



Submission No 14

Inquiry into RAAF F-111 Descal/Reseal Workers and their Families

Name: Mr Phillip Moon

SUMMARY

INCLUSION OF THE MANY AMBERLEY BASE PERSONNAL NOT DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THE FUEL TANK DESEAL/RESEAL PROGRAM ON THE F-111 AIRCRAFT, BUT ACTUALLY HANDLED/WORKED/OR BREATHED THE SR51 SEALANT DURING THEIR DAILY DUTIES!

REFERENCE: WHAT WILL BE COVERED IN THE ATTACHED SUBMISSION

1. THE BEGINNING INVOLVING THE U.S.A.F. AND MEXICAN WORKERS AT McCLELLAN AIR FORCE BASE, SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA
2. INFORMATION REGARDING AUSTRALIAN EQUIPMENT LIASON PERSONNEL POSTED TO McCLELLAN AIR FORCE BASE AND THE TRANSPORTATION TO AUSTRALIA
3. THE AMBERLEY BOMBSHELL, AMBERLEY'S MEDICAL SECTION IRRESPONSIBLE ATTITUDE AND ASSISTANCE TO THE SICK PERSONNEL
4. RECEIVING THE SR51 SEALANT AT AMBERLEY AIR FORCE BASE AND THE DISPATCHING OF THE DRUMS TO THE DESEAL/RESEAL WORK AREA
5. THE RETURNING OF THE EMPTY SR51 DRUMS TO THE EQUIPMENT SECTION AND THE DESTRUCTION OF THE DRUMS

Submission into F-111 Parliamentary Committee Inquiry

26th June 2008

SECTION 1

The summary begins with a complete rundown of how the United States Air Force became aware that the SR51 Sealant was so toxic and how the poisoning of the F-111 Hangar personnel at the McClellan Air Force Base, outside Sacramento, California were affected. It was revealed to me by an ex United States Air Force serviceman that he once worked in the main F-111 building on the base, which held fourteen F-111 aircraft with their wings fully extended, (to Reseal/Deseal the fuel tanks in the wings) you can imagine the size of the building? The main work force in the building was made up of Public Citizens (Mexicans) from around the Sacramento area as well as a small number of military personal. One member Albert Durden was constantly ill and instead of sending his medical reports to the Pentagon, he sent them directly to the White House. His personal complaint was to do with the SR51 Sealant, which arrived from the Eldorado Chemical Plant in Phoenix, Arizona for the Deseal/Reseal fuel tanks program.

Finally a very Senior Officer decided to visit the Base and observed for himself, if these stories he had heard was really as bad as was listed on each covering page of Mr Durden's medical report. Upon arrival and during the course of a number of tours of the base he recognised that not only was the SR51 Sealant, causing problems with the soil, but a number of other major issues were causing extreme problems with the entire bases personnel's performance. During his tour of the base, he observed that the chemicals used in aircraft maintenance, such as solvents, caustic cleaners, fuel oils and hydraulic lubricants had caused extensive contamination at McClellan, particularly the groundwater.

In addition, there are small amounts of radioactive waste at the base. The contamination was the result of leaky pipes and storage tanks, spills, landfills and fire training areas. The result of this Officer's visit was a full blown investigation into all underground water supplies. Soil samples were taken from numerous areas outside every building on the base, where it was found that the entire base was totally toxic and had to be immediately shutdown. At one time, McClellan Air Force Base was one of most heavily polluted bases in the nation. Cleanup started in the 1980s. As of 2005, it was still ongoing and expected to take at least another decade. McClellan was listed on the EPA's National Priorities during the 1980s.

Please note that a major railroad track network ran very close to the base, which no doubt was used in the transportation of all chemical, toxic products and fuel. We have seen over the years the great number of train accidents involving dangerous cargo such as chemicals etc on television, plus the road network was always described as too dangerous to have trucks transport dangerous goods, as most of the highways went directly through major cities and towns.

SECTION 2

A very large warehouse/hanger was allocated to Equipment Liaison personnel from all Arms of the Services from Great Britain and Australia, where the members would place orders through out the United States and receive the goods, prior to determining their mode of transport to each establishment outside the USA. With the Royal Australian Air Force Liaison Staff, they would assign each of the ordered items to whatever base sent in the requisition!

After inspection of the different items, it was up to the Senior staff members to decide the method of transportation to Australia, which was a difficult task to perform in many cases, especially if it came to deciding the method of transport for the F-111 Sealant SR51, because the Royal Australian Air Force pilots said a definite NO, due to the toxic stench and emissions given off by the drums and the possibility of the pilots and crew being overwhelmed by the stench.

This left the only other method and that was by sea! Travelling by ship had its perils as well, due to each of the drums seals constantly being subjected to the ever rolling motion of the ship and the inner sealant splashing around in the drums and rotting the drum seals. Upon arrival in Sydney or Melbourne, but mainly Sydney, a Transport Driver from Regent's Park No 2 Stores Depot, would go to the ship and have his/her truck loaded with the pallets of 205 LT drums. The Transport Driver would then usually stay overnight back at Regent's Park Stores Depot prior to driving to Amberley Air Force Base.

