

United States Senate

August 3, 1981

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Chief of Legislative Affairs
Office of Legislative Affairs
Room 5c760, The Pentagon
Washington, D. C. 20350

Dear Admiral:

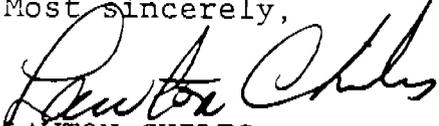
Enclosed you will find correspondence I recently received from Mr. John N. Austin regarding his concerns about chemical dump sites at the Naval Air Station in Jacksonville, Florida.

Prior to his letter, Mr. Austin forwarded a tape to me which outlines background information on this matter. Mr. Austin advised that a news story on this matter broke in early June on two television stations in Jacksonville about the chemical dumps being located at the Naval Air Station in Jacksonville. According to Mr. Austin, there were 100 thousand gallons of open paint sludge pits and 100 thousand gallons of spent fuel pits having been accumulated over a period of 30 years. In late June, based on an inquiry by Mr. Austin with the State of Florida's Department of Environmental Regulation, the news broke on the television stations that there was also PCB pollution in the area. Mr. Austin called the local television stations and told them what he had learned from the State. The news media interviewed the Naval officials who acknowledged the situation.

Mr. Austin's contention is that, especially in relationship to the PCB pollution, the Navy has the responsibility of notifying the public when a danger like this is evident. According to the newscast, the Navy also has some problems at Mayport and Cecil Field. Mr. Austin feels that the Navy probably has sludge pits like this at Navy installations throughout the United States.

I would appreciate your looking into this matter and providing me with a report. I will look forward to hearing from you soon.

With kindest regards, I am

Most sincerely,

LAWTON CHILES

Aug 7 10 10 PM '81

LC/mbk
Enclosure

525034

July 25 1981
c356 Sundown Drive
Jacksonville, FL. 32210
(904) 771 3098

U.S. Senator Lawton Chiles
Federal Building
Lakeland, FL. 33801

Dear Senator Chiles;

Thank you for your letter of July 22, in reference to chemical dump sites at N.A.S. Jax.

The following info may assist you in your investigation of the problem.

Geraghty & Miller, Consulting Ground Water Hydrologists & Geologists, of 13902 North Dale Mabry Highway-P.O. Box 271175-Tampa, FL. 33688-Tel. (813) 961 1921 prepared a study of the contamination of the soil & ground water from the disposal of oil and volatile products into pits at NAS JAX, under a contract number N62467-78-C-0717, for the Southern Division of the Naval Facilities ~~Engineering~~ Engineering Command, with the final report being made May 27 1980.

While the oil and chemical waste dumping is serious, I am especially disturbed over the PCB spill that occurred at a transformer site on NAS in 1978. Unused transformers were shot full of holes by vandals, causing the PCB to leak into the ground. The Navy later removed the useless transformers, which had been behind a locked gate in the transformer yard.

The Geraghty & Miller report, (pages 52 to 58) speak of a test well, (No. S-14), located nearest to the PCB contaminated area, that shows a leakage of PCB into the shallow ground water, (17 ug/l). The accepted level for PCB in drinking water is 1ug/l.

This test well, (S-14) is located not too far from the deep aquifer well that supplies on base housing. The Geraghty & Miller report shows concern that if the casing of the drinking water well is not perfect, then there is a matter of concern that PCB might enter the drinking water supply.

In a recent telephone conversation with National E.P.A. in Washington, I was advised that once the PCB entered the ground water supply, it was there to stay. Eventually, this PCB can enter the St. John's river, get into the fish and shrimp and into you and I, or our descendants, as there is nothing in nature that will degrade the PCB.

The TV coverage, (and I have video tape recordings) indicate that after the Navy removed the transformers from the transformer yard, the gate was left unlocked, and that children from nearby base housing used the area to play in.

To sum up the PCB problem—the spill occurred in 1978, the contaminated soil is still there, the ground water supply is now contaminated, children played in the contaminated area, and the Navy knew of this problem, but failed to notify the public, or, the workers on the base. In my opinion, a case of criminal negligence.

The Florida Times Union, on June 28, carried a story about another PCB problem, on their front page. This concerns the Cecil Field Air Station, and again, in my opinion, another case of criminal negligence on the part of the responsible authorities.

C.O. of NAS, Jax, in a letter to Congressman Bennett, admitted that it was common practice for about 30 years, to dispose of chemical wastes into pits around the station.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)

Sam G. [Signature]

I respectfully suggest that it is a matter of national concern about the past dumping of hazardous wastes aboard military bases, nationwide, and that a complete study be made of these past dumping practices.

Please note that the Gerhaghty & Miller report was known to the Navy on May 27, 1980, but that to the best of my knowledge, no report was ever made to the public, until TV 12 in Jacksonville made their report on TV, June 4 1981.

