News Release

Public Affairs Office
Honolulu Engineer District
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Fort Shafter, Hawaii 96858-5440

Contact: Doug MaKitten or Alex Kufel

Telephone (808) 438-9862

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE October 20, 2000
NEWS RELEASE No. 00-13

Tanapag Cemetery No. 2 Reopens for Public Visits

(HONOLULU, October 20) -- The public is again visiting Cemetery No. 2 in Tanapag Village, Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, thanks to the successful excavation of polychlorinated biphenyl contaminated soil by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Public visits to the cemetery began Sunday after the Corps' contractor, Environmental Chemical Corporation of Aiea, Hawaii, finished restoration of excavated sites. The cemetery had been closed since last October due to public health concerns about the PCB contamination.

The Corps began phase 1 of the cleanup of the cemetery in August and pledged to complete the excavation and restoration work in time for the public to visit the burial ground on the Nov. 2 All Souls Day holiday. Since then, ECC has removed approximately 6,000 tons of PCB-contaminated soil from the cemetery and stored it in nearby containment cells.

Work on phase 1 of the contract continues as ECC tests other sites near and in the village for contamination. Excavation and storage of any PCB-contaminated soil found and restoration of the sites is expected to continue for several months.

The Corps, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the CNMI Department of Environmental Quality are closely monitoring all work to ensure it is in compliance with United States environmental regulations. Public safety and the protection of human health and the environment are paramount in all project activities. The Corps is also committed to keeping CNMI officials and the public informed as work progresses.

Phase 2 of the project, the treatment and elimination of the PCBs, is expected to begin early next year and take three to four months. Before phase 2 begins, the Corps will evaluate treatment processes and disposal options and seek public comment on the alternatives.

Environmental Chemical Corporation successfully cleaned up a much larger and more complex USEPA Superfund site in Wallington Borough, N.J. The Corps of Engineers also oversaw that work. At Wallington, approximately 95,000 tons of contaminated soil was safely and successfully treated using a process called low temperature thermal desorption. That process involves the heating of soil to separate PCBs and other contaminants. Then a step called the Fenton's reaction, that chemically destroys the PCBs removed from the soil, concludes the process. It is anticipated the same technique will be used in the Tanapag cleanup.

-30-