



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Susan Sullam (Cardin), 410-960-2440 (cell)

Melissa Schwartz (Mikulski) 202-228-1122

June 30, 2008

***BOXER AGREES TO CARDIN, MIKULSKI CALL FOR
HEARINGS ON DoD REFUSAL TO CLEANUP
HAZARDOUS WASTE***

EPA cites problems at Fort Meade, other military installations

WASHINGTON – **U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer** (D-CA), Chairwoman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, today agreed to a request from **U.S. Senators Benjamin L. Cardin** and **Barbara A. Mikulski** (both D-MD) for a Senate oversight hearing on the Department of Defense’s (DoD) refusal to comply with the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) regulations to clean up toxic chemicals that pose an “imminent and substantial” threat to residents on and near Ft. George G. Meade and two other installations in the nation. The two other facilities cited are McGuire Air Force Base in New Jersey and Tyndall Air Force Base in Florida.

A story in today’s Washington Post outlined DoD resistance to EPA efforts to clean up the three military installations that pose an immediate threat to people on site and nearby residents, and the Pentagon’s refusal to sign agreements required by law regarding 12 other military installations on the Superfund list of the most polluted hazardous waste sites in the nation.

“The Department of Defense is an important part of many communities across the country, like Ft. Meade, and they must be a responsible neighbor,” said **Senator Cardin**, a member of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. “DoD is not above the law and is not exempt from EPA regulations. The sites outlined in the Washington Post article pose an immediate hazard to the health and safety of Americans, and I look forward to oversight hearings to ensure DoD’s immediate compliance with EPA’s cleanup efforts.”

“This issue affects not only Fort Meade -- but the thousands of people living, working, praying and playing on base and in nearby communities. I am very disappointed in the Defense Department’s lack of response to the EPA’s orders. We need to cut through the red tape and make sure that this clean up is conducted in the sunshine,” said **Senator Mikulski**. “I am proud to team up with my colleague Ben Cardin to urge the DOD to remove the chokepoints holding up this important process.”

In a letter earlier today to Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA), Senators Cardin and Mikulski called for congressional hearings into the refusal of DoD to comply with environmental regulations. The text of the letter follows:

Dear Chairman Boxer:

We are concerned about reports in the *Washington Post* that the Department of Defense is blocking efforts to have the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) oversee the clean up of hazardous waste at the Fort George G. Meade installation in Anne Arundel County, Maryland. The *Post* story details similar problems at McGuire Air Force Base in New Jersey and Tyndall Air Force Base in Florida.

EPA has the responsibility for implementing the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), commonly known as Superfund. The Fort Meade site was added to the Superfund's National Priorities List (NPL) after investigations revealed contaminants including solvents, pesticides, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), heavy metals, waste fuels and waste oils as well as unexploded ordnance. The site was added to the NPL a decade ago on July 28, 1998.

In recent months EPA has negotiated unsuccessfully with the Department of Defense to address continuing hazardous waste issues at the Fort. Solid and hazardous wastes still exist on site and they present an imminent and substantial endangerment to the health of our citizens. EPA, relying on the authority it has under CERCLA, is requiring the Army to assess the nature and extent of continuing contamination on site, to determine the appropriate corrective measures, and to implement them under EPA's strict oversight. The Army has refused to comply with Superfund requirements and has also blocked efforts to have the cleanup proceed under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) authority.

CERCLA and RCRA are the two bedrock laws protecting America from the dangers associated with hazardous wastes. To have the Department of Defense openly blocking these laws from being fairly and fully implemented is a direct challenge to the integrity of these statutes. You have been a forceful advocate for these laws over the years, and we turn to you now to help us address this critical problem. We respectfully request that you schedule an oversight hearing on this matter as soon as practical. They need to come before the Committee and explain the Department's refusal to abide by these laws, which are under the jurisdiction of your Committee. The Department must recognize that it has to comply with the same cleanup laws that apply to every other organization in the country.

Thank you for your careful consideration of this request. We look forward to working with you on this vital issue that affects the health and well-being of our citizens.

---##--