

STAFF SUMMARY SHEET

	TO	ACTION	SIGNATURE (Surname), GRADE AND DATE		TO	ACTION	SIGNATURE (Surname), GRADE AND DATE
1	18CESS /DEE	Coord		6			
2	18CEG/ CC	Coord		7			
3	18CSW/ CV	Info		8			
4	18CSW/ CC	Sign		9			
5	313AD/ CC	Info		10			
SURNAME OF ACTION OFFICER AND GRADE			SYMBOL	PHONE		TYPIST'S INITIALS	SUSPENSE DATE
McCarty, 1Lt			PA	41509			

SUBJECT

Environmental Pollution Incident

DATE

1 Dec 87

SUMMARY

1. In mid-November 1987, 18 CESS/DEEJE (Environmental Planning) notified my office of a PCB contamination incident -- and accompanying problems -- which occurred in the base supply open storage yard 25 Nov 86. The accompanying health, environmental and political concerns associated with this incident require prompt attention.
2. In order to avoid embarrassment and accusations of a "cover up," it is critical that we rapidly forward this information to Japanese government officials and try to minimize the "damage" which will inevitably result.
3. Tab 1 contains background information about the situation. Tab 2 details problems which have developed because of the spill. In tab 3, you'll find a list of questions likely to be asked by Japanese government officials and news media. Each question is followed by a recommended answer. Tab 4 holds a "game plan" for minimizing the damage which will follow notification of GOJ, OPG and municipal officials. Annex 1 to tab 4 is a summary paper of the incident.
4. Direct questions about this subject to myself or 1Lt McCarty, Ext. 41509.

ROBERT W. WINKELMANN, Lt Col, USAF
Chief, Public Affairs

5 Atchs:

1. Background
2. Problems
3. Q and A
4. Game Plan
 - a. Summary

TAB 1: Background

A. The incident occurred 25 Nov 1986 when base supply personnel were repositioning an electrical transformer within the yard. The transformer, on a wooden pallet, tipped over when the pallet failed. A ceramic insulator broke when the transformer hit the ground, releasing 20 gallons (75.7 liters) of PCB-contaminated oil onto the deteriorated asphalt surface. The oil covered 940 sq. ft. (87.3 square meters) and penetrated to a depth of six inches. Clean up operations began immediately IAW 313 ADPLAN 545.

B. Soil samples were taken of the area one week later and sent to a stateside Air Force testing laboratory. Results, received 12 March 1987, showed a contamination level of 2,290 parts per million although the oil in the transformers only contained 214 ppm. This seemingly impossible difference in PCB levels spurred a second soil testing on 21 Aug 1987. Results of the second set of soil samples, received 23 Oct 1987, showed 5,535 ppm contamination. These sample results were startling, since the "scientific community" believes PCB does not concentrate in soil.

TAB 2: Problems

A. DELAY IN NOTIFICATION OF JAPANESE -- Assuming we are able to notify the Japanese by 15 Jan 88, the following time periods will have passed:

1. Nearly 14 months since the time of the incident;
2. More than 10 months since initial soil sample results received;
3. Almost 3 months since second soil sample results received.

RESULT: Allegations of a "cover up," incompetence and/or negligence by USFJ (particularly Kadena AB) officials will surface.

B. GOVERNOR NISHIME PLACED IN AWKWARD POSITION BEFORE ELECTIONS -- Shortly before prefectural assembly election day (June 1988), the USFJ-friendly governor, will be placed in an awkward position.

RESULT: As a leader of conservative politics on Okinawa faced with a matter holding much potential for scandal, his constituents and fellow conservatives will force him, at least in appearance, to put pressure on USFJ commanders and demand answers to tough questions about the incident and subsequent late notification. Water quality and public health issues will also surface.

C. ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS -- It appears that the incident merely "opened a can of worms." Soil sampling in the open storage yard would have yielded high PCB levels whether the spill had occurred or not. The 214-ppm oil could not have produced results of 2,290 ppm or 5,535 ppm.

RESULT: We will be asked to explain the high levels of PCB found? Since PCB has been used as an insulation and fire retardant property since the 1940s and was not determined to be a carcinogen until the early 1980s, the potential for soil contamination at sites on other USFJ installations on Okinawa exists.

D. HEALTH CONCERNS -- The potential for soil contamination at sites on other USFJ installations on Okinawa exists.

RESULT: Since the level of islandwide PCB contamination, if any, has not been determined, both USFJ and GOJ officials will be pressured to test soil samples from high-risk sites (i.e., open storage yards, hazardous waste storage areas) at all USFJ installations.

E. HOW AND TO WHICH GOVERNMENT'S STANDARDS WILL CLEAN UP BE ACCOMPLISHED? and WHO WILL PAY FOR IT? -- Clean up to Japanese environmental standards, requiring PCB levels to be at or below 3 ppm, would cost an estimated \$190,000. U.S. clean up standards are set at 25 ppm at an estimated cost of \$119,500. A third alternative would require partial excavation of contaminated soil, followed by placement of concrete slab curbs around the spill site. Estimated cost, an estimated \$115,000.

