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NEWSPAPER ARTICLE "BURNING HERBICIDE STOCK IN U S SOUGHT BY AF" NCBC
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New Orleans, Louisiana

Burning Herbicide Stock in U.S. Sought by AF

Use of Chemical Banned in Vietnam

By ROBERT A. DOBKIN

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Air Force, left with 2.3 million gallons of herbicide after its use was banned in Vietnam, is seeking approval to destroy the entire stockpile in Illinois or Texas near major cities.

"The probable environmental consequences of the proposed action will be minor or insignificant," the Air Force said in an environmental-impact statement filed earlier this month with federal and state agencies in Texas, Illinois and Mississippi.

About 75 per cent of the material, once used to strip away jungle cover concealing enemy troops and supplies, still is in Vietnam. The remainder is at Gulfport, Miss.; Kelly Air Force Base, Tex.; and Eglin Air Force Base, Fla.

DISPOSAL METHOD

The Air Force proposes to dispose of it in commercial incinerators at Deer Park, Tex., near Houston, or at Sauget, Ill., across the Mississippi River from St. Louis. The final selection has not been made.

"The 'adverse' environmental effects which cannot be avoided are the generation and discharge of combustion by-products and liquid effluent residue into the atmosphere and public waterways," the Air Force said in its draft statement.

But it added this would "not adversely affect human health, esthetically or culturally valuable surroundings, standard of living or other aspects of life."

In its statement, the Air Force said the chemical would be incinerated at 2,500 degrees fahrenheit at a rate of 2,000 to 5,000 gallons a day.

THE BY-PRODUCT

By-products of the burning would be carbon dioxide, a non-toxic gas, and hydrogen chloride, an acid which would be converted to salt and discharged into public waterways.

The Air Force has asked the three states and federal government to comment on its proposal within 30 days. If there is a public outcry, the Air Force may hold a public hearing before turning in the final impact statement to the Environmental Protection Agency.

Air Force officials said facilities for destroying the herbicide safely are not available in Vietnam.

Use of the orange defoliant in

Vietnam was banned in 1970 by Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird after the Agriculture Department reported that large doses may possibly cause birth defects in animals. About 5.5 million acres were sprayed in Vietnam from 1962 through 1969.

The leftover herbicide cost \$16.9 million and the expense of its destruction has not been calculated.

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