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THE MEMPHIS DEPOT
TENNESSEE

ADMINISTRATIVE RECORD
COVER SHEET

AR File Number 471

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers ®
Huntsville Center

ENVIRONMENTAL FACT SHEET

Former Defense Distribution Depot Memphis, Tennessee

February 1999

Working Toward a Safer Tomorrow

Cleanup of Recovered Chemical Warfare Materiel

The Site

The former Defense Distribution Depot Memphis, Tennessee, covers 642 acres of land in Memphis, Shelby County, Tenn. Throughout its 55 years of operation, the site was used as a warehousing and supply distribution point for military services and some civilian agencies.

The Depot began operations in 1942 during which time the Chemical Warfare Section was activated. At that time it functioned as a storage and distribution site specifically for the Army's engineer, chemical and quartermaster corps.

Chemical Warfare Materiel

In 1946, a single incident occurred involving bombs filled with the blistering agent, Mustard. The World War II German chemical bombs were being shipped by railroad from the port at Mobile, Ala., to storage facilities at Pine Bluff Arsenal, Ark. Some bombs were found to be leaking the Mustard chemical agent while the railcars were traveling through Memphis on the Missouri Pacific Railroad. Three railcars carrying the bombs were moved to the Depot where the munitions could be handled properly.

Twenty-nine bombs were decontaminated at Dunn Field by being drained into a pit containing bleach and then burned. The bomb casings were then burned in a separate pit.

In addition, the Depot operated as a supply point for the Chemical Corps. It stored chemical agent identification sets, kits of glass vials that contain dilute solutions of chemical warfare agents. The glass vials were used to train soldiers to identify the odors of chemical agents.

Environmental Restoration

The Corps of Engineers has begun a study, an engineering evaluation/cost analysis, to confirm the exact location and extent of the buried chemical warfare materiel. An engineering evaluation/cost analysis provides a detailed look at the situation and recommends alternate courses of action. The study requires field work, well installation, soil sampling and the use of sophisticated detection devices (similar to metal detectors).

The engineering evaluation and cost analysis is being conducted by Parsons Engineering Science, Inc. Field work for the study has been completed. A draft report of the study is scheduled to be completed in the summer of 1999,

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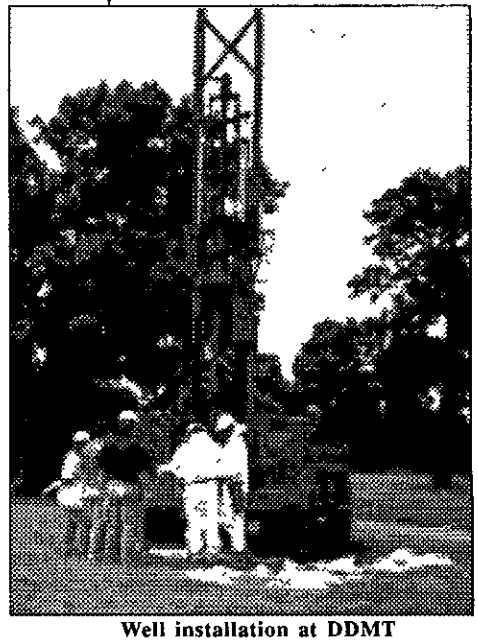

Well installation at DDMT

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