

ORAL STATEMENT

SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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COLONEL CHARLES J. FIALA, JR.

COMMANDER

BALTIMORE DISTRICT, U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEER

Good morning, Chairwoman Morella and Members of the Subcommittee. I am Colonel Charles J. Fiala, Jr., Commander of the Baltimore District of the Corps of Engineers. Thank you for your invitation to testify before this committee. Last July I testified about our past work at the site. Today I would like to discuss our recent progress at this site and at other FUDS in the District of Columbia.

In the past year, we have made significant progress in the Spring Valley project on three fronts. First, our project team has been extremely busy defining the scope of DOD contamination at the site and removing hazardous materials found. Second, the project partners – that is, the Corps, EPA Region 3 and DC Health – have made great strides in our working relationship. All three parties agree that their effectiveness continues to improve as they move forward in openness and cooperation, drawing on the strengths each brings to the fight. Lastly, we have actively solicited community input on key project decisions and increased residents' opportunities to get involved.

Fieldwork in the last year has greatly reduced uncertainties about the extent and location of arsenic contamination at the site. We have nearly completed the site-wide soil sampling effort developed by the partners in the spring of 2001. To date, we have sampled 95% of the 1,158 residential properties at the site. On the map before you, the areas shaded in green and light yellow have already been sampled. Based on the sampling results, we expect to conduct soil removals at approximately 160 properties. Besides arsenic, the sampling results have not identified any other chemicals of concern at the site.

In addition to delineating the scope of soil contamination, we are reducing the hazards associated with this contamination. Since last July, we have removed arsenic-contaminated soil at the American University Child Development Center playground and just began soil removal at the adjacent grounds and intramural field to address those hazards before the children return to their facility. We are also beginning the first soil removals at residential properties with arsenic contamination.

The Corps has reduced hazards associated with buried ordnance and chemical warfare material at the site. We safely investigated a large burial pit straddling two Glenbrook Road properties. This investigation yielded more than 370 ordnance items, a small fraction of which contain chemical warfare agents, and over 50 sealed bottles, many of which also contained agents. We conducted this work in a safe manner, ensuring no chemicals were released.

Regarding the status of the project partnership, I am confident the Corps, EPA and DC Health will continue to forge an effective working relationship. We work together on management, technical and community issues. Let me give you a few examples of what I mean.

Last fall, the Corps tested several updated instruments used to detect potential ordnance burials. From the results, the partners selected equipment for use in future investigations. Concurrently, the partners developed a site evaluation scheme to identify and prioritize areas for ordnance investigation. This led to the identification of the highest priority areas, many of which have now been surveyed with the new equipment.

As another example, the EPA took a leadership role in proposing a sufficiently protective, site-wide arsenic cleanup level. In reviewing this proposal, the partners sought input from two advisory groups, the DC Mayor's Spring Valley Scientific Advisory Panel and the project's Restoration Advisory Board (RAB). Their input proved very helpful in the partners' recent adoption of the cleanup standard.

Establishment of the RAB highlights the third area of progress. Our interaction with the RAB, participation in public meetings and our daily conversations with individual residents have all helped us fully appreciate the community's diverse concerns. Important decisions are now routinely discussed with the RAB and interested members of the community. The result is that the partners now have a better understanding of community issues as we plan future work.

Lastly, I would like to discuss the status of other FUDS in the District of Columbia. We have identified 59 sites in DC. Of these, 45 sites have received a classification of "No DOD Action Indicated" (NDAI) and 11 sites are ineligible under the FUDS program. We have current response activities at the remaining three sites: Spring Valley, Camp Simms, and Catholic University. All three were NDAIs originally, but this classification is always open to reevaluation if warranted by new information.

In conclusion, we have worked hard during the past year to reduced uncertainties associated with the Spring Valley FUDS by defining the extent of DOD contamination and solidifying the partnership's collaboration. To succeed at this challenging site, we will continue its synergistic partnership with the EPA and the District of Columbia, seeking full and open consultation with the community. As always, we remain committed to aggressively responding to the risks associated with former Department of Defense activities at the Spring Valley FUDS.

I would like to thank the subcommittee for the opportunity to speak and I am prepared to answer your questions regarding the Corps' efforts at this site.