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NEWSPAPER ARTICLE "TECHNICIANS PREPARE FOR DIOXIN CLEANUP" NCBC  
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# Technicians prepare for dioxin cleanup

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A 12-acre site on the Seabee Center in Gulfport is becoming "the most intensely sampled property in the U.S." as technicians prepare for the cleanup of highly toxic dioxin from soil there, Air Force officials say.

Meanwhile, officials from the Air Force and its prime contractor in the sampling work, EG&G Idaho Inc., are winding down the process of selecting a subcontractor who will conduct a pilot project in which methods of decontaminating dioxin-laden soil will be tested at the Seabee Center and another Air Force site.

The selection of the subcontractor for the \$2

million testing work is set to come by Feb. 1. The subcontractor, to be picked from a field of 27 firms, will test various technologies capable of removing all but miniscule traces of dioxin from soil, according to Air Force officials.

EG&G crews returned to the Seabee Center last week to begin taking some 2,200 soil samples as part of their efforts to locate and define areas of dioxin contamination, most of which are believed to be six inches or less in diameter. Last month, the crews conducted survey work to be used in the mapping.

EG&G has a \$1.7 million contract to sample and map dioxin contamination at three Air Force bases.

The 12-acre Gulfport site became contaminated while some 843,000 gallons of the herbicide Agent Orange were stored there during the 1970s. Minor leaks in some of the 17,000 drums containing the herbicide left soil in some small areas contaminated with dioxin — a contaminant of Agent Orange — in levels of as high as 200 to 300 parts per billion, according to officials.

"Our goal is to see if the technology will reduce the level of total dioxins to less than 1 part per billion," said Capt. Terry L. Stoddart, an environmental research scientist at Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla.

Stoddart said officials have not decided how many of the several known decontamination

methods will be tested at the Gulfport site. He said the technology never has been tried in climatic and soil conditions similar to those at the Gulfport base.

The decontamination methods are grouped into four major categories: thermal destruction through incineration or intense heating; chemical neutralization; physical treatment, such as exposure to ultraviolet light; and extraction through the use of solvents or "soaps" to remove the dioxin from the soil.

"The Air Force wants a successful demonstration, so we're trying to bias things in

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## Dioxin

Continued from Page A-1 that direction," Stoddart said.

The tests will be done on about 1,000 to 1,500 pounds of the sandy soil sometime between May and October of this year,

Stoddart said. Similar tests will be conducted at a former storage area on Johnston Island in the Pacific Ocean.

The Mississippi Bureau of Pollution Control will have to approve permits for the tests, but Stoddart said he sees no hitches in the permit process.

The tests at the base, which will follow initial work in the subcontractor's laboratory, will be conducted within a "closed system" and will pose no threat to area

residents, Stoddart said.

"We're not going to choose anything that's going to cause any problem locally, and stringent safety precautions will be taken," he said.

The test results will form the basis of a recommendation to be made to the Department of Defense concerning an eventual cleanup of the site. The cleanup will return the site to "full and beneficial use," Stoddart said.

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