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NEWS RELEASE FROM U S AIR FORCE REGARDING DISPOSITION OF HERBICIDE
ORANGE NCBC GULFPORT MS
10/13/1976
U S AIR FORCE



NEWS RELEASE

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

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Air Force Public Information Office, Washington, D. C.

The Air Force has filed an amendment to its final environmental statement with the council on environmental quality (CEQ) regarding the disposition of Herbicide Orange.

In the amendment, the Air Force proposes that stocks of Herbicide Orange be sold to a private company for reprocessing into registered herbicides. The reprocessing is proposed instead of ocean incineration of the herbicide. The reprocessing proposal complies with the provisions of the Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) consider land-based alternatives before issuing a permit for ocean disposal. Reprocessing also complies with EPA guidelines that the destruction of pesticides and herbicides only be considered when the recovery of useful value is determined to be unfeasible.

Reprocessing herbicide orange would recover a useful and valuable herbicide, avoid the cost of incineration, and provide a potential net return to the federal government.

The Air Force final statement in December 1974 proposed destruction of the Herbicide Orange aboard a specifically designed incinerator vessel in a remote area of the Pacific Ocean. During hearings on an Air Force request regarding permits to incinerate at sea in 1975, the

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EPA requested further exploration be done to prove the feasibility of removing the herbicide dioxin before granting permits for non-productive destruction of the herbicide.

Herbicide Orange was used as a defoliant in Vietnam. It is an equal mixture of two commercially available weed control products--2,4-D and 2,4,5-T and is reddish brown in color. There are some 15,000 55-gallon drums of Orange stored at the Naval Construction Battalion Center (NCBC), in Gulfport, Mississippi, and another 25,000 55-gallon drums at Johnston Island in the Pacific.

DOD halted the use of Herbicide Orange in 1970 when the Departments of Agriculture and Health, Education and Welfare restricted certain uses of 2,4,5-T. The Air Force was named executive agency for the storage and ultimate safe disposal of the Orange stocks when its use was discontinued. During the manufacture of 2,4,5-T, process fluctuations caused certain lots of the Herbicide to contain a small amount of a toxic contaminant, TCDD.

The average concentration of TCDD in Orange stocks is about 2MG/KG, and the total amount of TCDD in the entire stock of Orange is about 50 pounds.

The Defense Supply Agency (DSA) was requested to work with the Air Force to determine if reprocessing and resale of the Herbicide Orange stocks was technically and economically feasible. A pilot plant program, conducted at the NCBC, successfully adsorbed the dioxin onto activated charcoal and reduced the Herbicide concentrations of TCDD to no more than 0.1 MG/KG TCDD. Dioxin (TCDD) reductions to or below this level

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would allow herbicide registration for commercial sale.

The reprocessing method would allow the usable herbicides to be reclaimed for public use and offers the government a return on its original investment.

DSA proposes to accomplish the sale of Herbicide Orange for reprocessing at the existing two storage sites. Using the storage sites provides maximum control over the unprocessed herbicides and minimizes any potential hazards inherent in their transportation.

Sealed cartridges of the activated carbon used in the reprocessing of Herbicide Orange would have to be placed in monitored, recoverable storage until subsequent environmental analyses can determine an acceptable disposal technique for the carbon. Selection of a storage site would be based on the site's remoteness, controlled access, storage facilities, an arid climate and in an area of low seismic activity. It is anticipated that a site under federal jurisdiction would provide maximum control with a minimum impact on local authorities.

Copies of the amendment to the final statement may be obtained from the USAF Occupational and Environmental Health Laboratory (AFSC), Kelly AFB, Texas 78241.