# Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 12, 2015

Ron Curry
Administrator,
Region 6, U.S. EPA
1445 Ross Avenue, Suite 1200,
Dallas, Texas 75202

Peggy Hatch
Secretary, Louisiana Department of
Environmental Quality
602 N. Fifth Street
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Dear Administrator Curry and Secretary Hatch:

We write you today to reiterate our recent correspondence regarding the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) decision to use an open-burn process at Camp Minden. The Louisiana Congressional delegation has been contacted by concerned citizens regarding potential safety impacts from the method chosen and agreed to by the federal and state parties involved.

We are aware that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has established a website to provide public access to information about the project to dispose of explosives at the Camp Minden site in Webster Parish, and that the Louisiana Military Department (LMD) continues to work to address this imminent threat. However, we have received multiple reports of the potential lack of coordination by the involved parties. Due to growing concern, we demand the LMD, LDEQ, and the EPA to improve coordination with local state officials moving forward.

After months of bureaucratic foot-dragging by the U.S. Army, all involved parties must act expeditiously to ensure public safety. The Army Explosive Safety Board previously advised that deterioration of the propellants could greatly increase the risk of explosion by August 2015. The stabilizers in the explosives continue to degrade, and the explosives will become more and more unstable and the likelihood of auto-ignition continues to increase. The EPA must address constituent concerns and ensure that the method of disposal will not cause unnecessary harm to surrounding citizens.

In order to address ongoing constituent concerns and address any potential faulty information surrounding the disposal process, we urge you to provide written responses to our previously submitted questions.

We additionally ask for your assurances that human health and environmental impacts on the air, water, and soil will be continually monitored throughout the process to ensure that the necessary protections remain in place throughout the cleanup. A copy of previously submitted questions is below.

Sincerely,

David Vitter
United States Senator

Bill Cassidy, M.D.
United States Senator

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John Fleming, M.D.
United States Representative

Ralph Abraham
United States Representative

CC: Carl Edlund, Director, Superfund Division EPA Region 6
CC: Glenn H. Curtis, Major General, Louisiana National Guard

Below please find the questions previously submitted:

1. The EPA has previously completed a bench-scale burn of the materials to evaluate the physical and chemical properties as well as determine air monitoring requirements before any large scale activity. Will the EPA provide the data it has collected on the methods examined?

    a. Will the EPA share with the delegation its comparison of potential health hazards to verify that the open burn is the safest way, including any documentation on the analysis conducted regarding potential health and environmental effects from the December test burn?

    b. Does EPA have any other data or studies, aside from the test burn in December, of an open burn of M6?

2. Has an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) been conducted? Has the EPA granted an exemption to an EIS to the U.S. Army, Louisiana Military Department (LMD, or other involved parties?

3. According to official documents, on June 5, 2014, the Louisiana State Police (LSP), in coordination with the LMD, conducted a training exercise, using 128 lbs. of black powder previously owned by Explo Systems and listed on the inventory provided by the ESB. Was this instance the "bench scale burn" completed for evaluation purposes and, if so, was the test burn announced publicly prior to the trial burn?

    a. Does EPA have any other data or studies for an open burn of similar propellants? To what extent, if any, was this data taken into consideration in the decision to conduct the open burn of M6?

4. The EPA's publicly available documents which reference the disposal process state that "(s)hould the open-burning response action generate hazardous waste residues requiring off-site disposal,…" Does the EPA have data or estimated prediction on the likelihood of this outcome?

    a. What is the public health hazard associated with it?

5. On Page 14 of the EPA's, "Request for Approval of a Time-Critical Removal at the Explo Systems" it states that previous materials disposed of through open-burn was analyzed and will be disposed of at an appropriately permitted facility, and that a final report of the operations is pending. Is this final report now available?

    a. Does that report contain health hazard information? If so, please provide a copy for my office to review.

6. Can you confirm that both EPA and the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LMDQ) will continue to check air quality and potential groundwater contamination during the burning process, as previously stated?

    a. Will that take place as an EIS, risk assessment, or air modeling study?

7. Lastly, if there are no delays what is the expected final date for the contract for the work to be finalized? For all of the work to be completed?