

# Iraq Vets At Treatment Plant Asked To Get Exam

*KIMBERLY HEFLING Associated Press Writer — October 14, 2009*

WASHINGTON (AP) — Six years after nearly 1,200 U.S. soldiers in Iraq were potentially exposed to a sometimes deadly chemical linked to cancer, the military and Veterans Affairs Department have been tracking them down and asking them to get a medical exam.

The troops were protecting or in the area of workers hired by a subsidiary of the contractor, KBR Inc., based in Houston, to rebuild the Iraqi water treatment plant Qarmat Ali near Basra, Iraq. The chemical was sodium dichromate, and it had contaminated the area.

In June, The Associated Press chronicled the health problems of the soldiers who had served at the site. Sickness with symptoms ranging from chest pain to lung disease and even death among troops who served there have been blamed on exposure at the site.

KBR, which is facing at least five pending related lawsuits, denies wrongdoing. It says its conduct was governed by its contract with the U.S. military, which was to ensure work sites were free from environmental hazards. Once the contamination was found, it says it notified the Army and helped clean up the site.

The military is also asking the soldiers potentially exposed to enroll in a registry that is tracking such health problems, according to a Sept. 19 letter sent by then-Army Secretary Pete Geren to Sen. Byron Dorgan, D-N.D., which spells out the efforts to reach the troops.

Among those potentially exposed were about 600 members of the National Guard, primarily from West Virginia, Oregon, South Carolina and Indiana, Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki told Dorgan in a separate letter dated Oct. 8. Shinseki said veterans potentially exposed will receive an annual exam, including a chest radiograph every five years.

The letters were released by Dorgan's office.

**Source URL (retrieved on 07/28/2015 - 1:53pm):**

<http://www.chem.info/news/2009/10/iraq-vets-treatment-plant-asked-get-exam>