

N00639.AR.002100
NSA MID SOUTH
5090.3a

NEWSPAPER ARTICLE "NSA ENVIRONMENTAL CLEANUP REPORTED NEAR HALFWAY
MARK" MILLINGTON SUPPACT TN
11/8/1995
MILLINGTON STAR

NSA environmental cleanup reported near halfway mark

**By Bill Short
Star Staff Writer**

Memphis Naval Support Activity in Millington is almost halfway through the process of cleaning up areas of potential contamination on the base.

David Porter, Base Realignment and Closure Commission environmental coordinator for the Naval Support Activity, said recently there are 10 steps in the process, and the base is now finishing Step 5, which is evaluation and testing of the sites.

"Now, we're going to go in and do feasibility studies for cleanup," he said. "And then we'll actually do the cleanup."

Porter, environmental engineer with Southern Division Naval Facilities Engineering in Charleston, SC, made the comments as one of two guest speakers for the monthly Russell Neighbors Dutch Treat Breakfast at North Shelby Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7175 at 4681 Cuba-Millington Road. He acknowledged that the breakfast crowd was probably interested in when the property will be transferred to the city.

"There's a federal law that says

we as the federal government cannot transfer property by deed unless it is clean and uncontaminated," Porter noted. "We can, however, lease property, and there's some of that going on right now."

He said the city has leased Hangar N126 and is getting ready to lease the airfield and some other structures.

"Although there are portions of the facility that are going to take longer to clean up than others," Porter said, "the vast majority of the property on the north side of the Naval Support Activity is clean and in a condition where we can transfer it."

But Porter acknowledged that federal law requires the completion of an environmental impact statement, which is currently underway. He said the process evaluates the impact that realigning the facility will have on the environment and the local community.

Porter said the impact statement is scheduled to be completed in early July 1996. At that point, the base can begin transferring property it knows is clean and uncontaminated. After work is completed on property that is con-

taminated, he said, the base can begin transferring it.

"We can start doing that somewhere around the first of 1997," he said. "We hope to have the entire process completed by the year 2000."

Although the base did not receive as much money from Congress this year as it had hoped, Porter said he does not think it will impact the city's plans for reuse of the facility. He said the "funding outlook" is pretty good.

"You never know with the federal government, though, and the attitude of the current Congress and president," he said. "But we do hope to get full funding next year and for the remainder of the program."

Porter said there has been recent talk in Congress about extending the program to 10 years to attempt to fund it over a longer range. He noted that the Naval Support Activity does not have many of the major environmental problems of other facilities.

"This was never a large-scale, industrial-operations type of base," he said. "So, our problems here are not as severe as they are at other facilities. And consequently, they're not going to be as expensive to clean up, which is very much in our favor."

me

To date, Porter said, between \$3 million and \$4 million worth of clean-up work has been awarded, but only \$1.5 million to \$2 million of that has been spent thus far.

A total of 67 sites are being investigated on the north and south sides of the base, he said, with 34 of them in the area that is to be excised and transferred to the city. But two sites appear to be of greater concern than the other areas.

One is the firefighter training facility operated near Navy Road, which has some petroleum contamination. The other area is adjacent to Hangar N126. Porter said there was a plating facility in the hangar that discharged into a dry well on its south side.

"We have done extensive testing and evaluation of the geology and ground water in that area," he noted. "We're very lucky that there is a very thick layer, a confining layer of clay that protects the drinking water source for the base. The drinking water source is safe and has not been contaminated."

For the current fiscal year, Porter said, the base cleanup team

identified a need of \$2.9 million for the clean-up program. Only \$1.6 million was funded, leaving a \$1.3 million shortfall.

Porter said about \$144,000 of that \$1.6 million is being spent on asbestos removals, \$1.2 million on underground tank removals, \$180,000 on further investigations, and about \$66,000 is planned this year for actual clean-up work.

Dr. David Watt, operations analyst for HealthSphere of America Inc. and a member of the Restoration Advisory Board, told the breakfast crowd that the goal of the RAB is to improve the community's access to information.

He said the RAB is composed of three members from the BRAC clean-up team, 10 residents of the community representing various interests and two co-chairmen, Capt. J. A. "Tony" Mallory, commanding officer of the Naval Support Activity, and Millington Mayor George R. Harvell Jr.

"Some members, like myself, are just kind of nosy and want to know what's going on," he said. "Others have specific points of view that are environmentally based. Some have an interest in the commercial development of the land as it comes under civilian control, and are looking at it from that aspect."

Watt noted that all the RAB members are serving "pro bono" and receive no remuneration. The board's actions are taken with motions and votes as a result of consensus and discussion.

He said the board also brings in "all kinds of experts" to advise it. Some "very high-tech personnel" have done certain types of tests and analyses of the ground and ground water.

"They walk across the north part of the base, and they stumble onto a pile of tin cans," Watt said. "Nobody kicks those cans and says, 'Oh, that's litter.' They assume that it might be something harmful and potentially dangerous, and they investigate it."

Watt said a great deal of time has been devoted to those types of studies to ensure that, when the land comes under civilian control, it will be clean.