SECTION 3

Trucks from No 2 Stores Depot in Sydney would arrive at the Central Store R.A.A.F Base Amberley on Tuesday morning at about 08:30am. Depending on the SR51 order from Deseal/Reseal, governed the length of the trailer, for example, an 8.6mr trailer would carry eight pallets with four drums per pallet, giving it a total of 32 drums. An 11.38mr trailer would carry a total of 16 pallets, giving it a total of 64 drums of SR51. Loads were always covered by tarpaulins, and tied down with heavy ropes or nylon straps. The driver would present himself to the Flight Sergeant's office only to be told to report to the Overseas Receipts Section, a Corporal Moon'. The driver would come over and see Cpl Moon, and advise Cpl Moon that he (the driver) only had load manifests, when Cpl Moon asked the driver did he have any Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS), the driver said that he was only given the manifests.

As stated by Flight Sergeant Clive Brown in his statement dated 31st October 2001, any Technical publications correct handling procedures were either held by the Procurement Section within Headquarters Support Command (HQSC) in Melbourne or the User Section (one copy was held at the Deseal/Reseal Section, unknown to any Equipment personnel directly handling the SR51) in Central Store. Cpl Moon would then call upon other members on the store (namely Lac Flannery who worked in the Forward Supply Area Warehouse Transport Section). Lac Flannery would arrive beside the semi trailer with a forklift and assist Cpl Moon and the driver to the top of the trailer by way of an enclosed safety pallet tied to the forklift.

Cpl Moon and the driver would then untie all the tarpaulin tie ropes (holding the two or three tarpaulins together on top of the trailer), and Lac Flannery would at the same time undo the tarpaulins along the side of the semi-trailer. Lac Flannery would then assist the driver and Cpl Moon down off the trailer and all three of us would then pull the tarpaulins off the trailer on to the grass verge at the side of the Warehouse. At the very moment the tarps were removed, the stench would blow on through the Central Store. On every occasion the Flight Sergeant/Sergeant in charge of the Warehouse would tell Cpl Moon in no uncertain terms to remove the truck. This was not possible at the immediate time because the drum seals would have to be checked and counted by Cpl Moon. This could only be done by climbing onto the semi trailer.

Because of the sea journey from the USA, and the road trip from the wharves of both Melbourne and Sydney and the road trips to Amberley, most of the drums were rusted through because of the toxicity of the compound inside. As Cpl Moon went about his duty counting and checking the load, he was constantly being covered in the sticky pungent goo, whilst Lac Flannery and the driver would also be covered in the pungent goo whilst they were laying all the tarpaulins flat on the grass, ready for cleaning on our return because pungent goo that had splashed onto the tarpaulins during the trip north.

The Driver and Cpl Moon would then take the semi-trailer and Lac Flannery followed with the forklift down to K- Group, (where all gases, polish, paints, sealants, hardeners, acids, alkaline, oxides, bulk drum items of all kinds of material, avgas, (a type of aircraft petrol) for the Army exercises, chemicals of all types, were stored in a locked compound. The NCO in charge of K-Group, namely one Corporal Greg Glazner would assist both the driver, Cpl Moon, and Lac Flannery unload the semi-trailer in the K-Group Compound and all the pallets of drums were placed in the open (because of the toxicity and pungent odour and covered with several layers of canvas, and a large tarpaulin, kept in the compound for that purpose.

All four of us would use a mixture of Gamlin Liquid Soap (we would get from the Airmen's Mess), and about twenty litres of Avtur (which we would get from the Fuel Farm across the road from K-Group), and using hard bristled brooms and a lot of rags. We would scrub the trailer down until it was cleaned of all the sticky goo, the semi was then sent back to the Central Store for loading of cargo for No 7 Stores Depot in Toowoomba, and Sydney. Cpl Moon would then borrow the K-Group van and transport the cleaning liquid to the Central Store, Lac Flannery would drive the forklift back to the Central Store where Cpl Moon and Lac Flannery and the driver would then scrub down the tarpaulins until they were clean enough to place back on the loaded trailer for the trip to Toowoomba.

After Cpl Moon left the K-Group Compound, Corporal Glazner would try and remove the compound from himself and his clothes by showering. Unlike Cpl Moon and Lac Flannery, they would have to finish work and go home before they could remove the stinking sticky goo from themselves. Our wives (Mrs Moon and Mrs Flannery both refused to allow us in our homes in the Combined Working Dress, these items of clothing would have to be removed and another change of clothes put on out in the laundry before we were allowed into the home. No amount of showering and hard scrubbing would remove all the goo from our bodies. To successfully remove the SR51 from our bodies, we would have to wash ourselves in the same cleaning mixture as we used on the semi, van multistop, forklift and tarpaulins.

