

# Anniston Chemical Activity Stores and Demilitarizes Weapons of Mass Destruction

*By Mr. Michael B. Abrams*

The U.S. Army Chemical Materials Agency (CMA), the organization responsible for the safe storage and disposal of the U.S. stockpile of chemical munitions in seven locations, is overseeing operations at the Anniston Chemical Activity (ANCA) in Anniston Army Depot (ANAD), Alabama.

A cloak of secrecy over the U.S. chemical munitions stockpile was lifted in 1996 when the Department of Defense publicly announced the distribution makeup. The announcement detailed the distribution of stockpiles at eight sites in the continental United States and a ninth site on Johnston Atoll, 800 miles southwest of Hawaii.

More than seven percent of the Army's chemical and munitions stockpile is at ANAD, including rockets, artillery shells, mortars, land mines, ton containers (for storing bulk supplies of agent), nerve agents sarin (GB) and VX, and sulfur mustard blister agents (H, HD, and HT).

Storage operations began at ANAD in the early 1960s. Munitions were maintained for 20 years, but a series of events and national policy decisions in the 1980s changed the focus of the mission from stockpile to safe storage until the munitions could be safely demilitarized. A lengthy research and development effort led to the construction of a disposal facility at Johnston Atoll and later in Utah. Subsequent facilities were constructed in Maryland, Oregon, Arkansas, and Alabama. Chemical munitions at Johnston Atoll and Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, are complete. Disposal operations are continuing at other locations, including ANCA. Disposal facilities are currently under development in Colorado and Kentucky.

Lieutenant Colonel Phillip M. Trued, Jr., ANCA commander, and Sergeant First Class Richard LaMonica, senior enlisted advisor, are responsible for the safe storage of stockpiles at ANCA. With more than 180 civilian employees, they oversee storage requirements imposed by the Department of Defense, Department of the Army, federal and state environmental laws and regulations, and

the Chemical Weapons Convention (an international treaty that mandates the destruction of chemical munitions and production facilities). Treaty provisions are overseen by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. Treaty teams regularly inspect storage activities, and inspectors monitor demilitarization operations.

The Anniston Chemical Agent Disposal Facility (ANCDF)—a facility designed, built, and tested to safely destroy chemical munitions—is now in its second phase of operations. Workers have been processing VX-filled munitions since July 2006 and have safely disposed of 26,491 M55 rockets and 30,301 gallons of liquid VX. VX-filled artillery shells and land mines are scheduled for disposal next.

The focus of the first phase, which ran from August 2003 to March 2006, was GB-filled munitions. Operators demilitarized 142,428 rockets and artillery shells and 96,246 gallons of liquid GB. The third (final) phase will involve the disposal of mustard-agent artillery shells, mortars, and bulk containers.

The most recent accomplishment at ANCA was the conclusion of the VX trial burn.



**A systems equipment mechanic at ANCA repairs a miniature chemical-agent monitor.**



**Workers at ANCA load a pallet of VX-filled rockets for transportation to ANCDF.**

Agent trial burns, required by the Alabama Department of Environmental Management, required a series of tests on the emissions from two furnaces, the liquid incinerator, and the Deactivation Furnace System (DFS). The liquid incinerator destroyed liquid VX at 2,700 degrees. The DFS destroyed M55 rockets after they were drained of agent and cut into eight pieces. The DFS will also be used to destroy explosives from projectiles and mines (at 1,300 degrees).

When destroying nerve agents, ANCDF managers are required to show that the facility destroys 99.9999 percent. Test results demonstrate that operations at ANCDF exceed that requirement. ANCDF managers say that the data proves the facility is safe for workers, the local community, and the environment. Similar trial burns during a GB disposal campaign demonstrated that operations at the ANCDF were also compliant with all mandated regulations. ANCDF managers and employees have a reputation in the industry for a very strong safety program. ANCDF and its site contractor, Washington Group International, have performed more than 9.5 million safe work hours. In recognition, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration awarded ANCDF "Star" status under the Voluntary Protection Program.

Chemical munitions storage and disposal operations at ANAD are expected to be ongoing for another four to six years. The facility will be decommissioned at the end of operations.

For more information about the U.S. Army's chemical munitions disposal program, go to Web site <[www.cma.army.mil](http://www.cma.army.mil)>.

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*Mr. Abrams is a CMA public affairs officer at ANAD. He holds a bachelor's degree in radio and television from Southern Illinois University—Carbondale. Mr. Abrams previously served as a public affairs specialist at Fort McClellan, Alabama, and as an Army broadcaster and journalist in Alabama, Germany, and Washington, D.C.*

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## 86th Chemical Mortar Battalion Web Site Update

Dear Members, Family, and Friends of the 86th Chemical Mortar Battalion:

Since 1998, I have maintained a personal Web site about the 86th Chemical Mortar Battalion. My father, Harold (Mat) Matson (Company B), has supplied me with much of the information from his memory and from the Battle History book. I have recently updated the site, and it now has a new address: <<http://web.mac.com/barbcooper/iWeb/Site/Welcome.html>>. I intend to add several more pages to the Web site, including a roster of current members of the 86th.

If your name is included on the list of current association members, I need to know if you want to be included on the new Web page. Please provide the information requested on the form to the following address or e-mail me at <[bcooper@cinci.rr.com](mailto:bcooper@cinci.rr.com)>:

Mat Matson  
12816 Dornoch Court  
Fort Myers, FL 33912

Sincerely

Barb Cooper



**Yes, include the following information on the 86th Chemical Mortar Battalion Web site:**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street address \_\_\_\_\_

City, state, and zip code \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

**No, do not include me on the Web site.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_