

N62604.AR.000076
NCBC GULFPORT
5090.3a

NEWSPAPER ARTICLE "GULFPORT HERBICIDE STOCK WILL SOON EXIT STATE" NCBC
GULFPORT MS
2/1/1977
THE DAILY HERALD

Gulfport herbicide stock will soon exit state

LARRY JONES

Herald Staff Writer

A Gulfport stockpile of a Vietnam-vintage herbicide considered a "danger to human life" will exit the state via a Gulfport reprocessing center or by Air Force jets to an unknown storage or disposal site.

U.S. Rep. Trent Lott's office confirmed Tuesday that 800,000 gallons of the dangerous Herbicide Orange, now in rusting metal drums at Gulfport's Seabee Center will be shuttled

out of Mississippi as soon as possible in the "safest way possible."

The safest way possible largely depends on a public hearing forecast by a state pollution control commission which could determine whether Gulfport will house a facility for reprocessing the dangerous chemical.

A spokesman for the Mississippi Air and Water Pollution Control Commission (AWPCC) said Monday that the agency will

conduct a public hearing at an unspecified date if it receives an application to construct the herbicide reprocessing plant.

The application for the facility would have to come from Agent Chemical Inc., the Houston, Tex., firm which has proposed to dilute the substance to a safe level.

While some area residents have opposed reprocessing dangerous dioxins from the herbicide in the Gulfport area, a spokesman for Lott said Tuesday the congressman would support reprocessing on the Coast if government researchers claim that is the safest way.

Lott's press secretary, Tom Houston, said, "After lengthy studies, if they agree that's the safest possible way, we'd be in favor of it."

Identifying the herbicide Orange status as a "touchy issue," Houston said Lott has kept a low-key profile on the future of reprocessing because "it can alarm people."

Lott had said Monday, after the Harrison County supervisors said they received a letter from the Republican representative urging Air Force removal of the herbicide, that "without a doubt, the cylinders will be removed."

"They have assured me that the cylinders will be removed from Mississippi. I have been told bluntly they will be taken out."

Lott said he had received the unqualified assurance from several high-ranking sources within the Air Force.

Research into reprocessing or oceanic disposal of the substance, used by the Air Force as a Southeast Asian jungle defoliant, continues to determine the best and safest way to dis-

pose of the chemical. "We don't want them (the Air Force) to storm in here and truck (the herbicide) somewhere if that's not the safest way," Houston said, speaking for Lott.

Officials of Agent Chemical, working with the Air Force, have said they have discovered a method to take dioxin—the fatal ingredient—from the herbicide by absorbing the chemical through coconut filters.

Once an application has been received from Agent Chemical for the reprocessing, the AWPCC will give a 30-day notice for a public hearing.