This cleaning solution would leave our skin red raw for three or four days, medical would tell us the because the redness was self inflicted we would have to live with it, or we could be charged for doing ourselves a deliberate injury, also because Cpl Moon and Lac Flannery attended the Base Medical Section so many times for the same problems, ie; severe headaches, nausea, joint pain, respiratory problems, stinging and constantly watering eyes, skin rashes, dermatitis, gastric, constipation, and blisters on the soles of our feet. The nurses would only give us bottles of Mylanta and panadol tabs, and sent us back to work. After several visits by both Cpl Moon and Lac Flannery, the Senior Medical Officer advised both parties that if this sort of thing continued, he (the SMO) would have no choice but to recommend a Medical Board for both of us and declare that both of us medically unfit for the Air Force.

When our wives washed our Combined Working Dress or our Coveralls, it was impossible to remove all the goo from the fabric, the hot water would simply spread the goo out around the fabric of the clothes and some of the goo would stick to the washing machine bowl, contaminating all future washing, this washing process would not get rid of the smell at all, and as we were only allowed to exchange our Combined Working Dress/ Coveralls once a year at the Base Squadron Clothing store, it meant that both of us were working with the toxic stench and goo five day's a week or more when an exercise was on. As about one third of the lower ranks were called to do other duties away from the Base; ie Brisbane Commonwealth Games, Exercises, marching practice etc, Cpl Moon would have to pull staff from other areas of the Base Squadron Central Store to get the job done.

Equipo's (**Store persons**) names include, Lac R Butler, Lac Barr, Lac Steve Boulton, (**deceased**) Lac Mark Buchannan (**deceased -Cancer**) Lac Andy Andigah, Bill McNaught, Cpl Farrell (Bumpa), Lac / Cpl Adrian James, Lac/Officer Reg Mills, Sergeant Wayne Connolly (**deceased-throat cancer**), Sergeant Harry Gerskey (**cancer**), Sergeant Barney Myers(**deceased-heart attack**),Lac Don Adams (**deceased**), Cpl Donny Wolfe (**deceased**), Lac/Cpl Eddie Fawkes (**deceased-cancer**),Sergeant/Flight Sergeant Jim Bower(**deceased-heart attack**), Sergeant/Flight Sergeant Clive Brown (**very sick**),Lac/ Cpl Glazner [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Lac/Cpl Albert Johnson, Lac/Cpl Allan Jones, Sergeant Wayne Howarth, Lac Michael Jones, Lacw/Cpl Julie Pickett. There were also several female Lacw's /Cpl's personnel involved.

Other Mustering's also directly /indirectly involved in the SR51 Deseal/Reseal saga.

Surface finishers (**Aircraft Painters**), Safety Equipment Workers, Firemen, Airframe Mechanics, Transport Drivers, Barracks General Hands, NDI Personnel (**Non Destructive Investigation-cracks in Aircraft frames**). There may additional Mustering that escape my mind, involved as well and their families.

As we both drove to and from work in our own vehicles, and we wore our working dress, the contamination from the SR51 would transfer to the driver's seat of the vehicle. As both our wives drove the vehicles, it meant that every time they sat in the driver's seat they would be contaminated as well. Cpl Moon wife suffers severe rashes in the buttocks area of her body; she has also been diagnosed with chronic psoriasis of her hands, elbows, feet and knees, with small outbreaks around her eyes.

Lac Flannery's wife (Helen) suffers severe joint pain in both knees and the muscles in the lower part of both legs, she has had several cancers removed from her left cheek and her nose, she also suffers lower back pain from assisting her husband (Peter) to, on numerous occasions (on his bad day's) to stand, sit and/or move about the house, getting in and out of the car, and getting out of bed. Mr Flannery's height is 199cm and his weight is 157kg's, Mr Flannery suffers severe osteoarthritis in both knees, lower back, left shoulder, also suffers Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), some memory loss, has panic attacks in large crowds.

Cpl Moon's wife (Glenda) has had x-rays and is due to have a CT scan on the Lumbar region of her spine, due to constantly assisting to help lift Mr Moon in and out of the car, off the bed, out of his personnel chair, and also out of the bath/shower. Mr Moon height is 167cm and his weight is 105kg's, Mr Moon has been diagnosed as a walking paraplegic by the Spinal Injuries Association, and he has to use a mobile walking frame. Mr Moon suffers additional conditions/symptoms.

SECTION 4

Senior Flight Sergeant/Sergeants in Charge of the Central Store banned the untarping, and checking the load because of the pungent stench omitted from the semi's load, when the semi arrived Cpl Moon was to find people from both the Receipt's area and/or Bulk Store and go with the semi to the K-Group compound. If Lac Flannery wasn't available at the time of the arrival of a semi load of SR51 drums from No 2 Stores Depot, I would get people from the Bulk Store or Receipts Section to accompany me to K- group to assist with the unloading. As Forward Supply was the Section within the Central Store to deliver all items ordered by the Squadrons, Lac Flannery would be called upon to assist on a continuous basis to deliver the 205 li drums to the Deseal/Reseal section, as there were only two forklifts allocated to the Central Store including the outstations, for example K-Group (the Bulk Chemical and Toxic items storage area) and the Forward Supply section. The K-Group forklift was constantly unserviceable, which then put more pressure on the Forward Supply forklift to undertake all the work for both areas!

