

Smith: IG Earle Security Audit on Track

Washington, Nov 26, 2007 - Rep. Chris Smith met with top Pentagon investigators here today to access progress of an audit of security risks posed by the leasing of 300 housing units to the general public at Earle Naval Weapons Station.

Smith who requested the probe by the Defense Department's Inspector General (IG) last May, said the audit is expected to be completed by April next year, and that the final report will be issued by July, 2008.

According to Smith, IG investigators have already visited Earle and plan to return.

“The IG investigation is aggressive, comprehensive and on track and will, I believe, uncover serious security deficiencies and flaws in the Navy’s plan to permit anyone with rent money—including potential terrorists—to secure a home in such close proximity to larges caches of munitions,” Smith said.

Specifically, the Inspector General has promised to:

- Review the security measures the Navy will implement in order for civilians to live on the base;
- Determine whether the Navy has issued a contract for a National Environmental Policy Assessment for NWS Earle and whether the assessment will cover security; and
- Determine whether DOD has rented on-base housing to the general public at other DOD installations and whether additional security measures are in place at those locations.

The need for better security at New Jersey’s military bases was highlighted in May when a plan to ambush Fort Dix in New Jersey was exposed by a civilian tip to law enforcement.

“As we saw earlier this year with the foiled plot against Fort Dix and again today with reports about a possible plan to attack Fort Huachuca in Arizona, our military bases need more protection—not less. After quick Congressional action on efforts to limit vendor access following the Fort Dix arrests, one would think that all branches of the military would be using all means necessary to limit access to bases,” said Smith.

Shortly after the suspects were arrested at Ft. Dix, Rep. Smith worked with Reps. Jim Saxton, LoBiondo, and Andrews to require enhanced background checks of vendors that visit bases. Smith said the vendor background checks are needed and will enhance security measures but they are not enough to allow non-military tenants to live at housing inside a base parameter.

“Those who want to do us harm are so intent that they plot and plan years in advance and wait for the right conditions to strike,” Smith said. **“Opening base housing to non-military residents of the general public may allow potential terrorists to live in the immediate vicinity of our munitions and give them an opportunity they never expected.”**