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NCBC GULFPORT  
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LETTER FROM U S AIR FORCE REGARDING MEETING WITH NEWS MEDIA BETWEEN 20  
DECEMBER AND 22 DECEMBER 1976 NCBC GULFPORT MS  
1/10/1977  
U S AIR FORCE

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE  
HEADQUARTERS AEROSPACE MEDICAL DIVISION (AFSC)  
BROOKS AIR FORCE BASE, TEXAS 78235



NCBC, Gulfport MS

REPLY TO  
ATTN OF: HQ AMD/EH

JAN 10 1977

SUBJECT: Trip Report - NCBC, Gulfport MS

TO: HQ AMD/CC

1. Place: Naval Construction Battalion Center, Gulfport MS
2. Inclusive Dates of Travel: 20-22 Dec 76
3. Persons Making Trip: Col Walter W. Melvin, Jr., Director, Occupational and Environmental Health, HQ AMD/EH, Brooks AFB TX and Maj James W. Tremblay, Chief, Special Projects Division, OL AA, USAF Occupational and Environmental Health Laboratory, Kelly AFB TX
4. Primary Mode of Transportation: Commercial Air
5. Purpose of Trip: To provide technical assistance to the Commander, NCBC in meeting with a local physician and news media.
6. Persons Contacted:
  - Capt (O-6) James T. Taylor, Commander, NCBC
  - Cmdr (O-5) Robert Miller, Executive Officer, NCBC
  - Capt (O-3) Gary Hawksworth, SAF/OIPA, Wash DC
  - Mr. Claude Anderson, Mgt Eng Division, NCBC
  - Mr. Glen Wood, Jr., Executive Director, Mississippi Air and Water Pollution Control Commission, Jackson MS
  - Mr. Jackson Balch, Coordinator for Water Quality Planning, Jackson MS
  - Dr. Thomas A. Quigley, Jr., private physician, resident of Gulfport MS
  - Mr. Tim Kriehn, newsman, "The South Mississippi Sun", Gulfport MS
7. Background: On 13 Dec 76, a letter to the editor from Dr. Quigley was published in "The Daily Herald", an evening paper serving an estimated Mississippi Gulf Coast distribution of approximately 33,000 readers (see Atch 1). Dr. Quigley's letter was critical of the proposed plans to reprocess Herbicide Orange at NCBC and recommended that readers write to the Mississippi Air and Water Pollution Control Commission (MAWPCC) objecting to the issuance of a MAWPCC permit to reprocess at NCBC "...in the center of large residential areas and within two blocks of two community hospitals." On 16 Dec 76 OL AA, OEHL (Maj Tremblay) received a personal letter, dated 12 Dec 76, from Dr. Quigley asking questions about the proposed reprocessing operations and associated public safety hazards (see Atch 2). Between 14-16 Dec 76 Dr. Quigley made numerous phone calls to Capt Taylor requesting an



opportunity to visit the Herbicide Orange storage area and to ask some technical questions. On 16 Dec 76 Capt Taylor requested OL AA, OEHL to provide technical assistance in a meeting with Dr. Quigley on Tuesday, 21 Dec 76. On 17 Dec 76 Capt Hawksworth (SAF/OIPA) indicated that he would arrive in Gulfport to talk with local news media representatives on Monday, 20 Dec 76 and would be available to attend the 21 Dec 76 meeting with Dr. Quigley.

#### 8. Summary of Events:

a. Dr. Melvin and Maj Tremblay arrived in Gulfport on Monday, 20 Dec (1800 hrs) and met with Capt Hawksworth. It was learned at this time that another article appeared in "The Daily Herald" on 20 Dec reporting that the Mayor of a nearby community, Pass Christian, had written a letter to the MAWPCC objecting to the proposed reprocessing of Herbicide Orange at NCBC (see atch 3 and 4).

b. On 21 Dec 76 at approximately 1430 hours Capt Taylor received a call from Mr. Wood asking for a meeting as soon as possible to discuss ways in which the proposed reprocessing could be expedited. Mr. Wood indicated to Capt Taylor that the Governor of Mississippi, Clifton Finch, was disturbed over the level of concern of the populace being generated in the Gulfport area. Mr. Wood stated that Governor Finch viewed this situation with deep concern, and that he would be ready to seriously consider relaxing certain restrictive administrative constraints to facilitate the transport of the herbicide out of the State of Mississippi. Subsequently, there were two telephone conversations with Dr. Billy E. Welch (SAF/ILE) and three telephone conversations with Mr. Wood. On 22 Dec 76 (0900 hours) Capt Taylor received a letter from Mr. Wood dated 21 Dec 76 confirming a meeting for 1330 hours on 22 Dec 76 (see Atch 5).

c. Preliminary discussions were held with Capt Taylor on the morning of 21 Dec 76. A meeting was held with Dr. Quigley between 1030 and 1130 hours on 21 Dec 76. Between 1330 and 1500 hours on 21 Dec 76 a meeting was held with Mr. Kriehn. Between 1330 and 1600 hours on 22 Dec 76 a meeting was held with Mr. Wood and Mr. Balch. Summaries of these meetings follow.