As Lac Flannery was also Aircraft Loader Trained, and had worked in the Air Movements Section at Amberley, there were times when it was possible for Lac Flannery to get the 2000kg forklift and the Air Movements Aircraft baggage Pallet from that Section, and use the large forklift and Pallet to deliver the 205li drums of SR51 Sealant to the Rag Hangar at the southern end of the Amberley Base, better known as Deseal/Reseal. The Central Store had an 8 tonn flatbed truck that we used for deliveries all around the base. When Lac Flannery would take the truck and Cpl Moon drive the forklift to K-Group straight after morning parade on Wednesday morning, we would load 8 X 4= 32 drums of SR51 Sealant and hardener. The Baggage Pallet would hold 12 drums of Sealant. The big forklift was only used when Deseal/Reseal wanted 12 drums or less. By using the big forklift for this it would take the pressure off the Forward Supply vehicles.

Cpl Moon would already have the Counter slip and the Transfer Voucher raised and printed out Tuesday afternoon. On delivery of the drums of SR51 Sealant and small 20li drums of Hardener to the Deseal/Reseal Section at the southern end of the Base (Rag Hangar) Cpl Moon would see the Equipment Person or someone in charge of the Deseal/Reseal, to sign for the drums of Sealant and Hardened. Deseal/Reseal would have a Transfer Voucher already printed out for the empty SR51 drums as they were an accountable item, Cpl Moon would sign the return voucher and load the same amount of empty drums on to the flatbed truck as was delivered. These drums were then taken to Board of Survey Section, and placed in the lockable compound at the western side of that section.

SECTION 5

The Board of Survey stores (2 igloo shaped buildings) had a small security compound at the western end, that was locked at all times and held large items including the empty SR51 drums, which had to be stored outside the igloo, due to their toxicity and stench. The lockable compound also held large items that wouldn't fit inside the igloo buildings. These items were held for sentencing by the sentencing officer for destruction by burning, sold at public auctions or for repair. Thursday morning was always sentencing time, for all equipment held at the Board of Survey Section. It wasn't always possible to find any sentencing officers, once they found out that the sentencing included SR51 drums. The reason for this was, that after the drums were sentenced to be burnt, the officer was suppose to remain with Cpl Moon and Lac Flannery and a Lac General Hand and a Lac transport driver until the burn was completed, however this was not the case ever, the Officer would park approximately 100 yards up wind from the fire with all the windows up and the aircon going flat out in the car.

In this following area, I will be covering my arrival at the Central Store at Amberley on the 20th January 1982 and ends, with my discharge from the service on the 9th April 1987! During this period it was unavoidable to remain too far away from the SR51. As a Corporal (Non Commissioned Officer or Junior NCO), it was expected of me to be selected at any time to immediately take over any position allocated to me by members of Superior Ranks, which meant I had to become like all the Leading Aircraftsmen/Airwomen and develop into a multiskilled person, as quickly as possible, especially since the Brisbane Commonwealth Games were fast approaching. As it turned out I became multiskilled in a large number of areas both within and outside the Central Store, as with certain members of the Central Store Supplier's, who were working in both inside the Central Store and the Out Station!

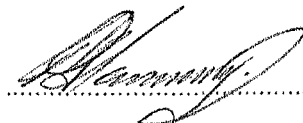
This joint submission has shown proof that numerous other sections were involved in the handling of the SR51 Sealant and not just the workers on the F-111 aircraft!

Dated this day 15th June 2008

Phillip Moon



Peter Flannery



F-111 Deseal / Reseal Program McClellan AFB, Sacramento, California, USA

by Albert Durden

My name is Albert Durden. I worked at McClellan AFB as a civilian aircraft mechanic from 1966-1978. I was hired as a flight line mechanic apprentice and went through 3 1/2 years of class room instruction and on the job training. I graduated at the top of my class. My brother was hired as an electronics technician apprentice. We worked together on the F-106 Flight line in the early years. He went on to become a top level F-111 Support Manager and retired after over 20 years but passed away in 1994 from lung cancer. I worked on the F-106 Delta Dart for 10 years and became a top notch Crew Chief, dedicated, loved my job, earned my nickname as "Dirty Durden, received an outstanding performance award and many letters of appreciation for a job well done. The F-106 was America's First line of defence from 1958-1986. See www.f-106deltadart.com.

I did not have any known medical problems at this time. I did notice dizziness when I used Naphtha to wash down hydraulic leaks and to clean the engine compartment and I had a lot of headaches. In Dec. of 1975, I was affected by a reduction in force, downgraded and transferred to a job cleaning and resealing F-111 fuel tanks. It was a big project for McClellan because we had to reseal every F-111 in the US Air Force Inventory due to the premature failure of the factory sealant that resulted in fuel leaks. I was assigned to the F-111 Deseal / Reseal Program from 1976 until I retired on a disability in 1978, not knowing at the time that my medical conditions were actually caused by the job exposures.

I worked in a large hanger that held up to 14, F-111 aircraft with all fuel tanks open and being cleaned and resealed at the same time. We were told that we only needed to wear our breathing masks when we were using solvent for the final cleaning operation. We did not use the masks for the initial cleaning operation when we scraped the goop from the cracks and seams with aluminium tools. This procedure failed to account for workers using solvent in other tanks allowing the fumes to be blown to tanks where, unaware workers were scraping goop and not wearing masks.

