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NEWSPAPER ARTICLE "BURNING OF HERBICIDE TO BEGIN" NCBC GULFPORT MS
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Burning of herbicide to begin

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Burning of the Herbicide Orange stored in Gulfport for seven years will begin later this week in the Pacific, an Air Force spokesman said Monday.

The Dutch-owned incinerator ship Vulcanus arrived at Johnston Island on Sunday where monitoring equipment and other supplies were to be loaded on the vessel. The Vulcanus came into port two days earlier than scheduled following a 29-day cruise from Gulfport which included passage through the Panama Canal.

The spokesman said transportation of the herbicide was uneventful and "went very well."

The incineration of more than 800,000 gallons of the toxic herbicide will take 13 days, the spokesman said. Air and water monitoring will be conducted by a California firm under contract with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The Vulcanus' contract with the government, which was signed after the ship left the State Port at Gulfport, calls for payment of \$2.6 million to burn the stocks from the Seabee Center in Gulfport and an additional 1.5 million gallons stored on Johnston Island.

After the burning of the herbicide from Gulfport, the EPA will evaluate the program and decide whether to issue a permit for the remaining stocks.

The Air Force, which has maintained control over the herbicide since it was banned in 1970, now estimates the cost at \$5 million for the removal and incineration of all of the herbicide and the cleansing and smelting of the 55-gallon containers in which the chemical was stored. Earlier estimates were \$3 million and \$4 million.

The herbicide, which cost the Air Force \$17 million when it was purchased to defoliate jungles in Vietnam, was linked to birth defects and later banned by the Department of Agriculture and the EPA. Following seven years of study, the Air Force was granted a permit by the EPA last spring to conduct the incineration.