KEN SALAZAR
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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

WASHINGTON, DC:
702 HART SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510
(202) 224-5852

COLORADO:
2300 15TH STREET
SUITE 450
DENVER, CO 80202
(303) 455-7600

http://www.salazar.senate.gov

September 25, 2007

The Honorable John Young
Under Secretary of Defense (Acting)
Acquisition, Technology and Logistics
3010 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-3010

Dear Secretary Young:

I am writing regarding the method of disposal of hydrolysate at the Pueblo Chemical Depot in Colorado.

In recent years the Department of Defense has commissioned several studies on the potential cost savings of shipping hydrolysate, a byproduct of neutralizing mustard agent, to an off-site location for destruction. The two most recent studies, completed earlier this year, both concluded that shipping hydrolysate off-site would yield few, if any, cost-savings and would likely result in litigation, strong public opposition, and potential delays to chemical weapons destruction. An analysis conducted by Mitretek found that "a decision for off-site treatment will probably result in litigation of the CD at Pueblo, resulting in extensive delays. Every month of delay costs roughly $15-$16 million. Any delay over 6 months, regardless of cause, would be expected to erase all possible savings, even under the most optimistic assumptions." A report by Lean Six Sigma concluded that off-site destruction would actually cost more and could result in as much as a five-year delay in chemical weapons destruction at Pueblo.

Given the conclusions of these recent studies on hydrolysate destruction, I am perplexed that the Department has commissioned two additional studies on the potential cost-savings of hydrolysate destruction. It is unclear to me what questions remain to be answered after the Mitretek and the Lean Six Sigma studies recommended on-site hydrolysate destruction. Furthermore, since construction of a biotreatment facility for hydrolysate is already underway in Pueblo, the money spent to commission two more studies would be more wisely used to expedite construction of the weapons destruction facilities.

I respectfully ask that you not proceed with the latest studies on hydrolysate destruction at the Pueblo Chemical Depot and that you issue a final decision to proceed with on-site destruction. Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your service to the country.

Sincerely,

Ken Salazar

Ken Salazar
United States Senator

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