The ventilation was inadequate and improper. We used portable blowers to blow air into each tank which blew the solvent fumes out into the hanger. With all fuel tanks of 14 aircraft being cleaned and resealed at the same time, everyone in the hanger was exposed to the fumes even if they did not work in the fuel tanks. The Proper ventilation would have exhausted the fumes outside and brought in fresh air at the same time. I was OK at first but then I started developing symptoms of headaches, dizziness, nausea and loss of balance. I continued working until I was only able to stay in the tanks for 10 minutes and had to climb out, get a drink of water, splash water on my face, go to the bathroom and sit on the toilet until I recovered enough to go back in the tanks and repeat the cycle.

My symptoms worsened and became constant so I reported to the base medical clinic. A doctor placed me on restricted duty but I remained in the same work area exposed to the same solvent fumes and had the same symptoms. I consulted many doctors on my own, from an allergist to a psychiatrist but no doctor at the time could explain the cause of my symptoms. A doctor disqualified me for the job citing dizziness caused by a non specific allergic diathesis in 1977. I also had a hearing loss. I applied for disability retirement and worked in a different area sorting bolts and nuts until my retirement was approved in May of 1978. From Ace Crew Chief to nut sorter in less than 2 years! What a monumental waste of my former skill. My wife complained many times about the foul stinking odor coming from my clothes and my lungs when I breathed on her. Sometimes I had momentary black outs driving home from work.

We moved to Cool, California, U.S.A., in 1978 to get away from the industrial exposures in the Sacramento Valley that made me sick. In December of 1977, I suffered a compound depressed skull fracture at home when a loading ramp fell on my head because I forget that I had placed it on the back of my old farm tractor. I was lucky to survive this accident and I still have a hole in my skull from the injury. My wife was forced to work for 12 years because my retirement was not enough to live on and I was unable to work.

We did OK until the government had my disability case re-evaluated in 1983 by a doctor who tested me for allergies to grass and weeds dozed off during my consultation while I was explaining my symptoms and job history and then erroneously found me recovered from my chemical related conditions due to his ignorance. My retirement benefits were terminated and I spent the next 8 years fighting the decision. I appealed my case all the way to the US Supreme Court in 1985 but the Court denied reviewing my case. The government then asked me to pay back \$20,000.00 in retirement that I had received while I was appealing my case. I was unable to pay back the money and it was later waived.

I saw many more doctors and learned that my medical conditions were actually caused by the exposures to solvents at McClellan AFB so I started over and filed a claim for worker's compensation and submitted reports from 4 doctors. The Chief of Maintenance at McClellan AFB told the office of workers compensation that as an aircraft mechanic, I did not come in contact with jet fuel. I replied by telling him to remove his head from his ass and read my job description and he would learn that it was a daily part of my job as a flight line mechanic.

My claim was denied at first and I consulted 2 more doctors as part of my request for reconsideration. My claim was finally granted in 1991 based on toxic exposures at McClellan AFB. My compensation is based on Toxic Encephalopathy and Multiple Chemical Sensitivity. My other conditions include sterility, a hearing loss in my left ear, and skin cancer. We lived on our savings and were down to our last \$500.00. Our property taxes were due on April 10 and we did not have enough money to pay it. My claim was granted on April 4.

We don't have any children due to me being sterilized by the jet fuel that someone said that I did not come in contact with. My brother has three children. My chemical sensitivity seems to get worse with age. I am unable to tolerate any fragrances, perfume, after shave, solvents, inks, paint, gas fumes, smoke, household cleaners, new carpet, furniture and electronics including computers. The smell from my first computer made me so sick that I could not learn to use it. The Toxic Encephalopathy shows up when I try to solve problems. It takes me 10 times as long to think out a problem and I get tired from thinking before I solve the problem, I get angry, aggravated and loose my temper.

Today my brain works like a slow computer on slow dial up service. I eventually get there but it takes a long time. Tests showed that I lost some of my I.Q. due to the solvent exposure. On the flight line before I was exposed to the fuel tank solvents, my brain worked like the fastest computer on the fastest service. I could not perform that job today because you must be fast thinking and fast acting to stay alive. I am house bound much of the time due to smoke and air pollution outside and I must avoid public places whenever possible! I wear a charcoal filter mask when I must travel to the doctor or dentist.

I will be in a documentary film about chemical sensitivity currently under production titled The Tomato Effect. You may view the film site at www.rabble-rouser.com. The producer is the daughter of my doctor who helped me fight my case for 8 years. He died in a suspicious hiking accident in 1992. I consider myself fortunate because some workers have worse medical conditions than I do. My best advice is to never give up. You will eventually win because truth and justice is on your side. I know from experience that it is very hard to fight when you are sick and tired and tired of being sick. At times I was depressed but the more I learned, the more it turned to anger and sometimes the anger is all that kept me going.

