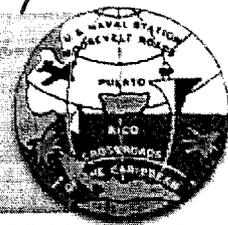


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INSTALLATION RESTORATION PROGRAM COMMUNITY FACT SHEET U.S. Naval Ammunition Support Detachment Vieques Island, Puerto Rico



NOVEMBER 2000

The U.S. Department of the Navy plans to transfer land on the western side of Vieques Island to the Government of Puerto Rico for the benefit of the Municipality of Vieques. It is the Navy's responsibility and desire to transfer the land in a condition that is safe for use and protects human health and the environment. This fact sheet describes an environmental investigation that is now in progress. Future fact sheets will explain the results of the investigation and actions for environmental remediation that the Navy will take as part of transferring the land.

BACKGROUND

On January 31, 2000, President William J. Clinton and Governor Pedro Roselló reached an agreement on several actions to be taken while the future use of the U.S. Navy's training range on Vieques Island, Puerto Rico (PR), is being decided. One of these actions was to transfer most of the Navy property on the western side of the island, known as the U.S. Naval Ammunition Storage Detachment (NASD), to the Government of Puerto Rico, for the benefit of the Municipality of Vieques.

On October 12, 2000, the U.S. Congress passed legislation directing the Navy to convey about 4,000 acres of NASD to the Municipality of Vieques and 3,100 acres to the U.S. Department of the Interior, by May 1, 2001. If all parties agree, about 800 acres will be conveyed to the Puerto Rico Conservation Trust for use as Conservation Zones.

Previous Investigations

Like many other military installations and civilian industrial facilities, the NASD contains some areas that have been contaminated by past activities such as training, maintenance of vehicles and buildings, storage of supplies, and waste disposal. Contamination may have resulted from accidental spills, or from practices that were legal and acceptable at the time but that are now recognized by the Federal government as possibly harmful to the environment.

The Navy's Installation Restoration (IR) program identifies contaminated sites that should be considered for cleanup actions. The IR program is designed to deal with the most contaminated sites first, to make the best use of available funding.

Preliminary investigations of the Navy's property on Vieques Island were conducted between 1988 and 1992, under the IR program and previous programs. The purpose was to determine whether specific toxic or hazardous materials might have contaminated the environment as a result of Navy activities.

Those studies identified areas of potential contamination on NASD, but did not find a high or unsafe level of risk to either human health or the environment. Further investigation was recommended for some of those sites.

ENVIRONMENTAL INVESTIGATION

The Navy intends to eliminate or minimize any risk from public exposure to possible contaminants on NASD as part of transferring this Federal property to Puerto Rico. The Navy is speeding

up the process of investigating the NASD to accomplish this. The goal is to determine whether any cleanup actions are needed to protect human health and the environment when the land is transferred.

Work Plan

A Work Plan describes the objectives, technical approach, and schedule for a site investigation. It describes where and how samples will be collected and handled, which contaminants will be investigated, and how the samples will be analyzed.

The Puerto Rico Environmental Quality Board (EQB) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reviewed the Work Plans for the NASD. The plans are available for public inspection in the Public Information Repositories (see next page).

Preliminary Assessment/Site Investigation

Field work for an Expanded Preliminary Assessment/Site Investigation (PA/SI) of the NASD was completed in June 2000.

Ten sites were investigated, where waste disposal or other activities may have resulted in contamination. Samples were collected and analyzed from soil, sediment, surface water, or groundwater. An independent laboratory validated all of the analytical data.

The study's objectives were to determine whether a release of hazardous materials has occurred at these sites and, based on the data, to recommend either further investigation or no further action for each site.

The Final PA/SI report should be available for public review in November 2000.

Environmental Baseline Survey

The Navy prepared an Environmental Baseline Survey (EBS) for the entire NASD. An EBS is an overview of the environmental condition of Navy-owned property, focusing on the likely presence of hazardous substances.

The EBS identified most of the land that will be conveyed to the Municipality of Vieques as uncontaminated by hazardous substances or petroleum products, but it defined approximately 50 acres as "potentially contaminated."

The EBS discussed the 10 potentially-contaminated sites that were investigated under the PA/SI last spring. The EBS also identified another seven potentially-contaminated sites. In addition,

the EBS discussed other non-IR environmental concerns, such as asbestos and lead-based paint in buildings.

Finding of Suitability for Early Transfer

The Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation and Liability Act of 1980 (CERCLA) requires that all remedial action necessary to protect human health and the environment from hazardous substances be taken before Federal property is transferred. However, CERCLA Section 120(h)(3)(C) allows for the "early transfer" of potentially-contaminated property before clean-up is completed, if certain conditions are met.

The Navy's Finding of Suitability for Early Transfer (FOSET) was based on the EBS and on available information about future land use. If the Governor agrees with this finding, the Navy will complete the investigation and cleanup of contaminated sites after the land is transferred.

What Happens Next?

Field work will begin in November for a Phase II PA/SI, to investigate the seven new potentially-contaminated sites that the EBS has identified.

The PA/SI report recommends a full Remedial Investigation (RI) at 4 of the 10 known sites and some additional study at the remaining sites.

Several small unexploded ordnance were identified at one of these four sites, the Inactive Waste Explosive Open Burn/Detonation Range. A fence will be installed around this site for public safety, until the RI and final remedial action are completed.

The Navy is working closely with EQB and EPA. After investigations are completed, the Navy will propose any necessary remedial actions for EQB's and EPA's review and approval. The public also will be invited to comment on the proposed actions.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Navy published a notice in local newspapers on October 25-27, 2000, inviting the public to review the FOSET and related documents. The Navy will publish another newspaper notice and a second fact sheet when the PA/SI report is released for public review. The Navy intends to hold a public meeting to discuss the PA/SI and future actions.

Community Relations Plan

To encourage ongoing public participation in the IR program, the Navy (in consultation with EPA) will plan and implement a public involvement program during the investigation and cleanup of the NASD.

The Navy will prepare a Community Relations Plan, based on discussions with community leaders and Vieques Island residents. The plan will describe how the Navy will make information available, as well as how elected officials and concerned citizens can participate in the decision-making process through two-way communication with the Navy.

Where Can I Find More Information?

The Navy maintains two Public Information Repositories at public libraries in Ceiba and Vieques, PR. New IR documents, such as the PA/SI, EBS, and FOSET, are added regularly.

The Public Information Repository in Ceiba contains the complete Administrative Record File of the IR program for Navy property in Puerto Rico, both on Vieques Island and U.S. Naval Station Roosevelt Roads on the main island. The Public Information Repository in Vieques mostly contains information about Navy property on Vieques Island. Some information is also kept in a museum in Vieques, because the libraries are not open on the weekend.

PUBLIC INFORMATION REPOSITORIES:

Biblioteca Pública, José Gautier Benitez

Calle Baldorioty de Castro, Vieques Island, PR

Hours: Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.

Telephone: 787-741-3706

Vieques Historic Archives

Museo Fuerte Conde de Mirasol

Barriada Fuerte, Vieques Island, PR

Hours: Wednesday-Sunday 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Telephone: 787-741-4688 or 787-741-1717

Biblioteca Pública Municipal,

Alejandrina Quiñones Rivera

Calle Fco. Gauthier #816, URB. Rosy Valley, Ceiba, PR

Hours: Monday-Thursday, 8:00 a.m.-12 Noon and 1:00-6:00 p.m.; Friday, 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

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