

ECBC and CBARR celebrate completion of munitions mission

ECBC

Staff members from the Edgewood Chemical Biological Center's Chemical Biological Application and Risk Reduction Business Unit joined representatives from the U.S. Army Chemical Materials Agency in celebrating the successful completion of the mission to destroy all non-stockpile materiel located at Pine Bluff Arsenal, Ark., during a June ceremony.

The CMA Non-Stockpile Chemical Materiel Project began destruction operations at PBA in June 2006. CBARR staff members were instrumental in operating the Pine Bluff Explosive Destruction System (PBEDS), which resulted in the destruction of more than 1,200 munitions, such as 4.2-inch mortars and German Traktor rockets captured during World War II.

The successful start of the PBEDS project was made possible after a nearly 18-month effort by ECBC to assemble a crew that would be permanently stationed at PBA to handle the most hazardous operations. A staff of 34 operators from all over the U.S., with backgrounds such as chemical engineers, chemists, chemical technicians, air monitoring and equipment maintenance specialists, were recruited, interviewed, and trained.

"The Army's Non-Stockpile Chemical Materiel Project is the nation's best equipped organization to provide safe, successful destruction of such a diverse inventory of recovered chemical munitions," said Carmen Spencer, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Elimination of Chemical Weapons. "This accomplishment exemplifies the excellent work we have come to expect from this dedicated group."

PBEDS workers completed operations in April 2010, marking the destruction of the largest recovered chemical warfare inventory in the nation. The PBEDS milestone also marks the completion of all non-stockpile materiel declared upon the United States' Entry-Into-Force of the Chemical Weapons Convention, an international treaty mandating the destruction of chemical warfare.

"In their work with CMA's NSCMP, ECBC personnel have once again



confirmed that they possess the knowledge and the training to work safely with chemical munitions," said ECBC Technical Director Joseph Wienand. "I applaud our employees and our world class partners at the U.S. Army Chemical Materials Agency who have all played an instrumental role in the successful completion of this mission."

Though Pine Bluff Arsenal was established in 1941, workers didn't discover chemical munitions buried on post for more than 20 years after the production of chemical agents and munitions ended in 1969. Shortly after NSCMP was charged with the destruction of the recovered items as well as safe storage and monitoring, ECBC's CBARR unit was tasked with helping to get the job done.

In June 2005, with support from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, NSCMP and ECBC, three separate, environmental enclosures were erected to house the mobile EDS units. An alternative to open detonation, the units provided on-site treatment and neutralization of recovered chemical warfare materiel and prevented the release of vapor, blast or munitions fragments from the process.

The PBEDS site included a command post, mobile chemical laboratory, air monitoring structures, personnel decontamination structures, and a munitions-holding facility as well as a break room and warehouse.

"Usually I just say I blow things up for

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a living, but it's more specific than that," said Laura Graham, ECBC PBEDS project manager. "I came to work and helped to get rid of something that's not good for people so it's been very rewarding. This isn't something many people get to do on a daily basis."

In addition to operating PBEDS and sampling residual liquid and air prior to reopening the EDS, ECBC employees lent their expertise to the NSCMP research and development team.

The collaboration resulted in the creation and implementation of new processes and state-of-the-art equipment enhancements including the Advanced Fragment Suppression System that reduced the amount of waste generated for each operation and the lift assist system designed to reduce EDS operator

stress and strain during munitions loading operations.

ECBC operators were also credited with developing the Fragment Suppression System Puller to assist in the removal of solid waste from the EDS vessel after detonation and neutralization.

Their work to develop a product that would reduce stress and strain on the operators trying to complete the task was rewarded with a U.S. patent.

"While our mission is to perform global chemical and biological operations in a safe, secure and environmentally sound manner, it's the quality and expertise of our people that make it possible for that to happen," said Timothy Blades, deputy director of ECBC's Directorate of Program Integration and CBARR team leader. "And if their know-how can help to improve the processes and the equipment along the way, everyone is successful."

For more information on ECBC or CBARR, visit www.ecbc.army.mil/.