November 19, 2026

Acting Secretary Adam R. Telle
U.S. Department of the Army
101 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310

Administrator Lee Zeldin
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Acting Secretary Telle and Administrator Zeldin:

We write to express our grave concerns with this Friday's planned detonation of 9,700 pounds of lead azide at the Iowa Army Ammunition Plant (IAAAP) in Middletown, Iowa. While we understand the urgent need to address these volatile materials, their detonation has the potential to spread lead contamination in and around the region. We call on you to consider delaying this detonation until there is an opportunity to explore safer alternatives. At a minimum, we request an immediate update before the Army proceeds on the detailed detonation plans; mitigation efforts; likely range and location of the possible toxic plume, including as modeled for weather conditions; pre- and post-detonation monitoring and sampling; possibilities of alternative disposal procedures; and plan to remain in timely communication with state and local officials and communities both before and after the detonation.

We appreciate that the Army and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have studied the need to address the degraded lead azide at the IAAAP, including the risks associated with transporting the material. However, Iowa and Illinois residents understandably are concerned about the potential health impacts of the scheduled detonation. Lead dust is particularly harmful to children and pregnant women. It can contaminate soil and critical farmland indefinitely.

We encourage you to remain in timely communication with state and local officials and communities across both Iowa and Illinois, which were informed of the planned detonation only this week. Our offices have received reports of poor communication from the Army and EPA about the detonation plans and anticipated monitoring after the detonation. In addition, there are significant concerns about appropriate Army and EPA oversight of this contractor-operated facility, the site of which remains on the Superfund list. We urge you to examine the contractor's handling of this and other hazardous material to prevent any future issues.

Given the urgency of this scheduled detonation, we request an immediate reply to this letter before any planned detonation and look forward to working with you to ensure that the health and safety of families across Iowa and Illinois remains the highest priority.

Sincerely,

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

Representative Darin LaHood
Member of Congress

Representative Mary E. Miller
Member of Congress

Representative Eric Sorensen
Member of Congress

JB Pritzker
Governor of Illinois

Juliana Stratton
United States Senator-Elect

Josh Turek
United States Senator-Elect