

Senate Democratic Policy Committee Hearing

“An Oversight Hearing on Whether Halliburton Has Failed to Provide Clean Water to United States Troops in Iraq”

Ken May

Former Halliburton Employee

January 23, 2006

My name is Ken May, and I am a retail manager in Louisville, Kentucky. From January 2005 to April 2005, I was an acting operations specialist in the KBR operations department at Camp Ar Ramadi, Iraq. My responsibilities in that position included daily, weekly, and monthly reports to both site management and the KBR project management office in Al Asad, Iraq; coordinating air and ground transportation with the military for KBR and VIP personnel; and performing payroll and other human resource functions. In my time with KBR, I also fulfilled a variety of other short-term duties and assignments

I became aware of water quality problems at the base on March 23, 2005, when Ben Carter asked me to instruct KBR personnel to leave their water running, which would assist with chlorination of the water distribution system. Ben told me that another KBR employee had reported a larva in his lavatory, which Ben had confirmed. I later learned from Harold Orr, who went by Mo, that Ben had discovered problems with the water.

In the days that followed, as I performed my regular duties, I heard rumors that KBR site management was still discussing the water quality problem. Mo told me that site management wasn't really addressing the issue, and suggested that they were simply trying to sweep it under the rug. I knew that Mo, our Health, Safety, and Environment coordinator, had other problems with site management, and specifically with site manager Suzanne Raku-Williams, so I didn't know how much credence to give what he told me about the water.

Within a few days, however, I learned from Ben that what Mo had said was in fact accurate: that the water had not been properly chlorinated, and that Ben had independently found a U.S. Government report that detailed contaminants and pathogenic organisms in the Euphrates River.

On March 26, 2005, senior KBR employee relations specialist Terence Copling came to Ar Ramadi to investigate unrelated complaints about site management. During his visit, Copling interviewed me about allegations that site management had knowingly and unnecessarily put employees in harm's way. More specifically, Copling was

investigating site management's retaliatory conduct toward employees who raised concerns about everything from our force protection shelters to health and safety issues.

In the course of that interview, I mentioned to Copling that, on top of everything else, we appeared to have a water contamination problem. Copling told me then that he would resolve the problem, meaning site management. No action was immediately forthcoming, although the site manager and chief of services were terminated within two months. Before then, however, they had succeeded in forcing their critics — including me, Ben, and Mo — to resign and leave Iraq. I have brought with me today Mo's letter of resignation, in which he expressed his disgust with site management.

After I returned to the States, I remained in contact with Ben. We were both concerned with the problems we had uncovered, and concerned as well about our own health and safety. After a barber at Ar Ramadi knicked the back of my neck with a razor, and after I had washed the cut in the sink, I developed a bad and sustained rash that I believed to be connected to the water. Both in Ar Ramadi and after my return to the States, I also experienced occasional but recurring gastrointestinal problems, comparable to food poisoning. I know many others who have experienced similar symptoms. Last but not least, since returning from Iraq, I have noticed vertical ridges in my fingernails, which I understand to be a possible indicator of various digestive or other health problems.

Because Ben has had continuing difficulty pursuing his own health claims with Halliburton and their insurer, AIG, I have chosen not to commit to a course of treatment until I know that I will be properly taken care of. I have recently moved to a new job in a new state, and cannot afford the time required to fight, as Ben has. I also believe that Halliburton knows that it exposed both its employees and American troops to contaminated water, and has a duty and responsibility to provide necessary testing and support. I do not believe they have done so.

Like Ben, I have remained in contact with former Halliburton colleagues still in Iraq. Last spring they informed me that, after my own departure in April 2005, the reports that Ben, Mo, and I had sent up the KBR chain of command led Wil Granger to investigate Ben's findings. In an e-mail forwarded to me by another KBR employee, Granger concluded, "Fact: We exposed a base camp population (military and civilian) to a water source that was not treated...The level of contamination was roughly 2x the normal contamination of untreated water from the Euphrates River." When asked how long the exposure may have lasted, Granger later wrote that the "exposure may have been occurring since the initial presence of KBR individuals at Ar Ramadi."

During my tenure at Ar Ramadi, I and many others observed repeated acts of poor behavior by site management and the project management office in Al Asad. The fact that these behavior patterns undermined essential checks and balances to ensure contract obligations came as no surprise to me. I, along with many others, observed on an almost daily basis how our KBR site management team made our presence more of a burden to the military than the essential resource that we should have been. The disregard for

essential health, safety and security measures, time card fraud, fraudulent documentation, and overbilling — not to mention the constant barrage of daily threats and retaliatory behavior from our leadership — made life at Ar Ramadi nearly unbearable.

Because of the ongoing unresolved problems at Ar Ramadi prior to discovery of water contamination, during discovery and ensuing investigations, and the continued cover-up after discovery to this day, immediate attention is required. The fact that Halliburton denies a water contamination problem ever existed is incredible, especially given that their own internal company documentation clearly indicates otherwise.

Had the project management office required site management to implement and track water analysis checks three times a day, as per the contract requirements at Ar Ramadi, not to mention countless other camps in Iraq, the issue of water contamination would have been identified immediately and corrective measures implemented. Instead, it is my belief that Halliburton officials knew of this problem long before the discovery at Ar Ramadi and weighed the costs of disclosing that information against their 1% - 3% cost-plus profit margin. Halliburton's continued denial and inaction has allowed nine more months to pass, possibly exposing thousands of military personnel and contractors to unnecessary risk. This in my mind borders on treasonous if not subversive conduct, which simply cannot be tolerated.

While aware of my own health concerns, both immediately and over the long term, I also realize that our troops in Iraq put their lives on the line every day. The least I can do, the least we as a nation can do — and certainly the least Halliburton can do — is to tell our troops the truth and to provide them with the resources that they expect and deserve.