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## Monterey Bay Toxics Project

Forty miles south of our beloved Santa Cruz sits a huge environmental disaster created by the U.S. Army - the former Fort Ord Army base. In the early 1980's, whistleblowers', Army's civilian employees complained to Army commanders, federal and state regulatory agencies about health and environmental concerns. Due to the Army's mishandling of toxic chemicals and petroleum. This led the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to rank Fort Ord as a threat to public health and safety, on the National Priorities List (NPL) by 1990. The NPL is a list of the nation's most toxic and polluted sites. The 28,000-acre Fort Ord was closed by the Army in 1993.

The Army's on-going cleanup is a failure at best. The Monterey Bay Toxic Projects (MBTP), non-profit citizens' environmental watchdog group organized a former Army Civilian employee, Curtis Gandy in 1993. Gandy was the Health & Safety Officer of the Army-Civilian employees union at Fort Ord while it was still an active training base. MBTP's goal is to ensure the Army's cleanup of the polluted lands is adequate to protect the public's health, safety and the environment prior to the transfer of contaminated Army lands to the communities surrounding the former base. MBTP has filed three lawsuits against the Army citing its' failed base "cleanup." Says Gandy; "we are very concerned that the Army is passing off the cost of its cleanup and responsibility to the State of California, local cities and residents while putting the same entities at great legal and personal health risks!" The Army's Fort Ord land transfers is a deception of the public. The Army's Fort Ord land transfers are exposing an unwitting public to unacceptable health and safety risks while degrading our environment.

It took a long time to create the Army's super toxic Fort Ord Superfund site, 80 years of military training for death and destruction. If we can affect a cleanup in half that time (40 years) it will be a miracle!

Toxic chemicals seep from Site 2/12 under Highway One into the Monterey Bay Marine Sanctuary, and into the groundwater under surrounding communities, and into the air. Unexploded ordnance (UXO i.e., bombs, bullets, tank rounds, mortar rounds, hand grenades, rockets, anti personnel mines, claymore mines, anti-tank rifle grenades, chemical warfare (gas) agents and more) have been found all over Fort Ord.

Since Fort Ord began as an Army base in 1917, there have been few if any accurate records kept regarding where Army used live explosives, ammunition and chemical agents. Between 1994 and 1995, the Army transferred lands to the California State University system for a new

Monterey Bay Campus. Since then, unsuspecting California State University Monterey Bay (CSUMB) students have been at risk of potential injury or death due to sloppy and unsafe Army cleanup actions. The very first problem was the property transferred to CSUMB. It was later revealed in the Army's own reports that due to the high content of waste munitions, the lands given to CSUMB were areas most likely for humans to come into contact with unexploded ordnance. In fact, at least half of the land originally intended for transfer to CSUMB was held back due to explosives and chemical warfare contamination.

The Army created a toxic waste dump (see Toxic Dump) within three hundred feet of CSUMB'S student housing residences. The Army is transporting contaminated soils from other parts of Fort Ord and consolidating them in an existing landfill. There is no reliable record of exactly what toxic chemicals and munitions are present in the soils deposited in the Army's toxic dump. According to a Bill Moyers special report, Trade Secrets, aired on PBS, no studies have ever been done on what happens when different toxic chemicals are mixed together in one place. After creating its' "toxic waste dump" the Army stripped lead-contaminated sands from the seven miles of beach firing ranges and deposited the toxic soil next to local residences and attempted to turn the still toxic beach ranges into public parks.

The Army transported the contaminated sands to the toxic waste dump, adjacent to student housing to sift the lead and sand. This operation often occurred during strong winds blowing directly from the sifting site into CSUMB student housing. On at least one occasion MBTP members observing the Army's activity saw two coed students out on the lawn area, ten feet from the fence line. We asked them if anyone had warned them about the toxic lead sifting operations up wind. They said no. Also observed in CSUMB housing were children playing less than 500 feet away from the toxic dump during the lead-sifting operations of 1998.