#### 9. Summary of Meetings:

a. Meeting with Capt Taylor on 21 Dec 76 (0800-1000 hours). Attendees were: Dr. Melvin, Capt Taylor, Major Tremblay, Capt Hawksworth, and Mr. Anderson. During this meeting a strategy for the meeting with Dr. Quigley evolved. The consensus for the selected approach was that Dr. Melvin and Maj Tremblay would summarize the various efforts made during the development of the selected alternative to reprocess the Herbicide Orange stocks at NCBC. Following this summary Dr. Quigley would be asked to state his concerns so that they could be addressed from a technical viewpoint.

b. Meeting with Dr. Quigley on 21 Dec 76 (1030-1130 hours). Attendees were: Dr. Melvin, Capt Taylor, Maj Tremblay, Capt Hawksworth, Mr. Anderson, and Dr. Quigley.

(1) Dr. Melvin summarized his background and involvement in the Herbicide Orange disposal project and provided Dr. Quigley with a synopsis of the various disposal alternatives considered, leading to the selection of the proposed reprocessing at NCBC and at Johnston Island.

(2) Dr. Quigley purported to be interested in the proposed reprocessing at NCBC as a representative of the staff of the Memorial Hospital in Gulfport. He stated that he would like to obtain some information so that he could report back to the hospital staff and his colleagues. Dr. Quigley's concerns centered on two points: 1) that the reprocessing at NCBC would endanger the local, high-density population, and 2) that the concentrating of dioxin (TCDD) in the activated carbon could also pose a health/safety hazard to the local inhabitants during transport through the city.

(3) Dr. Melvin and Maj Tremblay explained the engineering and safety precautions that would be incorporated into the processing plant and the activated carbon filter design. Included in this explanation were such factors as the proposed operating temperatures (100°C, approximately one-third of the boiling point of the herbicide), use of a low-pressure, closed system, use of activated carbon air scrubbing filters for dedrumming operations and cartridge charging processes, the associated biomonitoring and industrial hygiene sampling, the strength and sealing of the spent activated carbon cartridges and filters and the safety precautions to be employed during the handling and shipping of the sealed cartridges.

(4) Although Dr. Quigley appeared satisfied with the results of this meeting, it is our considered opinion that he will continue his vocal opposition to the proposed reprocessing at NCBC on the basis of its close proximity to highly populated areas. It appears that his position will be one of suggesting that the liquid herbicide could be moved from NCBC to JI or elsewhere where less potential for environmental and public health hazards would exist.

c. Meeting with Mr. Kriehn on 21 Dec 76 (1330-1500 hours). Attendees were: Dr. Melvin, Maj Tremblay, Capt Hawksworth and Mr. Kriehn.

(1) This meeting with Mr. Kriehn was essentially a technical interview wherein Mr. Kriehn was gathering facts concerning the proposed reprocessing operations. He asked about the proposed reprocessing plant design and operation, as well as the relative hazards of the dioxin-contaminated activated carbon cylinder handling and transport. The entire tenor of his questioning was objective in nature.

(2) It is our considered opinion that Mr. Kriehn will continue to report objectively on the proposed reprocessing at NCBC not necessarily as a strong proponent, but as an objective, well-informed critic, recognizing that the most feasible means of disposing of the NCBC stocks of herbicide will involve reprocessing at NCBC with some limited degree of risk.

(3) Note: On 24 Dec 76 Mr. Kriehn published an article in the "South Mississippi Sun" that was supportive of the reprocessing proposal (see Atch 6).

d. Meeting with Messrs. Wood and Balch on 22 Dec 76 (1300-1600 hours). Attendees were: Dr. Melvin, Capt Taylor, Maj Tremblay, Capt Hawksworth, Mr. Wood, Mr. Balch, and Mr. Anderson.

(1) The initial portion of this meeting was somewhat antagonistic. Mr. Wood and Mr. Balch attempted to convince Capt Taylor that he was, as far as the State of Mississippi was concerned, totally responsible for the Herbicide Orange at NCBC and that he would be held accountable for all actions to reprocess and/or move the stocks out of the state. Capt Taylor objected strongly to this position, explaining that the Herbicide Orange did not belong to the US Navy and that he was not responsible for the entire program, but that management of the program was a US Air Force (AF) and Defense Supply Agency (now Defense Logistics Agency - DLA) joint responsibility.

(2) After extensive dialogue Capt Taylor and the Mississippi representatives agreed that he, Capt Taylor, would bring the Mississippi State position to the attention of the AF and DLA managers. Both Mr. Wood and Mr. Balch stated that Governor Finch was interested in either having the Herbicide Orange reprocessed or moved out of the state. Mr. Wood indicated that as long as two years ago, the state had taken the official position that the Herbicide Orange should be removed from the state, and that until the recent public reaction he had assumed that reasonable progress was being made. He further stated that he was personally going to stay involved in this matter until it was resolved. He stated that Governor Finch's office had received over 120 "negative" letters on the subject in recent weeks and that the Governor had been questioned about the state's position at a press conference on 21 Dec 76.

