



Citizens League for Environmental Action Now
5120 Woodway Ste. 9004 • Houston, TX, 77056 • (713) 524-3000 •
www.cleanhouston.org

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Monday, November 5, 2007

Contact:

Juan Parras (713) 524-3000

Craig Williams (859) 986-7565

Waste Shipments Open Doors for Dumping in Texas

The Army's ongoing shipment of VX nerve agent waste from an Indiana chemical weapons depot to a hazardous waste incinerator in Port Arthur is another example of Texas' dirty secret. Reports and materials collected by CLEAN and the Chemical Weapons Working Group show that millions upon millions of pounds of chemical warfare agent wastes have been dumped in and on Texas for years via incineration and deep well injection.

In mid-April, the Army secretly signed a \$49+ million contract with Veolia Environmental Services to burn the VX by-product. Since then, trucks have been traversing over 900 miles through eight states to deliver the toxic mix to a community already suffering from the pollution from a slew of refineries and chemical plants.

The Army admitted that Port Arthur was chosen as a target after the waste had first been refused by Ohio and then New Jersey and that the Army's contract with Veolia was signed without public input or even notice, despite an explicit Congressional directive to first gain public acceptance.

The Chemical Weapons Convention Treaty, signed by the United States requires that the U.S. destroy its stockpile of chemical weapons by 2012. However, technical problems, program mismanagement, debates concerning funding and technological processes used for destruction have made this date impossible to meet.

Many of these weapons have been stored at various depots since the 1950s. It is only in the past decade that these chemical weapons have begun to be destroyed.

Before disposal efforts began in 1996, 44 percent of the U.S. stockpile was housed in Tooele, Utah. Between August 1996 and March 1998 40% - over 9 thousand tons - of the waste produced at the Utah incinerator was shipped to Texas. By 2003, of an ever increasing total, the percentage being shipped to Texas had risen to 90% - over ten million tons, nearly ten times the waste that was sent to all other states combined. Furthermore, over the past decade, Texas has received millions of gallons of Napalm.

"Texas should not be our nation's dumping ground for waste. This all seems to have started when Texas began accepting low level radioactive waste at the Waste Control Specialists site in Andrews, Texas back in the 1990s." says Juan Parras, CLEAN's director of community outreach. "More often than not, this waste ends up at facilities that neighbor low income, minority communities. That's the very definition of environmental injustice," he adds.

Although legal action to stop the VX waste shipments continues, many feel that an Indiana judge's decision to deny the request for a Preliminary Injunction to stop shipments to Port Arthur, Texas could allow for more shipments of warfare waste into the state. In fact, Army documents show government

studies underway that could lead to the shipment of millions of additional gallons of chemical weapons by-products from Kentucky and Colorado Army depots for disposal in Texas.

“The intentional secrecy surrounding the shipments of the VX waste to Port Arthur does not bode well for the future of Port Arthur and other Texas towns,” said Craig Williams, Director of the Chemical Weapons Working Group. “It’s clear that this program within the Army has no respect for the rights of communities; the principles of Environmental Justice and even the U.S. Congress.”

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