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# The Florida Times-Union

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Jacksonville, Thursday, March 21, 1991

## A VERSE FOR TODAY

*Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.— St. Luke 6:23*

## Speed toxic-waste site cleanup on the nation's military bases

The pace of cleanup of toxic wastes at military bases around the nation, including Florida, must be stepped up. It is now entirely too slow.

Since 1976, only 287 of 14,401 potentially polluted sites at 1,579 defense sites in the nation have been cleaned up, according to congressional investigator Don Gray. He works for the subcommittee on environment, energy and national resources of the House Government Operations Committee.

As part of the welcome being extended to the military personnel who took part in Operation Desert Storm, a greater effort should be made to remove toxics from the environments in which these personnel work.

For the vast majority of the toxic dumps, it is fruitless to try to assess blame. The material was buried at a time when burial was deemed an acceptable way to get rid of such wastes. Jacksonville's Hipps Road dump — now in the cleanup phase — is an example. It is one of four defense sites in Florida among 100 in the nation that are on the Superfund list.

The National Toxic Campaign Fund issued a report last week titled "The U.S. Military's Toxic Legacy." John Austin, of Jacksonville was a contributor to the report and was chosen to participate in the report's release.

The report cited a Nov. 15 Florida Times-Union article quoting the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as saying it would take a three-member investigative team five years to check out a list of 270 formerly used military sites in Florida.

Many of these date back 50 years or more, to the years before and during World War II. One of the case studies in the report is of Jacksonville Naval Air Station, saying the Navy has identified at least 43 potential toxic waste sites on the station's 3,820 acres.

Other Florida bases cited in the report are Tampa's MacDill Air Force Base with 43 pollution sites; Eglin Air Force Base, 37; Pensacola Naval Air Station, 37; Patrick Air Force Base, 37; and Tyndall Air Force Base, 28.

The bulk of the military's suspected toxic waste sites are in the process of being researched and assessed. Cleanup work is in progress on only 905 of the 14,401 suspected sites, in addition to the 287 sites where the work has been completed.

What is needed is a top-level decision in the Defense Department to give cleanup a higher priority, accompanied by a decision in both the Defense Department and Congress to put up the money to do the job.