

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the gentleman's courtesy in yielding me time.

I, too, was saddened by the decision of the House Republican leadership, so ably articulated by my friend, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. *Edwards*); and I appreciate the service you are doing for our servicemen and -women, training the spotlight on this.

But I would like to speak briefly, if I could, Mr. Chairman, to a specific area. Historically, I have come before this subcommittee talking about the problems of military cleanup. I did not this time, because I appreciated what the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. *Knollenberg*) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr.

*Edwards*

), the members of the committee, were faced with. And I think they have done a good job under difficult circumstances, trying to put a little bit of money into the BRAC cleanup; but I would like to serve notice that I am hopeful that this is the last time that we place this low degree of priority.

I appreciate the imperative that you are facing, but we have a long-term time bomb, literally, that is ticking. The presence of unexploded ordnance and other contaminants on transferred military property limits our use of hundreds of thousands of acres of closed military bases from prime real estate to scenic open space. That is one of the reasons why we have such great apprehension about the BRAC process that is working its way forward. People are afraid that they are going to be left with a toxic white elephant.

And, indeed, the BRAC situation is just the tip of the iceberg, because we have between 10 and 50 million polluted acres; and at the rate of the spending that we are embarked upon now under the MILCON and the Department of Defense, we are going to take in the neighborhood of 300 years or more to clean up this responsibility that will be skyrocketing in costs over time. And these things get worse as the explosives, as the military equipment deteriorates, polluting groundwater, migrating to the surface. This is a problem that we cannot continue to sweep under the rug.

The Federal Government should be leading by example, cleaning up after itself, making sure we are not leaving an expensive, toxic legacy for the future.

Last but not least, this subcommittee can help by providing more leadership with local communities to provide a framework to the cleanup. I have been impressed with what

happened in the State of California, recognizing that long-term operation of military installations must involve a partnership between the State, the local, the Federal Government; in some areas, tribal authorities.

I would hope that we could work together in a cooperative fashion with these other entities to be able to have a framework that will promote the clean-up because, ultimately, not only will this improve the quality of life of our military families, it will hasten the day that we solve this problem, saving billions of long-term dollars.