

Portland, Ore. - Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D - Ore) issued the following statement today in response to the recently released General Accounting Office (GAO) report on the upcoming round of military base realignments and closures and clean up of unexploded ordnance (UXO).

"I am pleased that this new report shows progress is being made in efforts to close and realign surplus military facilities. In addition to saving money for the Department of Defense, many communities around the country will benefit from the new jobs and valuable land that transferred bases provide.

"This report also highlights significant challenges. It states that the transfer of 140,000 acres of former military sites has been delayed primarily because of the costs associated with cleanup of UXO and chemical contamination. The cleanup costs associated with this remaining property are estimated at \$3.6 billion. This amount will likely increase as more research is done and more UXO is discovered. Just cleaning up the remaining bases closed in 1988 could cost more than \$70 million.

"Unfortunately, the BRAC (base realignment and closure) sites are only a small part of the UXO problem. In previous reports, the GAO has estimated that cleaning up formerly used defense sites will cost between \$8 billion to \$35 billion. At the current rate of spending, this could take up to 300 years."

"The GAO estimates that the Department of Defense will likely save about \$7 billion a year from its past BRAC rounds. If just a fraction of these savings were put towards cleanup, as well as toward research and development of more efficient technology, the DoD could make significant progress in transferring the remaining bases to public use.

"I hope that Congress will consider at least addressing the problem of cleanup at sites closed in 1988 before advancing further base closures. The slow, ponderous, approach to UXO clean up is one of the greatest impediments for realigning our outmoded base inventory. It is unacceptable to saddle communities with closed bases that will present dangers from UXO and other environmental contaminants for decades. Our failure to deal meaningfully with UXO clean up erodes public support at a time when our military deserves strong public support."