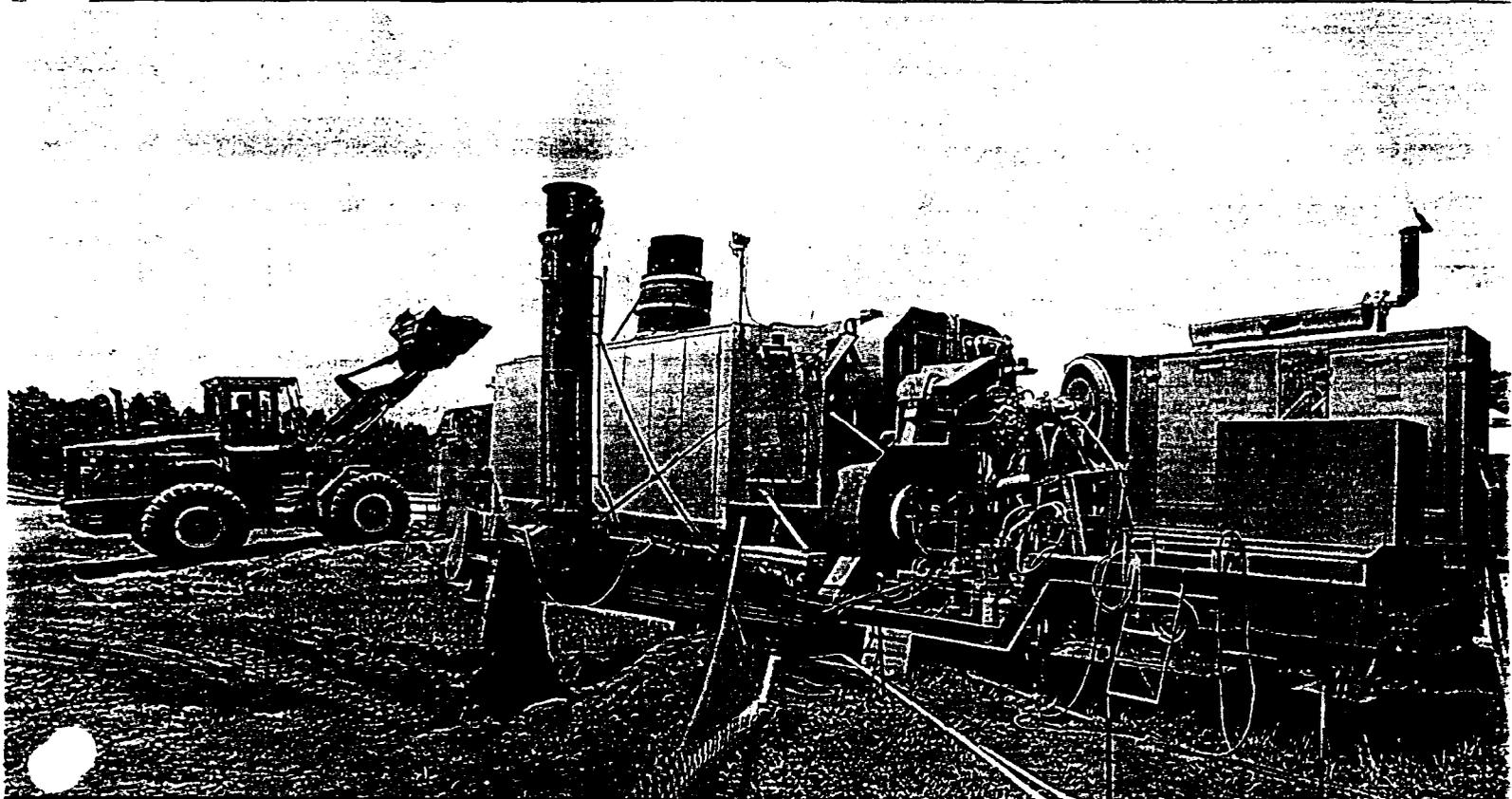


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NEWSPAPER ARTICLE "CUTTING BACK FUNDS ON BASES" NSB KINGS BAY GA
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Cutting back on base

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— Bob Self/staff

A front-end loader dumps soil contaminated with jet fuel into a hopper, which feeds into a furnace that burns off impurities at the old fire training pit at Jacksonville Naval Air Station. The base lost \$2.6 million for study and cleanup of toxic waste.

Jacksonville's NAS hit hard

By John Fritz
staff writer

A witch's cauldron of toxic waste polluting military bases in Jacksonville and across the country is continuing to brew because of cuts in the budget for environmental cleanup.

The new Republican Congress — the enemy in the eyes of many environmentalists — slashed \$300 million for cleanup work at bases this year and has proposed wiping out \$200 million next year.

"This represents the first line of an assault on cleaning up contamination," said Hawaii Kripke, who follows environmental budget issues for Friends of the Earth.

"The military's spending overall is not declining nearly as fast as spending on military cleanup," Kripke said. "The issue is priorities. Many in the new Congress have decided that cleaning up contamination is not a priority."

The result of decades of environmental abuse, military bases nationwide are pol-

luted with PCBs, mercury, cadmium and other dangerous toxics. They can cause myriad health problems, from cancer to liver, kidney and brain damage.

This year's cuts stopped cleanup at some of the Defense Department's most polluted sites. Contamination at some might be 100 times greater than the legal standard, said Sherri Wasserman Goodman, the Pentagon's top official on environmental matters.

Bases in Jacksonville and South Georgia lost \$3.7 million from their fiscal 1995 cleanup funds.

