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MCB CAMP LEJUENE
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LETTER AND RECORD REQUEST FROM THE U S HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY REGARDING WELL 602 MCB CAMP
LEJEUNE NC

3/18/2010

U S HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

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

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March 18, 2010

Dr. Thomas R. Frieden, MD, MPH
Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
Administrator, Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR)
1600 Clifton Road NE
Atlanta, Georgia 30333

Dear Dr. Frieden:

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 the U.S. Marine Corps base at Camp LeJeune in North Carolina. There have been numerous reports of unusual levels of leukemia, male breast cancer, and other cancers, still births and birth defects among former LeJeune residents.

In 1985, a contractor that had tested drinking water wells at Camp LeJeune in July of 1984 told Marine Corps officials that those tests revealed that the wells contained a number of volatile organic compounds, including extremely high levels of benzene, that posed a serious human health risk. The contractor recommended that use of Supply Well 602, in which samples contained 380 parts per billion of benzene, 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. Other wells with high levels of trichloroethylene (TCE), tetrachloroethylene (PCE) and 1-2 dichloroethylene (DCE) were also closed in 1984 and 1985.²

In 1989, Camp LeJeune was listed on the National Priorities List of Superfund sites by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the result of both soil and groundwater testing

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.

² Department of the Navy, Memorandum from Utilities Systems General Foreman to Director, Utilities Branch, entitled "Information Concerning Raw Water Wells; Request for," July 27, 1987, p. 1.

done previously. Several areas of the base – which was home to almost 100,000 military personnel and dependents – were contaminated with toxic materials from leaking fuel tanks, spills, maintenance facilities and a near-by dry cleaning establishment.³

In January of 1997, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) issued a public health assessment of Camp LeJeune as part of the Superfund process. However, the study did not include the potential human health effects of benzene contamination of the drinking water supply consumed by Marines and their families at Camp LeJeune. According to the 1997 assessment, ATSDR did not evaluate the potential human health impact of Supply Well 602 and the Hadnot Point Industrial Area which housed the leaking fuel supply tanks because it was not one of the “Installation Restoration Program.” sites.⁴ Additionally, according to ATSDR,

A separate investigation of the Hadnot Point Industrial Area was conducted. Therefore, it was not included in the Operable Unit Installation Restoration Program. Groundwater contamination (benzene, etc.) was detected in the base drinking water supply well 602. This well has not been used since 1984. Groundwater contamination is being monitored and tracked under several base programs.⁵

In 2009, despite these 1997 statements indicating knowledge of the presence of benzene in a drinking water well, ATSDR withdrew its health assessment, claiming in one document that it did not know the extent of exposure to benzene from Supply Well 602,⁶ and in another that it “assumed, incorrectly at the time, that well # 602 was not used to supply contaminated drinking water to residents of Camp LeJeune.”⁷ A new assessment underway at ATSDR is intended to address the potential human health effects of exposure to benzene and other volatile organic compounds from the Hadnot Point drinking water system on the base’s population.⁸

To further the Subcommittee’s understanding of why the effects of benzene exposure were not addressed by ATSDR in 1997, and pursuant to Rules X and XI of the United States house of Representatives and Rule 3 (a) (5) of the Committee on Science and Technology, I am requesting that the Subcommittee be provided with the following records, as defined in the Attachment:

1. All records regarding the original scope, substance and limitations of ATSDR’s planned public health investigation at Camp LeJeune.

³ ATSDR, “Public Health Assessment, US Marine Corps Camp LeJeune Military Reservation, Camp LeJeune, Onslow County, North Carolina, CERCLIS NO. NC6170022580.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 11.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

⁶ ATSDR, “May 8, 2009 Update to the 1997 Camp LeJeune Public Health Assessment,” assessed at http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/HAC/PHA/usmclejeune/clej_toc.html

⁷ ATSDR, “1997 Public Health Assessment (PHA) (FAQs), July 6, 2009; assessed at http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/sites/lejeune/faq_pha.html;

⁸ ATSDR, “May 8, 2009 Update,” *supra*.

1. All records related to the elimination of the Hadnot Point Industrial Area (Site 22) from the sites included in the Operable Unit Installation Restoration Program, the Superfund clean-up at Camp LeJeune and the sites evaluated by ATSDR for its 1997 Public Health Assessment.
2. All records related to ATSDR's decision to limit its Camp LeJeune 1997 Public Health Assessment to only sites named in the Operable Unit Installation Restoration Program.
3. Any and all records regarding benzene that were available to ATSDR or in ATSDR's possession prior to its publication of the 1997 public health assessment on Camp LeJeune. Please be sure to include all relevant correspondence, including e-mails, memorandums, records of activity, initial or draft reports, or any other records relating to benzene contamination at Camp LeJeune with, to, from or between ATSDR and/or Centers for Disease Control employees, U.S. military personnel, private contractors or laboratories, the Environmental Protection Agency or officials of the State of North Carolina.

Please deliver these records to the Subcommittee's offices in room B-374 of the Rayburn House Office Building by 5 p.m. on Friday, April 9, 2010. If your staff has any questions or needs additional information, please contact Edith Holleman, Subcommittee counsel, at (202) 225-8459 or Douglas Pasternak, Subcommittee professional staff member, at (202) 226-8892.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



BRAD MILLER
Chairman
Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight

Attachment

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

ATTACHMENT

1. The term "records" is to be construed in the broadest sense and shall mean any written or graphic material, however produced or reproduced, of any kind or description, consisting of the original and any non-identical copy (whether different from the original because of notes made on or attached to such copy or otherwise) and drafts and both sides thereof, whether printed or recorded electronically or magnetically or stored in any type of data bank, including, but not limited to, the following: correspondence, memoranda, records, summaries of personal conversations or interviews, minutes or records of meetings or conferences, opinions or reports of consultants, projections, statistical statements, drafts, contracts, agreements, purchase orders, invoices, confirmations, telegraphs, telexes, agendas, books, notes, pamphlets, periodicals, reports, studies, evaluations, opinions, logs, diaries, desk calendars, appointment books, tape recordings, video recordings, e-mails, voice mails, computer tapes, or other computer stored matter, magnetic tapes, microfilm, microfiche, punch cards, all other records kept by electronic, photographic, or mechanical means, charts, photographs, notebooks, drawings, plans, inter-office communications, intra-office and intra-departmental communications, transcripts, checks and canceled checks, bank statements, ledgers, books, records or statements of accounts, and papers and things similar to any of the foregoing, however denominated.
2. The terms "relating," "relate," or "regarding" as to any given subject means anything that constitutes, contains, embodies, identifies, deals with, or is in any manner whatsoever pertinent to that subject, including but not limited to records concerning the preparation of other records.