

**ORAL STATEMENT
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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Madam Chairwoman and members of the subcommittee, I am pleased to have this opportunity to appear before you to discuss the Spring Valley Formerly Used Defense Site and the GAO report. I would like to update you on the progress the Army has made over the past year and reinforce our commitment to protect the health and safety of the residents of Spring Valley.

I believe Spring Valley is a safe place to live and raise a family. There is no doubt that munitions, both conventional and chemical, pose a risk. However, because they are buried and not widely scattered, these buried munitions are contained and less likely to be encountered by the public. It is true that we still need to do additional work to identify any remaining buried munitions. To address this concern, the Army, EPA, and DC Health developed a plan to evaluate potential ordnance sites and to identify for subsequent action on a priority basis. The Army will take whatever action necessary to safely recover any munitions.

Although arsenic is present in soil at Spring Valley, ninety percent of the properties tested this past year had arsenic below the clean up level. At the remaining 10% of properties, the risk is related to long-term exposure. But, to deal with this remaining risk, we have a plan in place, we know where the arsenic is located, we have communicated the hazard to the public, and we are on site and will be cleaning up to community agreed levels.

Since the last time I appeared before you in July 2001, the Army has made significant progress in characterizing arsenic contamination in soil, adopted a property wide cleanup level, and we located and safely excavated a historic burial pit on Glenbrook Road. None of this progress would have been possible without the support of the community, and the cooperation between the Partners, which include the Army, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the District of Columbia Department of Health.

At the time of the last hearing, and at the request of the community, the Army had recently initiated a comprehensive effort to sample all properties in the Spring Valley community for arsenic. To date, over 90% of the approximately 1500 residential and non-residential properties have been sampled and we now understand the extent of arsenic contamination in the soil. It is important to note that 90% of those properties we have sampled require no further action. There are approximately 160 properties where we will need to take removal action, which will begin next month on a priority risk basis. I believe we have made great progress since last year's hearing and have significantly reduced uncertainty about the extent of contamination.

The agreement on a property wide cleanup level for arsenic was a major milestone for the project. Since there is no District of Columbia standard for arsenic in soil, the EPA provided leadership in proposing a clean up level that was both logical and provided a consistent level of protection throughout the community. It was adopted by the Partners and supported by the Mayor's Scientific Advisory Panel and the community. As a result, we have an established protection level and will begin cleanup at the first group of properties next month.

Our success in this area is due to active participation by each of the partners in the decision-making process. I believe the relationship between the partners is a model of collaboration and cooperation that should be applied at other clean up sites.

During the past year, after extensive effort, the Army was successful in locating a World War I burial pit that contained a large cache of munitions. The Army has safely recovered most of the contents and we are working to gain property access to complete the excavation. This operation turned out to be much larger than anticipated, and required considerably more resources and time to complete than originally planned. Again, the Army demonstrated our commitment to the safety of the community by re-programming resources within the FUDS program to address this unforeseen requirement.

The Army has committed to funding the clean up at levels that will allow completion over the next five years. Our plan represents a balance between national program priorities and the needs at Spring Valley.

I would now like to briefly provide my thoughts on the GAO report on the Spring Valley cleanup. In my review of the draft report, I found the report to be a positive testimony to the progress and the complexities of the Spring Valley clean up project. I think it is important to note that the uncertainties at Spring Valley are inherent to any environmental clean-up project where our understanding of site conditions has changed so dramatically over time. I believe the Army has approached the clean up of this site in a good faith, systematic manner. Where there are uncertainties, the partners have worked together to address them and will continue to do so.

I want to emphasize that the number one priority in all decisions made at Spring Valley is the health and safety of the community and our workers. We value the participation of the restoration advisory board and are striving to keep them informed as well as other community members.

The residents of Spring Valley can count on the Army to keep them well-informed of our activities there. Throughout the process, we have kept open the lines of communication through public meetings, newsletters, the Corps' web site, direct interaction with residents and other public releases of information.

We are committed to an open, continued dialogue on our activities at the site, and appreciate the feedback we have received from the community. It is our intention to continue our policy that whatever we know about the site, we will share with the community in as timely a manner as possible.

Madame Chairwoman, I wish to thank you and the subcommittee for its interest and support of our efforts at Spring Valley. I look forward to working with you toward successful clean up of the site.

Thank you.