Citizens should get involved and let their elected representatives know if they are concerned about what is happening, said Goodman, deputy undersecretary of defense for environmental security.

"It's their health, their environment and their communities that are at risk," Goodman said.

(See FUNDS, Page A-4)

Environmental cuts

Cuts to the Department of Defense Environmental Restoration Account, the military's primary account to investigate and clean up toxic waste sites at active military bases, for fiscal year 1995 include:

Where	DERA budget	Amount eliminated
Jacksonville Naval Air Station	\$14 million	\$2.6 million
Mayport Naval Station	Approx. \$5 million	\$275,000
Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base	N/A*	\$800,000
Nationwide	\$1.78 billion	\$300 million

* Kings Bay officials could not provide DERA budget.
Note: Cecil Field was not affected by DERA cuts because money for its cleanup comes from a separate account set up for cleanup of bases slated for closure.
Source: U.S. Navy

— Steve Nelson/staff

Funds for base cleanup cut

(From Page A-1)

Unfortunately, the reductions come when many bases are moving from conducting studies to doing physical cleanups, Kripke said. Next year, 69 percent of the funds are earmarked for actual cleanup — the largest percentage to date.

"It doesn't seem this is the right time to be cutting funding," Kripke said. "Just when we're trying to start doing the real cleanup, Congress is yanking the money out."

In its fiscal 1996 defense authorization bill, the House cut \$200 million from the Pentagon's \$1.62 billion request for cleanup funds.

A cut of that magnitude could mean a \$10 million loss for Florida next year — 20 percent of the \$50 million it is slated to receive, Goodman said.

The cuts for base cleanup are "pretty much in line with what Congress is doing to the environment in general, specifically the Clean Water Act, specifically the Endangered Species Act," said Dan Donaldson, chairman of the Northeast Florida Sierra Club.

"It doesn't surprise me," he said. "It's not an environmentally friendly Congress — that's a fact."

Hardest hit locally this year, Jacksonville Naval Air Station lost \$2.6 million of \$14 million earmarked for the study and cleanup of toxic waste sites, officials said. The base was declared a federal Superfund environmental cleanup site in 1989.

"This is going to be painful. There's no way around it," said Stuart Johnston, a spokesman for Jacksonville NAS.

The base has devised ways to reduce or postpone cleanup costs at some polluted sites. And pre-cleanup investigations at other sites will be delayed, said Kevin Gartland, environmental director.

"It slows us down. It does not stop us," Gartland said. No cleanups currently under way will be affected by the midstream funding cuts, he stressed.

The largest single cut was \$2 million to dispose of dirt contaminated with radioactive radium paint used through the late 1950s to make glow-in-the-dark aircraft dials.

Now, instead of the dirt being trucked to a hazardous waste landfill, it will be dumped at a contaminated landfill on base, and the whole mess will be cleaned up later, Gartland said.

Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base, Ga., lost \$800,000 for treating contaminated ground water seeping from an abandoned landfill polluted with cancer-causing vinyl chloride. A plume of contaminated water already has reached the adjacent Crooked River Plantation.

Officials at Kings Bay, like those at the other affected bases, say the contamination poses no imminent health threat.

Mayport Naval Station will delay cleaning a jet fuel spill near the waterfront and abandoned wastewater sludge drying beds. The base lost \$275,000 of its approximately \$5 million cleanup budget because of the mid-year budget reductions.

Earlier this year, Congress voted to slash \$300 million, about 15 percent, from the approved \$1.78 billion Department of Defense Environmental Restoration Account. Known as DERA, it is the primary cash pool for cleaning up contamination at active military bases.

Florida, which lost \$13 million, was hardest hit after Alaska, California, Texas, Utah and Virginia.

Bases scheduled to close, such as Cecil Field, another Jacksonville Superfund site, are part of a "fast track" cleanup program. Money for them comes from a separate account.

The DERA cuts, piled on top of a budget already \$400 million lighter than the administration requested, were spread across all the armed services. The Navy's share was \$67 million.

The reductions were aimed at funneling more money into defense training and readiness and to offset the costs of U.S. military peace-

keeping operations, Kripke said.

During last year's readiness debate, U.S. Rep. Tillie Fowler, R-Fla., complained about "increasingly spending precious defense dollars on non-defense items" such as environmental cleanup.

"Paying for these non-defense items is another strain on defense dollars and readiness," said Fowler.

Fowler said nobody disagrees the bases must be cleaned up. The controversy is over who should pay.

"There are a lot of us who really think the money should be allocated and come out of EPA," Fowler said, referring to the Environmental

Protection Agency.

Others in Congress argue the military made the mess and should be responsible for cleaning it up.

"In our view, environmental cleanup is a real cost incurred by DOD in pursuance of its national security responsibilities, and, like any other kind of overhead cost, should be paid for out of its budget," says a letter members of Congress were being urged to sign.

The letter to Rep. C.W. Young, R-Fla., chairman of the national security subcommittee on the House Committee on Appropriations, is being circulated by Reps. Gerry Studds, D-Mass, and Robert Ehrlich, R-Md.

"Defense is about more than buying bombs and fighting wars," Goodman said in an interview. "Defense is also about being part of community, and, therefore, we must be responsible citizens."

The Department of Defense is committed to cleaning up its past pollution not only because it has a legal mandate, but because it is the right thing to do, Goodman said.

"We want to protect the people who live in and around our military bases," she said. "We believe the men and women of our armed forces and the communities that support them are entitled to a clean and healthy environment."

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