

Senate Democratic Policy Committee Hearing

“An Oversight Hearing on Whether Halliburton Has Failed to Provide Clean Water to United States Troops in Iraq”

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Senator Dorgan and other members of the Policy Committee, thank you for allowing IAVA to take part in this testimony today. My name is Richard Murphy, and I am here on behalf of IAVA, the nation's first and largest organization of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans, and the civilian supporters of those troops and veterans. The mission of IAVA is to ensure the enactment of policies that properly provide for our troops and veterans, keep our military strong, and guarantee our national security for the purpose of a stronger America. We uniquely empower Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans to use their credibility and experiences to speak truth to power, shape public opinion, and place a priority on issues of national security. Our Follow the Money Project is investigating where the money appropriated for the Iraq and Afghanistan wars is going.

We are here today because of our deep concerns over KBR's water quality problems in Iraq. As this Committee and others have shown, KBR appears to have been derelict in its duty to provide clean and safe water to our troops, not just at Ramadi where this problem was first identified, but, as according to the “Granger Report,” to all the sites where KBR was paid to provide clean water.

I served in Iraq from 2003 to 2004, and could have been exposed to the problem that is being discussed today. I never imagined that I would have had to question the quality of the water at our bases in Iraq.

Our Follow the Money Project's Chief Investigator, Dina Rasor, has been working closely with Ben Carter, the courageous KBR employee who first identified this problem and then went public when his superiors at KBR tried to hide the problem. We are glad that this committee and now the DOD Inspector General are continuing to investigate this problem. We will be following the progress to insure that KBR permanently fixes the problem and that the government recoups any money where KBR failed to perform its contractual obligations. We are extremely disappointed that this has happened to our troops, especially considering that KBR's LOGCAP contract averaged \$425 million a month last year.

We are here today to address the aftermath of this problem. Although the extent of the problem is not thoroughly known because of the lack of documentation by KBR, there is a possibility that a widespread group of troops could have been exposed to this contaminated water. We are gathering information to see what contaminants were in the water, and have posted some preliminary information on our website, www.iava.org, to help inform the Troops and their families. We will add to that information as more is known.

This should not be construed as an attempt to raise the alarm unnecessarily, but we do believe that any soldier suffering persistent gastrointestinal problems or infection should consider the possibility that these problems are related to his or her exposure to contaminated water. We have posted a 1991 DOD report (Filename: 84429041 PATHFINDER RECORD NUMBER: 29041 GENDATE: 950623 HEALTH THREATS NORTHERN IRAQ (U)) that lists the health threats in Northern Iraq, including a list of potential pathogens that the troops might have encountered due to their exposure to KBR's water. We have also posted a DOD technical bulletin on sanitary control and surveillance of Field Water Supplies (TB MED 577) and the KBR Granger Report that is referenced today. We want the troops and veterans to educate themselves as to potential problems, what may have caused these problems, and what procedures should have been followed by KBR.

While we are not trying to give out medical advice, we do believe that any troop seeking medical treatment for unexplained gastrointestinal or infection problems should be aware of the fact that he or she could have been exposed to extremely contaminated water.

We will continue to update our website as we get more detailed information that can help the troops and their families with this problem. We are also asking troops and veterans of OIF/OEF to send us any stories of unusual or persistent gastrointestinal illness or infection so that we can continue to assist in the investigation of this negligence.

This exposure should not have happened, and IAVA urges Congress and the Executive Branch to demand a greater level of accountability from KBR and all other private contractors who work on behalf of our troops and veterans in Iraq and across the globe. We will be continuing to search for information on this disturbing problem, and we will share our findings with the government.

I am happy to answer any questions. Thank you very much.