

**Senate Democratic Policy Committee**

**“Are Burn Pits in Iraq and Afghanistan Making Our Soldiers Sick?”**

**Rick Lamberth  
Former KBR Employee  
Catonsville, MD**

Honorable members of the Committee: my name is Rick Lamberth. Beginning in 2003 I served in Kuwait, Iraq, and Afghanistan in both military and civilian capacities. While working for KBR, I witnessed KBR employees dump nuclear, biological, chemical decontamination materials and bio-medical waste, plastics, oil and tires into burn pits in direct violation of military regulations, federal guidelines, and the LOGCAP contract Statement of Work. Since returning from Iraq in July 2009, I have suffered from shortness of breath, spit up bloody mucus, skin rashes, and have been diagnosed with a non-organic sleeping disorder. I am here today to share with you what I witnessed at the burn pits, how it has affected my health, and KBR's efforts to keep this information from the public.

I've worked for KBR on the LOGCAP contract in different capacities since 2003. I served in Kuwait from 2003 to 2004 as a KBR Operations Manager and occasionally crossed over into Iraq to work on LOGCAP III Task Orders 59 and 89. From July 2004 to July 2005, I served in the United States Army as a Contracting Officer's Representative in Tikrit, Iraq. Beginning in January 2006 and ending in April 2006, I served as a LOGCAP Support Officer in Afghanistan. From August 2008 to July 2009, I worked in Baghdad as a J-4 Logistician for Joint Task Force 134 with direct contact for the LOGCAP contract and prime contractor, KBR.

Under the LOGCAP contract, waste disposal by private contractors must comply with Army regulations, federal EPA, and the Defense Logistics Agency's regulations for waste and hazmat removal and disposal. The contract states that work must comply with federal, state, and local requirements concerning hazard identification and control activities. These activities include surveys, hazard assessments, training, medical monitoring, worker protection, occupant notification, and proper solid waste disposal. Army regulations require that waste management at Army installations outside the continental United States must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act. These regulations require that facilities be designed, operated, and maintained so as to protect the health and safety of service members, family members, civilian work force, and contractors. Solid waste management at these facilities must be in accordance with the Solid Waste Disposal Act (SWDA) as well as all applicable regulations and requirements of the EPA.

The LOGCAP contract Statement of Work outlined more specifically how waste was to be handled at military installations in Iraq and Afghanistan. The LOGCAP Statement of Work explicitly conforms to Army Technical Bulletin 593 (Guidelines for Field Waste Management), which allows for the use of burn pits "only in emergency situations until approved incinerators can be obtained." Additionally, the Statement of Work further provides that any surface burning or "burn pits" must minimize the environmental effects on the base camp. It also requires that the "contractor shall minimize any type of smoke exposures to the camp population." Certain hazardous waste materials are specifically prohibited from being disposed of in burn pits, including PCBs and nuclear, medical and biological waste. Guidelines also prohibit disposal of petroleum, oils, solvents and lubricants in burn pits.

I saw KBR employees burn all of these items in burn pits in Iraq. From as close as ten feet away, I saw nuclear, biological, and medical waste, including bloody cotton gauze, plastics, tires, petroleum cans, oil and lubricants thrown into burn pits. Vermin, wild dogs, and jackals would roam the pits, carrying off debris. I personally witnessed this type of activity occurring in Iraq at camps at Balad, Taji, Tikrit, Kirkuk, Camp Bucca and Camp Cropper and in Afghanistan at Bagram Airfield and Camp Phoenix, all among the largest bases we operate in these theaters.

The burn pits emitted plumes of smoke and gave off a foul smell. You could see mile-high clouds of smoke coming from the pits. Sometimes the smoke was light but mostly it was dark black. The ash that came from the pits looked like burned notebook paper and fell like a black, sooty snowfall. The ash covered buildings and the ground like pollen dust. Soot from the pits would cover your clothes and stick to the walls of buildings.

The burn pits varied in size and location. At Camp Speicher, there were six burn pits while I was there. During 2004 and 2006, my estimation is that there were a minimum of 100 burn pits operating in Iraq and at least 30 in Afghanistan. At Camp Speicher, one of the pits was 25 feet by 25 feet and about 50 to 60 feet deep. KBR built the pit upwind from the living quarters, so all smoke traveled downwind to where soldiers were living, which in some cases was as close as one quarter of a mile.

This was in violation of the LOGCAP statement of work and Army regulations. KBR was supposed to site burn pits downwind from living quarters. KBR routinely ignored this

guidance. Instead of consulting a Health and Safety Engineer, they would just choose a site out of expediency. If done right, it would have only taken a day to do the proper wind flow analysis.

By continuing to use burn pits and claiming that these sites are “expeditionary,” KBR is able to drag out the life of the LOGCAP III contract and continue to get taxpayer dollars. If KBR can convince DoD that the sites are still expeditionary, they get to rollover the existing LOGCAP III contract.

As a LOGCAP Operations Manager, it was my duty to report to KBR management when the company was in violation of guidelines and the contract Statement of Work. I witnessed burn pit violations on a weekly basis. When I tried to report violations, I was told by the head of KBR’s Health Safety and Environment division to shut up and keep it to myself. At one point, KBR management threatened to sue me for slander if I spoke out about these violations.

KBR was able to get away with this because the Army never enforced the applicable standards. KBR’s Project Controls Department also kept their information hidden. During one visit by a representative from DCMA, I heard someone from Project Controls state that it was her job to keep DCMA away from the books during the inspection. KBR management would brag that they could get away with doing anything they wanted because the Army could not function without them. KBR figured that even if they did get caught, they had already made more than enough money to pay any fines and still make a profit.

Since returning home in July, I have suffered the health effects of burn pit exposure. Before this, I had always been healthy. I joined the military straight out of high school, where I had played three different sports. Since returning home in July, I have suffered from a number of respiratory problems related to the exposure. Now the military will not pay for my medical care. They claim that these conditions are EPTS -- existed prior to service.

I am testifying here today to let you know that we cannot wait one more day to shut down these burn pits and give proper medical treatment to everyone who has been exposed. We must also stop this from ever happening again. Thank you for your time and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.