

# Bombs found at housing site

## Work stopped when decades-old explosives uncovered

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Work has again been halted on a housing expansion and construction site on Fort Wainwright, this time for potentially hazardous bombs discovered during an environmental assessment.

Two World War II or Korean War-era bombs were unearthed Monday at the Taku Gardens construction site. Work was stopped when officials determined the two items might pose a threat to personnel on site.

"This particular device contains a potentially hazardous, yet undetermined, liquid substance,"

according to a U.S. Army Alaska press release on Friday.

Construction was halted in June at the site of the 128 family housing units so North Wind Inc. in conjunction with Bering Sea Eccotech Inc. could conduct an environmental assessment. Testing included digging pits to determine what type of metal debris and possible contaminants remain in the ground and searching for improperly disposed drums of fuels, solvents, PCBs and other hazardous wastes.

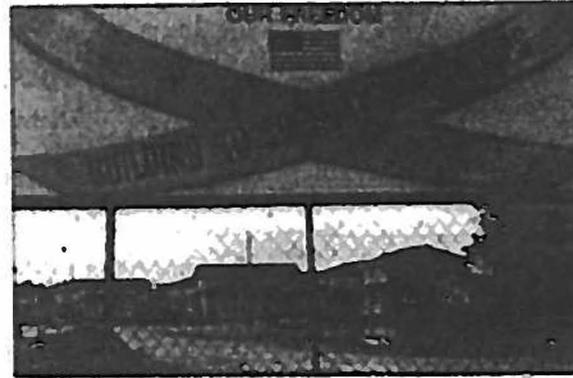
Several inert pieces of ordnance were discovered during the digging, but were found to have a

"low risk potential," according to the press release.

But the bombs found Monday caused greater concern.

The 716th Ordnance Company from Fort Richardson and the Alaska Air National Guard's 103rd Civil Support Team determined the two bombs did not pose a threat to areas outside the construction site, officials said.

While the team can't identify the liquid in the devices, they said the bombs are partially crushed and only contain about 10 percent of their original capacity. If the bombs should detonate, none of the unknown liquid or any of its



Eric Engman/News Miner

**ORDNANCE FOUND—**  
Construction was halted Friday at the Taku Gardens construction site for replacement housing on Fort Wainwright.

fragments would reach beyond the nearly 60-acre construction site, officials said.

Fort Wainwright officials said the perimeter of the site is fenced and under 24-hour guard.

"Safety is our first concern here," said Lt. Col. Ron Johnson, the Fort Wainwright Garrison commander, in the press release.

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"We're simply not going to take any chances. We're taking every precaution to ensure the safety of those on the construction site, as well as those in the neighboring areas."

Fort Wainwright officials have requested the support of an Army Technical Escort team, a specialized ordnance unit trained to identify and handle munitions.

The team is scheduled to arrive at Fort Wainwright on Monday to examine and dispose of the bombs. The ordnance are not being moved until the team arrives on scene, officials said.

The Army is using a special military first responder to conduct air sampling to detect any potentially hazardous vaporous materials as an added precaution. No contaminants have been detected, officials said.

The halt in construction is the second major setback for the \$55 million housing development. In August 2005, construction came to a stop after soil testing

revealed the presence of the cancer-causing chemical compound, PCB. According to a Department of Environmental Conservation situation report on the incident, about 150 cubic yards of PCB-contaminated soil from the site was shipped to Idaho for disposal.

According to the Department of Defense contract, the project was slated to be completed by Oct. 22. Hall said it's unclear how long construction could now be delayed, but said the project will not be finished by October.

Hall said environmental testing was done on the site before construction began. But core samples are usually taken acre-by-acre, not meter-by-meter on a site which could account for why the PCBs and ordnance were not previously detected.

"They did testing prior to building and they didn't find any of the anomalies they're finding now," Hall said.

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