

NEWS RELEASE
Energy and Commerce Committee Democrats
Congressman John D. Dingell, Ranking Member

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Army Corps of Engineers FAILS to Adequately Investigate

Potential Hazards at Formerly Utilized Defense Sites Nationwide

Washington, D.C. - Representative John D. Dingell, Ranking Member of the Committee on Energy and Commerce, today released a General Accounting Office (GAO) report that finds the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers lacked an adequate basis for its determination that almost 1,500 Formerly Utilized Defense Sites nationwide were not contaminated and needed no further cleanup or study. GAO found that in many cases the Corps overlooked or dismissed information in its possession when it looked for evidence of potential hazards. Nor did the Corps even visit hundreds of sites on which it made determinations.

"Clearly, as this report shows, the Corps' slipshod investigative work cannot be trusted to protect the health and well-being of our environment or of our citizens," Dingell said. "The Corps' oversights of mortar rounds, leaking underground tanks and rockets makes one wonder what exactly they consider a hazard."

GAO found problems in all nine Corps districts it visited, covering properties from New York to California and from Florida to Alaska. In addition to the examples set forth in the report, at the Spring Valley site in Washington, D.C., the Corps is now back cleaning up unexploded mortars, chemical munitions, and arsenic contaminated soil at a cost exceeding \$125 million after twice declaring the site needed no further cleanup action. Also, the site at the Bartow property in Florida was declared clean by the Corps until a rocket buried along the local airport ignited during a grass

fire and shot across the field.

"The GAO report shows that no state or territory can be assured that the Department of Defense and the Corps has identified all of the contamination at former defense sites," said Dingell. "It is critical that the GAO continue its investigations into the hazards associated with cleanup of unexploded munitions."