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CONTACT: Susan Sullam, 410-962-4436 or
410-960-2440 (cell)

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SENATOR CARDIN TOURS FT. MEADE SUPERFUND SITES WITH HEAD OF EPA AND DoD OFFICIALS

*Senator Pushes all Parties to Finalize a Formal
Cleanup Agreement by Summer*

FT. MEADE, MD -- U.S. Senator Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Lisa Jackson, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Environmental Issues Addison Davis, Congressman John Sarbanes and Maryland Department of the Environment Secretary Shari Wilson today toured three of the most seriously contaminated sites at Ft. George G. Meade, with the federal agencies committing to put a long-standing dispute behind them and to finalize a formal agreement to remediate the Superfund sites that are located on or near Ft. Meade.

“I am pleased that after nine years, we have a renewed commitment to reach a formal agreement regarding the cleanup of contaminated sites at Ft. Meade,” said Senator Cardin, who organized the tour and is a member of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee (EPW). “The agreement, which I am optimistic will be finalized this summer, will recognize EPA’s role as ultimate arbiter of cleanup standards and provide a framework for the Army to complete all remaining work at the Fort. Today’s visit by EPA Administrator Jackson and by Deputy Assistant Secretary Davis allowed them to see first-hand the contamination that still exists. And in our discussions, there was a clear commitment by all parties to ensure the health and safety of Ft. Meade and the surrounding community.”

In 1998, EPA listed Ft. Meade on the National Priorities List (Superfund), which requires a Federal Facilities Agreement (FFA) to be signed to provide a legal agreement governing the cleanup. Under the Superfund law, the FFA grants EPA final authority over cleanup decisions, but the Department of Defense (DoD) resisted efforts to negotiate the document. In May 2008, the DoD sought a legal opinion from the Department of Justice that it could evade the requirements of the Superfund law.

The Ft. Meade contamination includes 14 contaminated sites on the military campus and three sites on the property that were transferred from Ft. Meade to the Patuxent Research Refuge property. Contaminated groundwater that has migrated off base will also be addressed. Cleanup activities have been on-going, but community members have expressed concern that without an FFA, the work has lacked appropriate supervision by the EPA.

After nine years, a FFA has never been signed. In August 2007, EPA issued a unilateral enforcement order requiring the Army to address all pollution “releases” which may present an imminent and substantial endangerment to health or the environment at Ft. Meade and adjoining properties.

At Senator Cardin’s request, on September 18, 2008, the Environment and Public Works Committee held an oversight hearing on cleanups at federal facilities under the Superfund law. At the hearing, Senator Cardin pressed Wayne Army, Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Installation and Environment, U.S. Department of Defense, to address the cleanup at Fort Meade and to agree to EPA oversight. Secretary Wilson also testified at the hearing, stressing Maryland’s concerns about the pace and scope of the cleanup. In December 2008, the State of Maryland filed a citizen suit seeking to compel the Army to comply with the EPA Order.

Senator Cardin, Administrator Jackson, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army Davis, Congressman Sarbanes and Secretary Wilson toured three of the most seriously contaminated sites at Ft. George G. Meade, which included:

- The Manor View Dump area, where 20 homes have been abandoned because of unsafe conditions;
- The Old Post Laundry, where there are at least four different contaminated groundwater sites; and,
- The Closed Sanitary Landfill site located on the eastern edge of the Fort property, which is considered a potential source of contaminated water recently found in monitoring wells in the neighboring community.

*“Ft. Meade has a long and proud history and today marks another positive chapter,” said **Senator Cardin**, who also chairs EPW’s Water and Wildlife Subcommittee. “The efforts by a few at the Pentagon in recent years to resist EPA cleanup requirements are a thing of the past.”*

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