The Army's lead-sifting operation is inadequate as well as dangerous. The Army's cleanup goal for toxic lead is 1,860 ppb. California law says lead above 1,000 ppb. Must be designated a "Hazardous Waste Site" for lead. The state of California Parks Department originally agreed to let the former firing ranges be made into a CA park until it was discovered the Army hadn't cleaned its beach firing ranges thoroughly enough to meet California Health & Safety Code for toxic lead abatement. Young children, the most vulnerable to toxic lead poisoning, would have been crawling around in the lead contaminated sands.

In a meeting with California Assemblyman, Fred Keely, MBTP expressed its concern that California taxpayers would become liable for the Army's failed lead cleanup of the beach firing ranges, if the still toxic beach ranges were transferred to the State of California. As a result California Parks rescinded its approval of that plan to convert the Fort Ord beach ranges into a CA Parks & Recreation with public access.

Toxic chemicals leaking from Fort Ord have formed numerous toxic plumes, one going into the Monterey Bay. These toxic chemicals emanate from a number of areas on Fort Ord. One is Sites 2 and 12. Site 2/12 was Army's industrial operations and vehicle maintenance were conducted. Waste materials such as scrap metal, lead batteries, industrial solvents and oils were disposed in an illegal dump - the "lower meadow," east of Highway One and north of the Fort Ord's Twelfth

Street Gate. Site 12 soil analysis found 17 volatile organic compounds including acetone, methylene chloride, trichloroethane, toluene, carbon tetrachloride and xylene, etc.

Another source of a toxic plume is Site 2. It was the Army's main Garrison Sewage Treatment Plant. Eleven toxic heavy metals were detected at levels above normal. Among these metals are: antimony, arsenic, cadmium, chromium, copper, lead, mercury, selenium, silver, thallium and zinc. Four pesticides were found at that site. Consequently there is a groundwater plume of toxics flowing under Highway One, which has contaminated the Monterey Bay Marine Sanctuary with many of the above named chemicals. It is not clear if the Army has been able to contain the plume so far.

The Army is trying to disguise its illegal method of disposing of unexploded ordnance (UXO) on its inland firing ranges. The ruse is to burn vegetation in areas known to contain bombs and bullets. The Army tells citizens and regulatory agencies that these range fires are intended to clear the ground of brush that hampers searches for unexploded ordnance. One fire started by the Army in August 1997 raged out of control, threatening local residents. Their plan to limit the burn went up in smoke when unexploded ordnance detonated and the fire raged out of control and sent thousands of residents as far away as Greenfield, seeking cover from the toxic smoke.

The Monterey Bay Air Pollution Control District's notice of violation No. 030-97 described the damage. "The burn violated Health and Safety Code section 41700 and District Rule 402, creating a public nuisance. The burn fumigated most of the Salinas Valley, causing intense smoke exposure to thousands of residents, resulting in widespread physical discomfort and injury, and threatening the comfort, repose, health and safety of the public in the impacted area."

Elementary schools as far away as Spreckels were closed due to student's respiratory problems. In spite of this threat to public health, the Army has issued its "Record of Decision" to once again begin burning the Fort Ord firing ranges as early as this month.

### **Special Community Plea for Action:**

There has been no health assessment in spite of the many concerns regarding hazardous and toxic materials and poison oak that will go up in the smoke and into our schools, homes and businesses. These materials can cause: BIRTH DEFECTS, SERIOUS ILLNESSES, CANCER, AND DEATH! You must Say NO to this and stop it! A new tool has been created to help people instantly object to this issue. It is called Instant Activist. Simply Click onto HOPE's web site - <http://www.1hope.org/one-min.htm#FortOrd>. Then click on the words - "Auto-Prepare a letter Objecting to Burning Fort Ord"

A letter will appear addressed to Governor Davis, The EPA and others. It asks for a halt to the Fort Ord burning and for the first ever health assessment of the toxic burns. You can edit and add your own words. Add your name and address and you will have made a major step towards protecting your community and stopping the burns. Note: if you use AOL you may have difficulties; contact me and I will send you the letter and addresses. For more information on the burns and Army paid EVACUATION contact Vienna Merritt Moore at 831-384-7658.

The space on this and the next 3 pages have been purchased by the

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