

POINT PAPER

SUBJECT: Water Quality Issue at Base Q-West, Iraq

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BACKGROUND: Amid reports of possibly contaminated non-potable water at Base Q-West, the Commander of Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA) Northern Iraq, directed Mr. Eric Bell, a DCMA quality assurance representative (QAR) in Northern Iraq, to investigate the matter. Mr. Bell's involvement in the matter is finished. However, his involvement was mentioned in a letter dated March 31, 2006, by Army Captain Michelle Callahan, 101st Sustainment Brigade Surgeon, currently serving in Iraq. Captain Callahan reported she had recently treated six cases of bacterial-infections, which she suspects were caused by improperly treated water used for showering.

DISCUSSION:

- Mr. Bell's investigation revealed no conclusive linkage between the type of cases Captain Callahan refers to and the water-purification process used by KBR at the time. Nonetheless, there was evidence suggesting that KBR was using outmoded and no-longer-valid procedures with regard to the obtainment and treatment of the water used for showering.
- Corollary to Mr. Bell's actions, DCMA Northern Iraq determined that it would be in the best interest of the Government for KBR to follow more stringent water-purification procedures. On February 7, 2006, DCMA Northern Iraq issued to KBR a Corrective Action Request (CAR), citing questionable water-supply practices for non-potable water and prohibiting the use of brine water for any activities involving human contact.
- KBR immediately ceased using brine water for activities involving human contact, and, as it indicated in its February 27 response to the CAR, has updated and enhanced its handling and processing of water provided to ablution units.
- In the wake of the Q-West water-quality reports, KBR has voluntarily adopted new and improved company-generated standards that reflect guidance provided by the Theater Preventive Medicine Officer. KBR's implementation of these new standards and requirements is ongoing.
- A survey of all DCMA QARs in Northern Iraq in early April 2006 indicated no evidence of systemic water-quality problems.

RECOMMENDATION: None. For information only.