(3) Approximately half-way through this meeting a copy of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the AF and the DLA on Proposed Reprocessing of Orange Herbicide, dated 10 Dec 76, was delivered to Capt Taylor by TELDEX from Washington DC (Lt Col Buswell/DSAN-SN). Capt Taylor read the MOA to all present. Both Mr. Wood and Mr. Balch seemed impressed with the content and scope of the MOA. Capt Taylor then provided the Mississippi representatives with the proposed time schedule for reprocessing at NCBC that he had been given by Dr. Billy E. Welch on 21 Dec 76. The schedule provided by Dr. Welch was as follows:

(a) Final negotiations between DLA and Agent Chemical, Inc. (ACI) would be completed by 1 Feb 77.

(b) Congressional approval would be obtained by 1 Mar 77.

(c) Reprocessing would begin by 1 Apr 77.

(d) Reprocessing would be completed by 1 Jul 77.

(4) With regard to the proposed schedule for reprocessing at NCBC, the Mississippi representatives expressed a desire to expedite the proposed completion date of 1 Jul 77 as much as possible. Mr. Wood stated that if Capt Taylor

would transmit the state's concern to the proper AF/DLA authorities, the state would cooperate in all ways to expedite the resolution of the problem. Mr. Wood specifically stated that the MAWPCC would be willing to provide 48-hour turn-around time on all requested reviews of reprocessing plant engineering designs, industrial hygiene and environmental protection programs, plans for the transport of reprocessed herbicide and contaminated charcoal cartridges out of Mississippi, issuance of any required licenses and permits, etc., and that the MAWPCC and other state agencies would not delay orderly progress of the actions to properly resolve the problem. Mr. Wood stated that he felt confident that the proposed reprocessing operations would require that a MAWPCC permit be issued by the state. He further indicated that public hearings concerning the application for such a permit would be required, and that in his opinion, negative public reaction would be high and could even result in court injunctions being filed to delay or negate the proposed reprocessing at NCBC. He suggested that the contractor (ACI) should make applications for the permit as early as possible so that the state's statutory requirements for review and subsequent public hearings would not delay the proposed time schedule. In light of the strong possibility that negative public reaction could delay complete reprocessing of the Herbicide Orange beyond 1 Jul 77, Mr. Wood further suggested that an alternative of moving the liquid Herbicide Orange from NCBC to JI or some other location for reprocessing should be available. It was pointed out to the Mississippi representatives that this alternative would conceivably result in even greater delays caused by the need to formally assess this alternative as a separate and distinct proposal that would require extensive documentation and coordination, e.g., the preparation and filing of a formal environmental assessment.

(5) The initial somewhat antagonistic position of the Mississippi representatives was changed as a result of this meeting. Their initial position of adamant demands to quickly resolve the problem was tempered by a realization that the problem was exceedingly complex and could be resolved only by bilateral action - that it could not be solved by unilateral action by Mississippi. At the conclusion of the meeting they appeared frustrated by not having been able to expedite the resolution. They left the meeting apparently aware that the most reasonable approach to take was to concentrate on the current proposal for reprocessing at NCBC.

#### 10. Summary:

a. Continued storage of Orange herbicide on NCBC, Gulfport MS poses a potentially volatile public relations problem for both the Navy and the Air Force. Although state officials now appear to be supportive of expeditious reprocessing as the plan of choice to effect removal of the herbicide from the state, a groundswell of negative public opinion could quickly reverse that position. Additionally, any substantial delay in the reprocessing schedule provided by Dr. Welch will almost certainly evoke a change in posture by state officials. It should also be noted that Mississippi officials have stated that public hearing will be required prior to issuance of reprocessing permits. An unfavorable conclusion to such hearings or court action initiated by the populace could impede or totally negate the plan to reprocess at NCBC.

b. Considering the above comments, it now seems prudent to proceed concurrently along the following courses of action:

(1) Encourage DLA to finalize a contract with Agent Chemical, Inc. as soon as possible.

(2) Prepare a contingency plan for transfer of the herbicide to Johnston Island for reprocessing.

  
WALTER W. MELVIN, JR., Col, USAF, MC  
Director, Occupational and Environmental  
Health

6 Atch

1. Ltr to Editor, Daily Herald,  
13 Dec 76
2. Dr. Quigley's Ltr to Maj  
Tremblay, 12 Dec 76
3. Ltr to Mr. Wood from Pass  
Christian Mayor, 17 Dec 76
4. Staff Article, Daily Herald
5. MAWPCC Ltr to Capt Taylor,  
NCBC, 21 Dec 76
6. Article, South Mississippi  
Sun by Mr. Kriehn, 24 Dec 76