

[Go back to previous topic](#)

Forum Name	General Discussion (1/22-2007 thru 12/14/2010)
Topic subject	ARMY KNEW ALASKA BASE FAMILY HOUSING SITE WAS TOXIC
Topic URL	http://www.democraticunderground.com/discuss/duboard.php?az=view_all&address=389x3576301

3576301, ARMY KNEW ALASKA BASE FAMILY HOUSING SITE WAS TOXIC

Posted by nosmokes on Mon Jul-07-08 03:35 PM

So this is how the Army takes care of it's own? I can't say anything w/o getting into a rant tht will raise my BP to dangerously high levels so I'm just putting this one out there.

--###--

[original-peer](#)

For Immediate Release: July 7, 2008
 Contact: Carol Goldberg (202) 265-7337

ARMY KNEW ALASKA BASE FAMILY HOUSING SITE WAS TOXIC

— **Audit Found Civil and Criminal Liability at Taku Gardens But No Action Taken**

Washington, DC — The U.S. Army knew that the site chosen to build a family housing complex at Fort Wainwright was a toxic dump but proceeded anyway, in violation of federal laws and service policies, according to an audit by the Army's own Office of Staff Judge Advocate that was released today by Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER). Despite creating a hugely expensive debacle, sickening workers, spreading pollution and retaliating against whistleblowers, the base command has absolved itself and issued an "outstanding" rating to the official who green-lighted the project.

The January 2007 Army audit questioned "the wisdom of building a family housing complex on top of a known 1950s-era military landfill" and concluded that "the situation with the Taku construction project is the direct result of multiple individuals failing to adhere to Army and federal regulations and guidance."

Nonetheless, the Army command excused the failures at Fort Wainwright by issuing a report just six months later which dismissed any major concerns but skipped over most of the audit findings, including –

- * Construction workers became ill at both Taku Gardens and another toxic hotspot because the projects were not slowed to properly analyze the sites. As with the illnesses, worker safety in digging through unexploded ordnance was dismissed with one base official stating "if a bulldozer did encounter a live artillery shell, it would simply scare the driver."
- * The Taku project discharged polluted runoff directly into the Chena River while improper disposal of toxic soils, drums and other debris spread contamination beyond the work site; and
- * When a top environmental official at the base opposed the project, she was bypassed, harassed and ultimately removed. The environmental director who pushed the project through, however, was allowed to transfer with no sanction and an "outstanding" evaluation, provided that he did not "disclose any specific information regarding the PCB" at Taku Gardens.

The audit stated that the base "Command is at risk of being assessed significant environmental fines. Some personnel appear to be at risk of criminal prosecution... More significantly, military families in desperate need of housing will not be able to occupy the constructed units for several years – if at all." Slightly more than half of the planned 128 units on the 54-acre Taku Gardens site were built before construction was halted and these may ultimately have to be torn down.

"The experience at Taku Gardens demonstrates that accountability remains an elusive concept in the U.S. Army," stated PEER Executive Director Jeff Ruch, noting that taxpayers might end up losing \$150 million on a complex that may never be occupied. "This audit report is Exhibit A for the case of

why military agencies should not be exempt from pollution laws and why strict civilian oversight is essential."

PEER had requested all internal investigations of Taku Gardens back in November 2007 under the Freedom of Information Act, but the Army produced only two reports (one damning and the other exonerating) and did not even mention the audit. Last month, PEER asked the Department of Defense Inspector General to step into the case and is now supplementing its complaint to include the audit findings and why the Army hid them.

###

complete release including links to related sources [here](#)

3576576, k & r (in disgust)

Posted by alstephenson on Mon Jul-07-08 04:39 PM

3577080, Will we ever see accountability in our country again?

Posted by Pastiche423 on Mon Jul-07-08 06:16 PM

Recomend.

3577457, It'll take years

Posted by sakabatou on Mon Jul-07-08 07:18 PM

if not decades.

3577451, Jesus Christ!

Posted by symbolman on Mon Jul-07-08 07:17 PM

looks like Fairbanks aint no place to be any more.. PCB runoffs into the Chena River? Everyone uses that river, runs through town all the way to The Pumphouse and beyond - not sure where the drinking water comes from...

The town is all about the Starwars shield and military.. Like to visit it again and see how its changed, but not get polluted..

Lived there ten years in the late 70's..

A killer fun place then :)