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NEWSPAPER ARTICLE "SOIL BURNED CLEAN AT NAVY BASE" NCBC GULFPORT MS
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Soil burned clean at Navy base

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■ A \$20 million project to fry the dioxin out of contaminated soil at the Naval Construction Battalion Center in Gulfport is coming to an end.

About 26,000 tons of soil have been incinerated in the past year to rid eight acres at the base of the dioxin, a highly toxic compound that has been linked to cancer, birth defects and other health problems.

"The site's clean," beamed Maj. F. Thomas Lubozynski, a specialist in environmental engineering from Tyndall Air Force Base in Florida. The Air Force did the cleanup because it stored the defoliant Agent Orange, the source of the dioxin, at the Navy base.

"The whole thing's been successful," added Capt. Herb Lewis, the commander of the Seabees. "The Air Force came in and, as usual, did everything in a very professional manner."

The burning project is the first in the United States approved by the Environmental Protection Agency in which a moveable kiln has been used to destroy dioxin. Usually, contami-

nated soil is trucked to stationary ovens.

"That's the major accomplishment," said Air Force Col. Hokanson, who heads up the Engineering and Service Lab at Tyndall. "We solved the problem without creating one somewhere else."

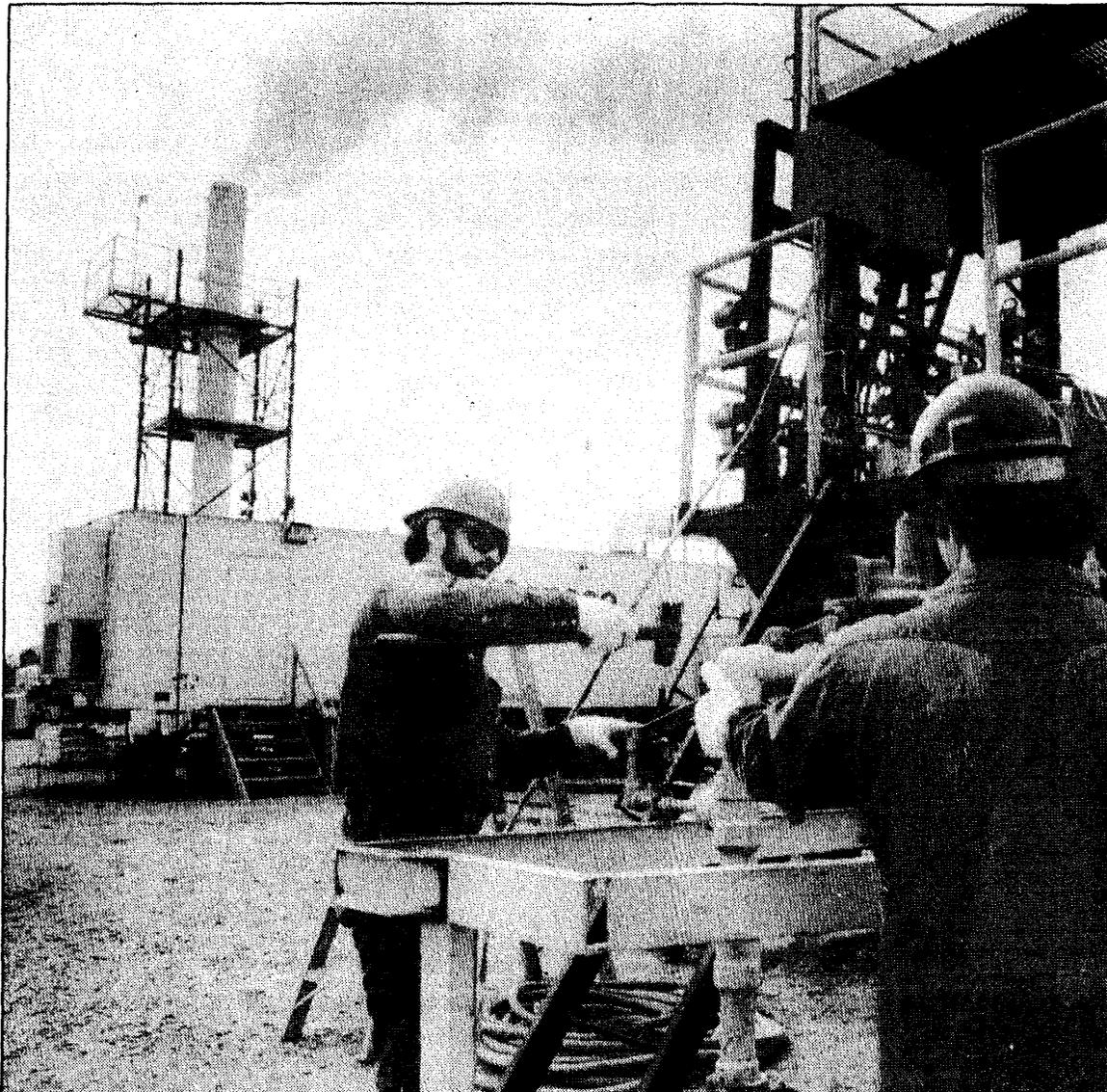
The dioxin leaked into the dirt at the base from about 15,000 barrels of Agent Orange, a mixture of two herbicides, that were stored at the base from the 1960s until 1977.

The Air Force dropped more than 18 million gallons of Agent Orange on South Vietnam before the herbicide was banned in 1971.

For years after it was outlawed, leaking barrels of the stuff remained at the Seabee base while military officials tried to figure out a way to remove the dioxin from the defoliant.

Finally, the dangerous waste was shipped to the U.S.'s Johnston Island in the Pacific, where it was burned.

Then the Air Force started looking into ways to decontaminate the soil at the base. Two methods researchers hit upon early didn't work. Finally they decided on using the incinerator, which is used to destroy polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs, which also



Pete Northrop, left, and Ronnie Necaize, both of Gulfport, begin dismantling an incinerator used

are suspected carcinogens.

The ovens have been working 24 hours a day for most of the past year. In November, the final bit of soil was burned, and since then, workers have

been filling the kilns with contaminated equipment that can't be salvaged.

Saturday, the white plume of steam rising from the incinerator should be no longer over the base. The ovens

will be dismantled and moved another job. Hundreds of mounds of burned soil will be t

make a field for equipment st
"I'm going to miss it," Lewis