

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

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March 9, 2010

Ray Mabus, Secretary
U.S. Department of the Navy
1200 Navy Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20350-1200

Dear Secretary Mabus:

For the past two years, the Investigations and Oversight Subcommittee has been reviewing scientific studies on the human health effects of toxic exposures conducted by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR). This review has included a continuing evaluation of ATSDR's role in assessing the health effects to Marines and their families from exposure to toxic substances while in service at Camp LeJeune. ATSDR's most notable work product in this area was a 1997 report on health effects at the Camp.

In 1985, a contractor that had tested drinking water wells at Camp LeJeune in July of 1984 told Marine Corps offices that those tests revealed that one of the wells used by the majority of the residents at Camp LeJeune contained a number of volatile organic compounds, including benzene, trichloroethylene (TCE) and 1,2-dichloroethylene. This well had benzene levels of 380 ug/L which "far exceeds the 10^{-5} human health risk level . . .; therefore, the use of this well should be discontinued immediately." The contractor indicated that the contamination most likely came from a leaking fuel tank farm and that the level of contamination had remained relatively constant in later sampling.¹

Benzene is a known carcinogen, and any credible human health effects study would address its potential impact on persons exposed, especially children. However, by the time ATSDR began its study in the mid-1990s, the documentation on benzene levels apparently was not been included in the records provided to ATSDR. It is unclear whether this loss resulted from a deliberate decision by Marine officials and their contractors or was inadvertent. However, the result was that neither ATSDR nor the Government Accounting Office (GAO), which did a subsequent 2007 review of ATSDR's work, addressed the potential health impacts of this carcinogen on the former Camp LeJeune residents exposed to this chemical.

¹ "Evaluation of Data from First Round of Verification Sample Collection and Analysis: Confirmation Study to Determine Existence and Possible Migration of Specific Chemicals *in Situ*, Marine Corps Base, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina" Environmental Science and Engineering, Inc., Gainesville, Florida, January 1985, pp. 2-35 and 2-38. The well was actually closed in November of 1984, after receiving sampling results from the contractor. General Account Office, "Defense Health Care: Activities Related to Past Drinking Water Contamination, GAO-07-276, May 2007, p. 27

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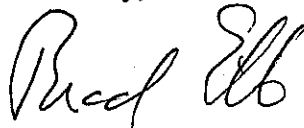
Recently, a select set of documents from a large Navy database concerning the Camp LeJeune contamination has become available. The password-protected database in which these records are housed is apparently called the "UST [Underground Storage Tank] Management Web Portal" and is maintained by the Naval Facilities Engineering Command (NAVFAC) at Camp LeJeune by the contractor Catlin Engineers & Scientists. The Subcommittee understands that the Navy has in just the last year given ATSDR access to this collection. The released documents from that database, one of which is quoted above, raise questions about what Camp LeJeune officials knew regarding the presence and amount of benzene in the facility's water supply and during what time frame.

To assist the Subcommittee in its continuing work in this area, I request that the Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight be provided access to the Navy database mentioned above by 5 p.m. on Monday, March 15, 2010. In addition, please provide the Subcommittee with an index or list of all records maintained in this database. Finally, please provide a complete list of all of the databases, repositories or other specific records collections that contain any records related to environmental exposures at Camp LeJeune or any human health effects from potential toxic exposures or contamination at Camp LeJeune and housed or maintained by the U.S. Navy, any of its subordinate commands or its contractors.

If your staff has any questions or need additional information, please have your staff contact Edith Holleman, Subcommittee staff counsel, at (202) 225-8459, or Douglas Pasternak, Subcommittee professional staff member, at (202) 226-8892.

Your prompt attention to this matter is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,



BRAD MILLER
Chairman
Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight

cc: Rep. Paul Broun
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight