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***** SECTION B

Delay urged in depot cleanup

By Tom Charlier
The Commercial Appeal

A citizens group wants federal officials to delay the excavation of chemical warfare materiel from waste sites at Defense Depot Memphis, saying neighbors' concerns haven't been sufficiently addressed.

A group called the Defense Depot Memphis Tennessee Concerned Citizens Committee said in a letter to the Defense Logistics Agency that emergency-preparedness planning has been inadequate and that officials haven't responded to other community concerns.

"I feel like they need to slow it down a minute and assess what they're doing and ensure that the people of this commu-

nity are safe," said Doris Bradshaw, director of the group. The excavation, which could begin as early as next week, will remove wastes that include remnants of World War II German mustard gas bombs and chemical warfare training kits. The work is part of a longer-term cleanup designed to make the now-closed depot suitable for re-use.

The excavation will be conducted within a sealed tent, which utilizes vacuum-like negative air pressure to prevent the release of vapors. The 70-foot-diameter tent also features elaborate air-filtration systems, video cameras and monitoring equipment.

According to DLA officials, the tent and the other planned safety precautions ensure that the public and excavation

workers will be safe.

Shawn Phillips, base environmental coordinator at the depot, said the agency's headquarters will respond to the group's letter. But so far, the project has not been delayed.

The Corps of Engineers and a contractor in the project today will conduct training exercises involving the excavation. If the workers complete the training successfully, the digging could begin next week, Phillips said. The excavation, conducted as part of a \$2.7 million contract, is expected to be finished in about three months.

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