The actions or failure to act by people in charge of the Deseal / Reseal Programs here and there borders on criminal behaviour and the attitude that the job comes first before the welfare of the workers must not be tolerated. I did not know that the solvents were so toxic but it was someone's job to know and they failed to protect the workers from the hazardous working conditions because the job came first.

In 1982, I learned that the drinking water wells at McClellan AFB were contaminated with pesticides and solvents. The same water that I drank for 12 years and splashed on my face to feel better when I worked in the fuel tanks! One well contained 1500 PPB Trichloroethylene TCE. The California State limit for TCE in well water is 5 PPB. McClellan has been pumping the water out of the ground and filtering it at the rate of 1200 gallons per minute. Most of the contamination is expected to be cleaned up in another 10 years, but it will take another 100 years to clean it all up. This was from a local news report.

We all paid a big price due to the negligence of others. If I had performed my job as a Crew Chief in this negligent manner, planes would have crashed and pilots would have died and I would have suffered the consequences of my actions. Instead, we all must suffer the consequences of someone else's actions.

Take Care and keep fighting.

Sincerely,

Albert D. "Dirty" Durden
Retired F-106 Crew Chief and F-111 Deseal / Reseal Victim

AMERICAN SITES FOR SR51 SEALANT

<http://209.85.173.104/search?q=cache:7DGay2l3Oz4J:www.ausairpower.net/APA-2005-01-A-1.pdf+Base+Squadron+Amberley+patch+1980%27s&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=20>

**Centre for Defence Command, Leadership and Management Studies (CDCLMS)
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CASE STUDIES

Comparison of organisational culture, leadership, risk management and ethical issues between the RAAF and NASA leading to the Australian F111 Deseal/Reseal chemical exposure and the Columbia disaster respectively.

Some contract doctors may be less likely to feel a sense of belonging to the Air Force community than full time serving medicos.

They are not 'members', but simply contractors, and it is not reasonable to expect of them the same commitment to the organisation and willingness to go beyond the call of duty when the need arises that is normally assumed of a member.

Safety depends on the capacity to learn from accidents and incidents. It is not enough to investigate their causes; recommendations arising from investigatory reports must be implemented.

Otherwise hard won lessons will be to no avail. We identify recommendations from previous reports which, if implemented, would have reduced the exposure of F111 fuel tank workers.

The wing integral fuel tanks had also been assembled using the same polyester faying surface sealant as in the fuselage tanks, however a silicone sealant rather than the polysulphide sealant was used for the fillet seal because silicone had better heat stability and was more flexible.

While the polyester sealant 'reverted' and had the same hydraulic effect on the fillet seal as it had had in the fuselage tanks, it seems there was not the same chemical reaction with silicone as there was with the polysulphide sealant.

Nonetheless, almost inevitably, the wing integral fuel tanks also reached the point where ad hoc fuel leak repairs became very time consuming and relatively ineffective. This collective realisation was documented by 482SQN in July 1981.

A wing deseal/reseal program was consequently developed and finally trailed by 3AD in 1985. The wing program then continued at 3AD through to 1992. Wings were worked on in pairs and twenty-four sets were processed through the program.

The tanks were able to be completely opened by removing the top skin (one machined piece) hence work was conducted from outside the tank. Chemical de-sealants were not used in the process because of concern for the D6AC steel wing pivot fittings and the fuel tank paint.

In any case, SR51 was not effective on the fluoro silicone fillet sealant therefore an alternative product needed to be proven. The USAF used PR3107 for a period to chemically deseal wings.

In particular, a problem remarkably similar to the F111 problem was identified in 1981 among Air Force surface finishers (roughly, spray painters), some of whom were suffering the ill effects of exposure to toxic substances.

An inquiry produced recommendations, many of which had direct implications for the work of the F111 fuel tank repair section. These recommendations were not implemented for F111 workers.

The need to learn the lessons of previous inquiries is a powerful theme.

Medicine faces a dilemma when patients complain of symptoms but there are no signs available to medical observers. There is a risk in these circumstances that medical observers will downplay the significance of the symptoms.

Thus, patients with back pain or overuse injuries undetectable to medical observers are often treated with scepticism, particularly when compensation issues are involved.

The method of sealing the fuselage integral fuel tanks was to apply the polyester adhesive sealant between faying surfaces and in structural voids, complemented by beads of polysulphide fillet sealant (MIL-S-83430) along seams and around the fasteners within the tanks.

Unfortunately, the polyester sealant degraded over time and 'reverted' (the common term used to describe the sealant condition). In essence, the sealant was hydrolytically unstable and the effect was the rupture of the fillet seal by hydraulic action and/or chemical reaction at multiple sites; hence the fuel leaks.

The F-111 was something of a political 'hot potato' at the time and every effort was no doubt committed to maximising aircraft availability and in-service performance.

The USAF had commenced a 'deseal/reseal' program at Sacramento Air Logistics Centre (SM-ALC) and, not surprisingly, the RAAF also decided on the need for a fuselage deseal/reseal program (DSRS), with procedures based on those developed by GD Fort Worth Division (GD/FW) and used by the USAF.

This first program (at the time it was hoped to have been the only one needed) was conducted by No 3 Aircraft Depot (3AD) at RAAF Amberley on eleven aircraft between October 1977 and February 1982.

