



News Release

BYRON L. DORGAN
CHAIRMAN

For Immediate Release
Tuesday
November 3, 2009

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
CONTACT: Barry E. Piatt
PHONE: 202-224-0577

Tens of Thousands of Soldiers May Have Been Exposed:

SENATE DPC HEARING WILL EXAMINE FAILURE TO PROTECT U.S. TROOPS FROM HEALTH IMPACT OF BURN PITS IN IRAQ

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) --- Chairman Byron Dorgan (D-ND) announced Tuesday the Senate Democratic Policy Committee (DPC) will conduct a congressional oversight hearing on Friday, November 6, to examine the health risks associated with the continued use of open-air burn pits by the U.S. military and contractor KBR in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The hearing is set for 10:00 AM and will be held in Room 628 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building in Washington, DC.

Although military guidelines allow the use of burn pits to dispose of waste only in emergency situations, most large U.S. military installations have continued to use burn pits for years, despite growing evidence that exposure to burn pit smoke may be causing an increased incidence of chronic lung diseases, respiratory ailments, neurological disorders and cancer.

Hearing witnesses are expected to testify that plastics, paint, solvents, petroleum products, rubber, and medical waste have been burned in the pits.

The hearing will also examine whether military contractor KBR operated the burn pits in a safe and cost-effective manner.

Witnesses will include the Air Force's former Bioenvironmental Flight Commander at Joint Base Balad, who warned three years ago about health hazards associated with burn pit smoke at the base, two KBR whistleblowers, and a medical expert who will describe the adverse health consequences associated with burn pit smoke inhalation.

Details follow:

WHO: *Senators:* Byron Dorgan (D-ND), Chairman, and others.

Witnesses: Lt. Colonel Darrin Curtis, former Air Force Bioenvironmental Flight Commander at Joint Base Balad; Rick Lamberth, former KBR employee; Russell Keith, former KBR medic; Dr. Anthony Szema, MD, expert on health impact of burn pit smoke.

WHAT: Congressional oversight hearing

WHERE: Room 628 Dirksen Senate Office Building

WHEN: 10:00 AM, Friday, November 6, 2009

WHY: To examine the health impact of burn pit smoke on U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, whether the Army is providing exposed soldiers and veterans with accurate information about the risks, and whether contractor KBR is safely operating the burn pits.

-- END --