Mr Walter Honour, the City of Jacksonville chief of the Bio-Environmental Service, when asked by myself, in a phone conversation, if he knew of the existence of the Gerhaghty-Miller report, stated that he knew of it when it first became available. I then asked him why the public was not notified, and he stated that he did not feel that was necessary.

It might be that because Mr. Honour was a former Commanding Officer of NAS, his decision not to notify the public of the PCB problem, although his job with the City was to protect our environment, could have been influenced by his Navy connection.

Another Federal Agency has now become concerned with this PCB problem.

OSHA has entered the case, (case number 12-6002-0058) by means of a certified letter, dated July 8 1981, to myself. This letter came from G. Larry Wyatt, Assistant Regional Administrator, Training, Education, Consultation & Federal Agency Programs, OSHA-1375 Peachtree ST. N.E. Atlanta, GA. 30309. He, or Marilyn McCartney, Federal Agency Program Officer, may be reached at FTS 257-7482, or, (404) 881-7482

Information has just come to me from a former fellow employee at NAS JAX, that the Navy did build on base housing, (about 1973 & 74) on a pre existing radio active dump site at NAS.

Environmental Pollution by private industry is inexcusable, but when the very Federal Govt. that is supposed to protect our environmental Safety, does the same thing, and, fails to let the public know, borders on criminal negligence.

Having just completed a eighteen month service on the Florida Fourth Wide State Grand Jury, I will be traveling on a much earned vacation. I plan to visit with relatives on Cape Cod, but mail addressed to me at this address will be forwarded.

You might want to view the following TV broadcasts TV 17 news June 23 & 24 TV 12 news 6PM & 11PM June 4 1981-6PM, June 24-12 noon June 25-6PM June 25 PM June 28 1981 & 11.40PM June 28 1981

I sincerely hope that this info will be of help in curbing the environmental pollution caused by our military bases. I do want a safe environment for my daughter & her children. Since Jacksonville has twice the cancer rate of surrounding areas, we need to do all we can to ensure a safe environment.

Sincerely Yours,

John Northam Austin



Disabled Veteran
Retired Federal Employee
Member, Fourth Florida State Wide Grand Jury
Member, Naval Air Lodge 1630-International Ass'n of Machinists & Aero Space Workers

June 28 1981

A True Statement of the Facts surrounding the discovery of the P.C.B. and Chemical Waste Dump sites at Jacksonville, s Naval Stations:

John Austin, a retired member of ~~XXXX~~ Naval Air Lodge 1630, International Association of Machinists & Aerospace Workers, was, on June 1 1981, a part of a group of Union members that were engaged in informational picketing at the gates of the Naval Air Station. News man Ken Amaro, from the TV 12 news Dept., came with a camera crew to report the event. Mr. Austin suggested to Mr. Amaro that perhaps he should look into a possible pollution problem aboard N.A.S. Jax.

TV 12 did investigate, and on June 4 1981, on their 6 pm news broadcast, reported finding two chemical dump sites aboard N.A.S. Jax.

Upon seeing this report, (and making video tape copies of this and subsequent news reports on TV 12 and TV 17) Mr. Austin contacted a Miss Theresa Ashworth of the Florida Dept. of Environmental Regulation-3426 Hills Road, Jax. FL 32207 Tel. (904) ³⁹⁶⁻⁶⁹⁵⁹ ~~441-3998~~, on June 5 1981, and requested information her dept. might have on the chemical dump sites.

On June 23, 1981, Miss Ashworth called Mr. Austin, at about nine o'clock a.m., and informed him of the existence of a report made by a consulting firm, for the Navy, sometime in the past year. Miss Ashworth stated that the report included P.C.B. pollution problems.

Acting on this information, Mr. Austin contacted TV 12 newsroom that day, and informed them of the problem. TV 17 was also contacted, and the facts of the P.C.B. problem were investigated and made public over the tv stations.

This was the first knowledge the public had of this problem, and it was, not until Sun. June 28 1981, that the Florida Times-Union printed a story on the P.C.B. problem.

Information gathered by TV 12 indicates possible criminal negligence of Navy officials in allowing the P.C.B. site at N.A.S. to remain unlocked and available to children who live at nearby naval housing. The evidence also indicates possible criminal negligence by Navy officials ~~xxxx~~ by failure to

report to the Public, of the P.C.B. pollution, although the problem was known to the officials for a period of years.

TV 12's investigation also turned up the pollution that exists at the other two Jacksonville Navy Bases, Cecil Field, and Mayport.

Since it now appears that this pollution problem seems to be a common problem of Naval military bases, it seems a logical conclusion that similar problems might exist at other military bases across our nation. Full credit for reporting this terrible pollution problem and making it known to the public is due to the efforts of a dedicated public servant, Miss Ashworth, and to ~~xx~~ TV 12 and TV 17 news departments.

It is encouraging to see the Florida Times-Union take an active interest in this problem, even at this late date. (see article in June 28, 1981 issue, Page 1).