TAB 3: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- Q1: What kind of pollution incident occurred at Kadena AB?
A1: An accidental polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) spill occurred at Kadena AB.
- Q2: When did the incident occur?
A2: Nov. 25, 1986.
- Q3: Why did the Air Force wait so long to notify local, prefectural and national government officials about the incident?
A3: Corrective action was taken immediately after the spill. Soil was removed and placed in safe containers. Afterward, soil samples were taken and sent to an Air Force laboratory in the U.S. for evaluation. At the same time, we thought we had the situation under control. Results of later sampling, however, indicated there was still an unacceptable level of PCB where the spill occurred. We are now working on a method of dealing with it.
- Q4: Did the Air Force attempt to cover up this spill by not informing Japanese government officials?
A4: No. The relatively minor spill in November 1986, followed by presumed success in cleaning it up, made us believe notification was unnecessary. Then, when the results of the initial soil samples were received, we reacted with curiosity and disbelief and took more samples. Still, we believed our clean up was thorough. Upon receiving the second test results, we were unable to explain the high concentrations of PCB reported, and we decided we should notify Japanese government officials.
- Q5: What makes the results of the second set of samples so significant?
A5: The November 1986 spill involved oil with 214 parts per million PCB. However, the two soil samples showed 2,290 and 5,535 ppm PCB, respectively. The November 1986 spill could not have caused these levels of contamination, so we must conclude that the contamination occurred before November 1986. For the record, PCB was first used as an insulating and fire retardant property in the 1940s and was not known to be a carcinogen until 1982.
- Q6: Exactly where did the spill occur?
A6: In the base supply open storage yard (give exact location).
- Q7: How did the incident occur?
A7: Base supply personnel were repositioning a transformer within the yard. The transformer, on a wooden pallet, tipped over when the pallet failed. A ceramic insulator broke when the transformer hit the ground, releasing PCB-contaminated oil onto the ground.
- Q8: How much PCB-contaminated oil was spilled?
A8: About 20 gallons (75.7 liters) of 214 ppm oil spilled.
- Q9: How large an area was affected?
A9: A surface area of about 940 square feet (87.3 square meters).
- Q10: How deep did the oil penetrate?
A10: Six inches.

(more)

PCB QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (cont'd)

Q11: On what type of surface did the spill occur?

A11: The spill occurred on a deteriorated asphalt surface.

Q12: Were any workers contaminated and/or injured by the spill?

A12: Two American base supply people were splashed with the oil.

Q13: How were they treated, and what condition are they in now?

A13: A thorough shower washed the surface contamination off the workers. They have not shown any ill effects from the incident.

Q14: Is PCB a carcinogen (cancer-causing agent)?

A14: Yes.

Q15: How many transformers containing PCB are still in use by the Air Force on Okinawa?

A15: The Air Force has more than 1,480 pieces of electrical equipment on Okinawa which could contain PCB.

Q16: Have you tested these 1,480 pieces of equipment?

A16: No; however, we must comply with a 1984 compliance agreement between the Air Force and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency requiring us to remove all items containing PCB from service by Oct. 1, 1991.

Q17: Were any of the base supply personnel Japanese employees?

A17: No. Japanese employees do not work in that area.

Q18: With more than 1,480 pieces of equipment possibly containing PCB, the likelihood of individuals -- both American and Japanese -- being exposed is high. How does the Air Force plan to compensate individuals whose medical records show contamination.

A18: The Air Force is concerned with the health of all people living on and around its bases. However, there have been no reports of illness related to PCB to date, and we have no reason to expect any.

Q19: Has the oil seeped into the Kadena aquifer yet?

A19: No. Our surveys show it has not migrated to any underground water sources.

Q20: What was done with the oil which was removed?

A20: It was placed into 55-gallon barrels for future disposal.

Q21: Is it still on island?

A21: Yes. It is in the base supply open storage yard.

-end-

TAB 4: "Game Plan"

A. NOTIFY JAPANESE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS ASAP: A summary paper containing details of the incident should be delivered to GOJ via HQ USFJ. At the same time, notification to the OPG and local municipalities should be made locally in separate meetings at the 313 AD Conference Room attended by the 18CSW/CC, CEG/DEEJE, SGPB and PA. A morning meeting should be set up with Gov. Nishime, followed by an afternoon meeting with mayors from Okinawa City, Kadena, Chatan and other municipalities. At each meeting, copies of the summary paper sent to GOJ would be distributed. Meeting agendas would include visits to the base supply open storage yard and candid discussion of the incident. (All Air Force personnel attending the meeting must be familiar with the background, problems, probable questions and overall game plan contained in this package.)

RESULT: A face-to-face meeting and openness in discussing the incident should alleviate many, but not all, concerns the Japanese have about the incident. Continued openness and cooperation should be the rule.

SUMMARY PAPER

On Nov. 25, 1986, an accidental spill of polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) occurred at Kadena AB.

Base supply personnel were repositioning an electrical transformer in the base supply open storage yard, a place where hazardous chemicals are temporarily stored. The transformer, on a wooden pallet, tipped over when the pallet failed. A ceramic insulator broke when the transformer hit the ground, releasing 20 gallons (75.7 liters) of 214 parts per million-contaminated oil. The spill occurred on a deteriorated asphalt surface and covered a surface area of 940 square feet (87.3 meters), penetrating six inches (centimeters).

Two American base supply people were splashed with the oil, but, following a thorough shower at the base medical clinic, they showed no ill effects from the contact with the oil.

Corrective action was taken immediately following the spill. Soil was removed and placed in safe, 55-gallon barrels for future disposal. One week later, soil samples were taken and sent to an Air Force laboratory in the U.S. for evaluation.

We considered it a minor incident, since clean up appeared successful, so we did not notify Japanese government officials. Upon receiving results of the initial soil sample test on Mar. 12, 1986, we reacted with curiosity and disbelief. The results showed 2,290 ppm from an area where contamination of 214 ppm had occurred.

We studied the initial results carefully, then decided to take more soil samples on Aug. 21, 1987. Results were received Oct. 23, 1987. They showed an even more surprising 5,535 ppm. These results were startling, since the consensus in the scientific community concludes that PCB does not concentrate in the soil.

We carefully considered all aspects of this incident, and decided we needed to notify Japanese officials at all levels of government and work together in finding a solution for the puzzling questions centered on the contamination incident.