The rest of the fleet (nine aircraft - four had been lost in service) was submitted to the program in the USAF facilities at Sacramento, between May 1981 and December 1982, coincident with the first Cold Proof Load Test (CPLT) program.

The matter came to a head in early 2000 and the fuel tank repair program was suspended. Since that time the problem of fuel tank leaks has not been adequately addressed and the availability of F111 aircraft has been affected.

In short, as well as causing substantial human suffering, the failure of the fuel tank reseal program has impacted on Defence capability.

Some of those whose health has been damaged believe that certain individuals should be held accountable for allowing things to go on as long as they did. But the scale and duration of the problem indicates that we are dealing with a deep-seated failure for which no single individual or group of individuals can reasonably be held accountable.

The 'material made available to the Board..Points to ongoing failings at a managerial level to implement a safe system of work and co-ordinate processes within a complex organisation'!

If anybody is to be held accountable, therefore, it is the Air Force itself.

The aim of a maintenance squadron or wing is to produce serviceable aircraft for use by operational squadrons. In this respect, a maintenance organisation within the Air Force is driven by production imperatives in the same way as any private sector producer. It must meet the needs of its client operating squadrons in the same way that private sector producers must supply the needs of their customers. The suspension of the maintenance program at Amberley meant a failure in the supply of serviceable aircraft to the client, just as the disruption of electricity or gas production results in a failure of supply to customers.

This analysis will be important at various stages in this report, in understanding, for example, the production pressures under which the fuel tank repairers worked, the deficiencies exhibited by the Air Force medical service, and the fact that flying safety has received greater attention than ground safety.

There is a major divide in the Air Force between the commissioned and non-commissioned officers. Non-commissioned officers - Corporals, Sergeants and Warrant Officers - work their way up through the ranks and promotion to Warrant Officer typically comes at a relatively late career point. A few are promoted to the ranks of the commissioned officers. Typically, however, commissioned engineering officers, are tertiary trained and their entry point into the Air Force is above the Warrant Officer rank. The result is that a young engineer may be placed in charge of a sizeable maintenance group with several highly experienced non-commissioned officers reporting to him/her. There is an inherent weakness in the chain of command at this point since the young engineer is often not in a position to effectively supervise subordinates or to understand their problems.

The differential impact of cost cutting on officers in maintenance squadrons, to which this witness refers, is another manifestation of the priority which the Air Force has given to operations over logistics, to the ultimate detriment of the fuel tank repair section.

El Dorado Chemical Solutions (El Dorado Chemical Plant) is still making SR51 and even has an office in Melbourne and the address is as follows;

PPG Industries - Australia

23 Ovata Drive, Tullamarine, Victoria 3043 Australia

Telephone: 61-3-9335-1557 Fax:61-3-9335-3490

Email: australia@eldoradochem.com

McCLELLAN AIR FORCE BASE

<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/facility/mcclellan.htm>

<http://ludb.clui.org/ex/l/CA3102/>

<http://yosemite.epa.gov/r9/sfund/r9sfdocw.nsf/3dec8ba3252368428825742600743733/4e0520cf3adc561688257007005e941f!OpenDocument>

<http://www.mcclellanpark.com/>

THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERAN AFFAIR'S
THEIR CONTINUOUS DON'T CARE APPROACH TO OUR POISONING ORDEAL

I would like to include with all the accompanying documentation, this important information regarding the total disregard to our requests, the knowingly ongoing delays in completing claims placed by individuals from the F-111 Deseal/Reseal disaster, plus additional information, which each of the individuals on the committee need to know about, as part of the investigation being conducted in July 2008.

Stage 1

In 2000/2001 when the first mention of a major knowingly poisoning of military personnel, was first brought to light by the media, all ex-Air Force personnel who either handled or worked with the SR51 sealant suddenly realised why they had been getting sick in many areas of their bodies, when prior to the release of the information, everyone had NO idea what was going on. It seemed like not a month would go by without another part of our bodies, becoming either sick or displaying numerous medical symptoms and we just put it down to plain bad luck.

When we found out what had happened to us, and we called the Department of Veteran Affairs for help and. What did we receive? a bunch of lies and the always (if you can't prove it you can't claim), plus constant delays and of course the beginning of the old sob story approach to every phone call or letter we would send into every office around Australia! The irresponsible approach of The Department of Veteran Affairs began immediately when they sent all the workers/handlers who were acknowledged as being part of the F-111 SR51 Deseal/Reseal Fuel Tank program, to the incorrect Specialist's from the very beginning.

In the Australian Industry requirements, if an industrial accident occurs anywhere, specialised Doctor's are called in to investigate the incident. In our case The Department of Veteran Affairs should have contacted every **OCCUPATIONAL PHYSICIAN** in Australia, to personally interview every worker male/female who worked with/handled or breathed in constantly the fumes/vapours of the SR51 sealant! Instead, all of us were sent to see Psychiatrists, Psychologists, Dermatologists', in fact everyone except the correct Specialist who deals with the chemical spillages or events involving chemicals!

