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NEWSPAPER ARTICLE "AGENT ORANGE MAY BE FILTERED, MOVED FROM COAST"  
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# METRO AREA

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## Agent Orange May Be Filtered, Moved From Coast

By **TON PETERS**

Clanton Ledger Staff Writer

Thousands of barrels of the potentially dangerous herbicide Agent Orange, stored on the Navy Seabee Base at Gulfport, may be reprocessed and moved off of Mississippi this summer, a U.S. Air Force spokesman said today.

The Air Force has proposed filtering Agent Orange to remove dangerous contaminants. The reprocessed herbicide would then be sold and the contaminants trapped in steel canisters and buried on federal property.

Capt. Gary Hawksworth, Air Force public information officer in Washington, D.C., said the Air Force has received "no significant objections" to its plan to reprocess the herbicide. Air Force officials will decide,

probably by the end of this month, whether to finalize a reprocessing contract with a private firm.

HAWKSWORTH said there is "no reason to suspect" the Air Force will reverse its position and decide to shelve the reprocessing plan that has been more than a year in the making.

He stressed, however, that the Air Force still has not officially determined its plans for the chemical.

Reprocessing could not begin for at least three months after a decision to proceed, Hawksworth said.

Agent Orange, a defoliant, was used by the U.S. Air Force during the Vietnam War to kill crops and strip the land of its leafy cover.

WHEN THE AIR FORCE discontinued use of the chemical in 1970, 15,000 barrels of Agent Orange, stored in Gulfport for shipment overseas, were left at the

base.

Although the Air Force insists that Agent Orange is harmless to people and the present environment of the Gulf Coast, the chemical reportedly contains a contaminant which, in its concentrated form, could cause serious injury or death if swallowed, inhaled or allowed to come in contact with the skin.

Last October, the Air Force filed an environmental impact study with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and several other groups outlining its plans for reprocessing the herbicide.

The Air Force stated in its study that if the plan proceeds, it will take charge of the contaminant-saturated canisters. The canisters will, Hawksworth said, be placed on some federal installation, probably a military base.

THE AIR FORCE will sell the reprocessed herbicide for re-sale by commercial herbicide dealers.

Hawksworth said that while some of the agencies that received the Air Force study recommended minor modifications to the reprocessing plans, none challenged the concept of the Air Force plan.

The Air Force must now consider the recommendations, decide which, if any, to incorporate into the final plans and then make a formal decision whether to proceed with reprocessing.

Once the decision to proceed is made, the Defense Supply Agency must negotiate a contract for the reprocessing and the sale of the herbicide also must be approved by Congress.