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UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE
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STATEMENT OF
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SENIOR ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR
U. S. GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INVESTIGATIONS
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ON
DEMILITARIZATION OF THE CHEMICAL
MUNITIONS STOCKPILE



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Mr. Chairman, Members of the Subcommittee:

I am pleased to appear before you today to discuss the results of our review of the Army's process for determining a preferred alternative method of disposing of chemical munitions. The Department of Defense Authorization Act of 1986 (Public Law 99-145) requires that the Department of Defense destroy the stockpile by September 30, 1994, because the stockpile contains munitions which are no longer required and are aged and, in some cases, hazardous materials. The law specifically directs the development of a plan defining the safest and most effective method of disposing of this stockpile. The Army addressed this requirement by preparing a draft environmental impact statement dated July 1, 1986, which evaluates three alternative methods of destroying the stockpile. The three methods evaluated were (1) on-site disposal at each of the existing storage installations, (2) transportation to two regional disposal centers, and (3) transportation to a national disposal center. The Army's preferred alternative method, presented in their draft impact statement, is to build demilitarization facilities at each of the eight continental United States storage locations.

At the subcommittee's request, we reviewed the Army's decision-making process and the preliminary cost estimates for the

three alternatives.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT PROCESS

Procedures for preparation of the environmental impact statement, upon which the Army has made its preliminary decision, are prescribed by the President's Council on Environmental Quality's regulations for implementing the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act. The process includes the systematic examination of the possible and probable environmental consequences of implementing a proposed action such as the munitions disposal. The statement is to provide full and fair discussion of significant environmental impacts and inform decisionmakers and the public of the reasonable alternatives which would avoid or minimize adverse impacts. In addition, the draft statement is to identify the agency's preferred alternative if one exists.

When addressing national programs, such as destruction of the chemical munitions stockpile, there are basically two types of environmental impact statements which can be prepared--(1) site-specific, which addresses in detail the environmental impacts on each specific location, and (2) program or programmatic, which covers environmental matters in a broader statement with subsequent narrower statements or environmental analyses concentrating on the issues specific to each location. We were told by the Environmental Protection Agency that National Environmental Policy Act regulations encourage the use of programmatic environmental

impact statements when considering programs of national scope.

The preparation of a draft environmental impact statement takes place early in the National Environmental Policy Act process.

After preparing a draft environmental impact statement and before preparing a final statement, the agency is required to (1) obtain the comments of any federal agency which has jurisdiction by law or specific expertise with respect to any environmental impact involved or which is authorized to develop and enforce environmental standards, (2) request the comments of appropriate state and local agencies which are authorized to develop and enforce environmental standards, and (3) request comments from the public, affirmatively soliciting comments from those persons or organizations who may be interested or affected.

Role of Oak Ridge National Laboratory and Other Contractors

In January 1986 the Army contracted with the Oak Ridge National Laboratory to prepare the environmental impact statement. The Oak Ridge Laboratory has worked with the Army since about April 1984 on a variety of tasks related to the chemical stockpile disposal program. Most of its early work centered around a proposal to destroy M-55 rockets. Since the M-55 rockets are generally considered to be one of the more hazardous munitions to handle, much of the information developed for the M-55 rocket destruction was used in the preparation of the current draft impact statement.

In April 1986, the Department of the Army, the Army Materiel

Command, the Army Toxic and Hazardous Materials Agency, the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, and the President's Council on Environmental Quality met to discuss the appropriateness of a programmatic versus a site-specific environmental impact statement for the chemical stockpile disposal program. The General Counsel for the President's Council approved the Army's use of the programmatic approach.

We visited Oak Ridge to determine how the draft environmental impact statement had been prepared and specifically what types of analyses had been performed and what data had been compiled to support the information presented in the document. We reviewed various supporting documents relating to evaluation criteria for choosing among the alternatives, documents related to risk analyses and determination of population at risk, and numerous studies. Most of this supporting documentation had been prepared by independent contractors - - for example, the Mitre Corporation developed much of the risk analysis data; Arthur D. Little, Inc., developed the decision analysis system and compiled data to compare the stockpile disposal alternatives, including the development of criteria to evaluate each alternative; H&R Technical Associates and GA Technologies aided in the hazard/risk analysis.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE NEPA PROCESS

We concluded that the Army followed the prescribed process in preparing the draft environmental impact statement and our conclusion was supported by statements and comments made by other

federal agencies. For example, a representative of the Environmental Protection Agency said the Army has gone to great lengths to comply with all regulatory requirements. Officials of the Center for Environmental Health told us the Army had been very responsive to all of their recommendations to date. The Center has a memorandum of understanding with the Army under which the Army will keep it fully informed of the status of the demilitarization program. The General Counsel of the President's Council on Environmental Quality provided us with a letter from the Council Chairman to the Deputy Under Secretary of the Army which stated, in part, that "This plan for NEPA compliance in relation to the Chemical Munitions Demilitarization Program is consistent with the CEQ regulations implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA."

DISPOSAL ALTERNATIVES EVALUATED EQUALLY

Citizen's groups and local officials have questioned whether the Army had decided prior to the preparation of the draft impact statement that on-site disposal was its preferred alternative. In the statement of work directing the Oak Ridge National Laboratory to prepare the impact statement, the Army expressed a preference for the on-site disposal alternative. In our review of documents and our discussions with those associated with the project, we attempted to determine whether each of the alternatives had been evaluated equally in light of this apparent early decision on the part of the Army. We found no evidence that the Army's preference

biased the analyses performed by the various contractors. In fact, the statement of work also reflects that the Army specified "all alternatives will be treated and evaluated equally in the Programmatic EIS." Based on our review and analysis of the draft statement and much of the supporting documentation and interviews with EPA, President's Council, Department of Health and Human Services, and Oak Ridge officials, it appears the three alternatives under consideration were treated and evaluated equally.

COST OF ALTERNATIVES

Current cost estimates of the three alternatives are as follows:

<u>National Destruction Center</u>	\$1.960 Billion
<u>Regional Destruction Centers</u>	\$1.864 Billion
<u>On-Site Destruction Centers</u>	\$1.972 Billion

We reviewed the cost estimating procedures to determine whether the same cost elements were included, if applicable, for each of the alternatives. We did not note any differences in cost elements considered which could, in our opinion, bias the selection of a preferred alternative.

Due to time constraints, we did not analyze the cost estimates in terms of accuracy. We were told, however, that certain of the estimates were based on very preliminary information and could

change substantially as more accurate information becomes available. For example, the Army stated its estimates for facilities and equipment are better than its transportation estimates since some facilities are already under construction at Johnston Atoll, whereas some transportation equipment has not yet been designed.

CONCLUSIONS

As stated earlier, we believe the Army has followed the prescribed process for preparing an environmental impact statement which includes a preferred alternative for destroying the chemical munitions stockpile. It is important to note that the means by which the stockpile will be destroyed is yet to be decided.

The Army states in its draft environmental impact statement that

"Even though the Army has selected on-site disposal as the preferred alternative at this time, information and knowledge gained or further analyses conducted during the public review period for this draft statement may influence the final record of decision (ROD). A combination of these alternatives could conceivably be selected as the ROD."

We would expect that a great deal of discussion will take place in the public review period and that additional information regarding site-specific characteristics will be developed before a final implementing decision is reached.

This concludes my statement, Mr. Chairman. We would be pleased to respond to any questions the Subcommittee might have.