In addition to this, one question needs to be explained to everyone who worked or handled the SR51 sealant! How could it be that in 2001/2002 when we began seeing these Psychiatrist's, Psychologist's and other Specialist's, we were all told that our conditions were in our heads, or we were lying, when in fact these people didn't even know about the SR51 Sealant and it's toxicity and deadly effects until 2004?

One of the major blows to all members affected by SR51 Sealant was at the beginning when they were told by The Department of Veteran Affairs to submit claims for every medical problem that we have suffered. So each individual did as they were told, and most of the people told The Department of Veteran Affairs that, some of their claims were not related to the SR51 Sealant, but normal injuries relating to their normal day to day duties at the work sites. The Department of Veteran Affairs were advised right from the start, not to get the claims mixed together, yet the staff in The Department of Veteran Affairs deliberately placed all claims together under the F-111 Deseal/Reseal section, knowing full well that the other normal claims would be held up for years!

Stage 2

One other question that needs to be asked of Warrant Officer's in charge of the F-111 Deseal/Reseal Section (**Rag Hangar**) at the southern end of Amberley Air Base is, were they aware that there was a copy of the Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) held within their office? If this was the case, why wasn't the Base Squadron Central Store, notified or given a copy to, at the very least protect those people from Overseas Receipts, Forward Supply, K-Group Section and every other person within the Store involved in the handling of the SR51 Sealant? Apparently the SR51 Sealant had been on the Base since the late 70's, through until 2000,

Upon arrival at the wharves in Sydney and Melbourne, Why were all the MSDS sheets sent directly to Headquarters Support Command in Melbourne to be placed in a safe and not passed to the Transport Driver? Support Command failed in their duty of care, to protect every member involved in the handling, loading, transporting, storing, delivery of this very toxic substance. As Support Command and Deseal/Reseal were both at fault, an investigation should be commenced to find the persons responsible for the deaths and injuries of so many Military and civilian personnel and family members.

Stage 3

I realise, within the submission our wives have been mentioned, however there is one important detail I wish to comment on, which would affect many of the spouses who are also Carer's. That many of our wives suffer back injuries due to helping us out of baths, showers, into cars, up ramps, lifting us out of beds, chairs and the list goes on. My wife is in so much pain that she can hardly sleep at night, but can't take any special pain killers due to suffering heart fibrillations that was brought on over six years ago, with the continual lifting of me in many circumstances.

Furthermore most overweight wives find it hard to lose weight because of the injuries that they have received over the years caring for their husbands. The children of most of us have in one way or another suffered, through the past thirty (30) years, both with their schooling, depression, learning difficulties, concentration, vile temper, severe mood swings, severe acne, and other skin disorders, unable to talk to their parents, because the parents were suffering from most of the same problems.

On behalf of all our surviving Carer's I strongly suggest that each F-111 Carer's Pension have a complete look at and adjustment made as soon as possible. The suggestion being that these people have their current pensions and the allowance ceased and a new F-111 Carer Pension created, which equals the average weekly wage and is indexed to the CPI (TOTALLY TAX FREE)! Unless you have personally seen how our spouses have to work twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, fifty-two weeks a year, then you haven't seen a thing. Imagine if the Carer's were too sick to care for us and we had to take up additional Hospital beds, due to many of the Carer's suffering illnesses themselves, then it would cost the Government a massive amount of extra money, not to mention the additional rush to find Hospital beds?

I realise not all of the remaining surviving workers are as sick as many of the Handlers/Workers who were really in the front lines as we say, however a pyramid approach to the level of sickness of the worker should be instigated and a questionnaire sent to all people who are on Category 1 and a section included for the Category 2 spouses! The Committee should also look at the personnel that either live in remote areas of Australia or have to travel great distances between medical centres or those who have been too sick to fully understand the requirements or their responsibilities to fill in forms, advising the F-111 Health Team of their involvement. A number of these people live reclusively and the public should be asked to advise your committee or after the committee completes its study, they should be able to contact the F-111 Health Team directly, leaving out The Department of Veteran Affairs!

The reason for this is, due to a lot of service personnel not trusting The Department of Veteran Affairs or even want to hear the name mentioned, due to the fear they have deep inside to the way they were affected in the first place, by the Air Force (RAAF).

In completing this Statement, under no circumstances do I place any blame on the way the Labor Government and solely on the Liberal/National Government, who over eleven years have taken the TPI recipients to the lowest level of pension payments the organisation has seen since the 1980's and treated us ex-F-111 SR51 Sealant ex-handlers/workers both military and civilian! An ex-gratia payment of \$50,000 dollars was firstly agreed to in talks, which included Angus Houston for the Handlers or \$100,000 for the actual workers on the F-111 wings, yet the Howard Government decided to only pay \$10,000 to the handlers and \$40,000 to the actual workers on the aircraft, which was an insult added to our suffering. We have heard only a few have actually received any payment at all. So immediately to show good faith to the remaining numbers of people still waiting for some money to come through, I believe the ex-gratia payment should be paid to those who haven't received any money as of this time to the above amounts, which would show that the Government does care and is really doing something to sort this disaster out.

Signed 

Signed 