It seems reasonable to expect a full scale, no holds barred, investigation should be conducted nationwide, of possible chemical pollution by military bases.

The very thought of military officials concealing vital information on environmental pollution aboard installations under their control, should cause great concern on the part of the public.

John N. Austin

John Northam Austin
Member, Fourth Florida State Wide Grand Jury

Retired Federal Employee, Retired Member of

Naval Air Lodge 1630, International Association
of Machinists & Aerospace Workers

Air stations knew of PCB, but Navy stalled on cleanup

(From Page A-1)

wood Holley, owner of Holley Electric, said he found "three 55-gallon drums of Askarel [PCB] that leaked their entire contents on the ground, due to rusted drum bottoms."

"We find many serious conditions that would draw heavy fines for non-compliance with EPA rules. Twenty transformers have very serious problems and should be corrected immediately," Holley said.

He said later that many of these PCB leaks were directly above desks, near work areas and close to the mess hall.

While waiting for the private company to clean up the PCB problem, officials at Cecil Field said they have tried to keep the PCB under control.

Lt. Cmdr. Wayne Johnson, assistant public-works officer at Cecil Field, said his department has been inspecting the leaks every month.

Although they store the contaminated refuse in 55-gallon drums, Johnson said, he is not certain what happens to the drums.

If PCB is so dangerous, why did it take the Navy so long to hire a company to clean up the mess?

"It's the type of project that requires funding from a higher level," Johnson said.

He said the work was similar to a construction contract.

"All these new programs come out and they never give you the money or the people to manage it," he said.

Documents show that Cmdr. W.E. Ellis Jr., officer in charge of public works, tried to find money for the cleanup, but for two years the work orders and the money were tied up in the bureaucratic shuffle of the Navy.

On July 2, 1979, Ellis wrote an urgent letter to the Southern Division of the Naval Facilities Engineering Command in Charleston asking them for assistance in cleaning up the PCB.

With his letter, Ellis included a proposal for cleaning up property that was contaminated by 165 gallons of spilled PCB.

He also suggested the repair of 18 transformers he said were leaking PCB and the disposal of other defective spare transformers.

He estimated the repairs would cost \$26,315.

"Urgent action is required to provide funding for this project to correct all PCB transformer problems and preclude EPA intervention," Ellis said in his report.

Only a couple of the leaks were im-

ceiving information about possible PCB violations at the base. Carlton Layne, area EPA inspector from Lakeland, entered Cecil Field to investigate.

During this inspection, in May 1980, he documented many of the same violations Holley found a year before.

Layne took samples from the transformer spills inside the buildings and outside. A chemical analysis showed high concentrations of PCB leaking from the transformers.

The reports said catch pans filled with contaminated water were under some of the transformers.

Layne said that if a private industry committed the same violations, it could be fined up to \$25,000.

But how do you fine the U.S. Navy?

"It's like robbing Peter to pay Paul," Layne said.

And as Holley later said, "The Department of Defense doesn't have much fear of the EPA or anything else."

The Times-Union began its investigation of the PCB problem at Cecil Field about a month ago after receiving complaints from a worker who claimed he was ordered to wipe up some spilled PCB with rags while wearing no protective clothing.

"No way," Johnson said. "The procedures are to wear protective clothing when they're working anywhere near PCB."

A company from South Carolina has recently been hired by the Navy to clean up the PCB contamination at Cecil Field.

At Jacksonville NAS, areas are contaminated with PCB, oil and paint solvent, said Navy spokesman Nick Young.

He said that in 1977 some transformers in storage were shot full of holes by vandals. The transformers leaked all their PCB contents into the soil.

The area is now fenced in and is supposed to be kept locked.

"There's no real danger, unless you're walking through them," Young said.

He said another area near the PCB site contains a large amount of oil dumped in the late 1960s. The base installed a special cleaning system to keep the oil out of the nearby river, he said.

Another contaminated area contains a hole filled with paint solvents.

Young said that a massive cleanup project for the PCB, oil and paint solvents at the base will cost the Navy \$300,000 in next year's budget.

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U.S. finally pays to clean up PCB at naval air bases

By Brad Johns

Special Staff Writer

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The Navy has known for many years that cancer-causing PCB is contaminating areas inside Jacksonville's two naval air stations.

But only now are the bases — Cecil Field and Jacksonville NAS — finally getting the money needed to clean up the hazardous wastes.

Finally happening," said Don Bayly of the city's water department central office.

Transformers leaking PCB were found on the Navy property.

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It's been slow getting started, but it's

The situation at Cecil Field is so serious that a federal inspector said the Navy could have been fined up to \$25,000 for safety violations — if it weren't for the intervention.

PCB is considered so toxic that any material it touches — including dirt and soil — must be dug up, placed in metal drums and then in a heavily approved landfill.

At Cecil Field, the report of an area contaminated by the Federal Environmental Protection Agency last year was over at \$100,000.

(See AIR, Page A-3)