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Request for a Scientific Flyover of the Iowa AAP to Test for Radioactive Contamination

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Secretary of the Army

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OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

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April 19, 2001

The Honorable Louis Caldera
Secretary of the Army
U. S. Department of the Army
101 Army Pentagon
Washington, D. C. 20310

Dear Secretary Caldera:

I wish to contact you in my capacity as Governor of the state of Iowa in order to express my concerns about the past and present activities at the Iowa Army Ammunition Plant in Burlington, Iowa pertaining to the handling, storage and cleanup of radioactive materials.

As you may be advised, under Executive Order No. 13, the state of Iowa's Department of Public Health assumed regulatory authority. This Executive Order, which was agreed to by the U. S. Army, transferred regulatory authority over the handling, storage, and cleanup from the Federal Environmental Protection Agency to the state of Iowa and its Department of Public Health.

In response to its duties under Executive Order No. 13, the Department of Public Health recently reviewed newly declassified information concerning the handling of radioactive materials at the plant in the early 1970's. These documents make reference to "plutonium," "ground zero" and "an incident that may have led to contamination." These documents raise the question whether or not the scope of the storage and handling of the radioactive materials might have been perhaps broader than previously acknowledged by the Department of Energy or the U. S. Army.

It is my understanding that our Department of Public Health has proposed a set of questions directed to the U. S. Army and the Department of Energy for response. These questions will give us the opportunity to flesh out more detail concerning the problems potentially raised as a result of these declassified materials.

It is also my understanding that it has been suggested to the Department of the Army, as well as the Department of Energy that a scientific flyover of the facility be conducted in order to test the remaining 17,000 untested acres of property for radioactive contamination. While I recognize that there is significant cost involved in such a flyover, the piece of mind and security

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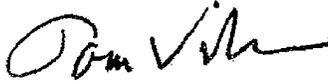
of knowing that we have all of the information necessary before developing a remediation plan, it is certainly worth the additional resources.

The Department of Public Health and the state of Iowa are pursuing and advocating a much broader review due to the information previously submitted and referred to in the declassified documents.

I would appreciate it if you would please advise as to what the Army's position will be with reference to conducting and scheduling such a flyover. By copy of this letter, I am also requesting a similar response from the Department of Energy. It is my understanding that Senator Tom Harkin from Iowa has also suggested and requested that the flyover be conducted. I am copying Senator Harkin, Senator Grassley and Representative Boswell with a copy of this correspondence so that they may be fully informed of our concern.

I would certainly hope that additional funds would be forthcoming in order to provide this most important information concerning the full scope and extent of problems, which might exist at the facility. A prompt response to my request for information would be appreciated. I look forward to your response and I thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Thomas J. Vilsack
Governor

- cc: Senator Tom Harkin
- Senator Charles Grassley
- Representative Leonard Boswell
- Iowa Department of Public Health
- Mr. Ruben Barrales, White House Governmental Affairs Director
- Commander of U. S. Munitions & Armament, Rock Island, IL
- Lt. Commander Elliott, Iowa Army Ammunition Plant, Middletown, IA

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