it has a “low level of confidence” in its test results for the overwhelming majority of those exposed.

Equally troubling, Dorgan said, is the report’s finding that the Department of Defense is refusing to provide information to Congress about the incident, because of a lawsuit to which it is not a party.

“I am very concerned about the findings we now have, and I am disappointed in the delayed release of Part II of this report. The IG’s investigation and its findings are very important to the lives of U.S. soldiers and workers who were at the site. Details and definitive findings will help us ensure accountability for this exposure and flawed follow up, but even more importantly, they will help ensure that all exposed soldiers receive appropriate notice and medical attention,” Dorgan said.

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