

Kelly Dreyer's Oral Statement for House Energy & Commerce Hearing

Chairman Stupak, Congressman Whitfield, distinguished Members of the Subcommittee; thank you for the opportunity to appear before you and participate in this hearing regarding past contamination in two of Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune's drinking water systems. My name is Kelly Dreyer and I am an environmental engineer and the installation restoration program manager at Headquarters, Marine Corps. As the installation restoration program manager, my job is to establish Marine Corps policy on cleanup issues. In addition, I serve as liaison between the Marine Corps, and the Naval Facilities Engineering Command, which executes the cleanup program for the Navy and Marine Corps, as well as other agencies involved in the cleanup program, particularly when issues cannot be resolved at the installation level.

As Major General Dickerson stated, the health and welfare of our Marines and their families is very important to the Marine Corps. As part of the cleanup program, all military installations on the National Priorities List of hazardous waste sites, including Camp Lejeune which was listed in 1989, undergo a Public Health Assessment conducted by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) to determine if there are any current or past health concerns resulting from past practices.

My significant involvement in the Camp Lejeune past water issue began in 1997 when the Public Health Assessment for Camp Lejeune was being completed by ATSDR. The PHA concluded that adverse health effects as a result of the impacted water were unlikely in adults, but recommended a follow-on study of children in the womb, the most susceptible population to potential chemical impacts. At the time, I participated in meetings between health scientists of the Department of the Navy and ATSDR about how such a study might be designed. In 1999, the health study began as a survey to determine whether or not a statistically significant study population could be reached for a case-control study.

In 2000, ATSDR requested assistance from the Marine Corps to reach additional participants for the survey. At the time, the number of participants was approximately 6,500. ATSDR needed over 12,000 for a statistically valid study. Over the next year, I worked with other Headquarters Marine Corps and Department of Defense offices to develop and implement a communication strategy, which included two administrative messages to all Marines, press releases to over 3500 media outlets, searches of Marine Corps databases, and working with Department of Defense Privacy Office to enable the release of manpower information to ATSDR. As a result of this effort, ATSDR closed the survey in January 2002 after reaching 12,598 participants.

Since that time, I have been working with Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune to provide information requested by ATSDR for their water model and study activities. Although ATSDR has had full access to all information, sometimes such information is difficult to locate due to the fact that the records requested are over 20 years old and may have been destroyed or because offices have moved around the base. The Marine Corps recently hired a contractor to perform a comprehensive search of Camp Lejeune to provide a better confidence level that all relevant documents have been found. ATSDR has been provided access to all documents that were found. In addition, we have been working with agencies outside of the Marine Corps to ask them to provide information that is under their control.

I have personally spoken with numerous people who feel that they have been harmed by the impacted water. Their stories are emotionally compelling...That is one reason why we continue to support and fully cooperate with ATSDR and have funded the National Academy of Sciences study, because we all have a common goal: to determine if Camp Lejeune drinking water harmed our Marines and their families.

We are pleased to answer any questions you may have.