

## **STURGIS Project Update, November 20, 2014**

Since we last updated you on Nov. 3, our project team has made presentations to the Galveston City Council and Texas A&M Galveston. Both of these presentations are located on our website under Project Documents on the left-side of the page:  
<http://www.nab.usace.army.mil/Missions/Environmental/Sturgis.aspx>.

On Nov. 15, there was a guest column published in the Galveston Daily News entitled, "Sturgis is a lesson in deception." We want to correct some of the inaccurate statements in the article.

In his article, Mr. Bevill wrote that the "Corps 'selected' Galveston as the place to unseal the Sturgis' radioactive contents 13 years early due to cost constraints and the risk of it being a terrorist target, according to Corps spokesperson Brenda Barber. In other words, if attacked, the Sturgis could be transformed into a floating "dirty bomb."

First, the likelihood that the STURGIS is transformed into a dirty bomb is very low. The primary residual radioactive waste that is remaining on the vessel is in the form of activated metals and not easily dispersed. Furthermore, the STURGIS is currently in a very secure location in the James River Fleet at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, VA. When the STURGIS arrives in Galveston, it will be situated in a slip that is behind multiple fences and controlled by security. There will be no public access to the area.

Second, Mr. Bevill is correct that we are starting the decommissioning earlier than originally planned. Our detailed analysis has shown that the two most abundant radionuclides remaining on the STURGIS, Nickel-63 and Cobalt-60, have decayed to an appropriate level for safe handling. Waiting the additional 13 years will not provide any added benefit to the project.

Both of these radionuclides are primarily located in the reactor pressure vessel and primary shield tank. The removal process will be conducted in a contained area of the barge using proven industry standards, including placing them in lead-shielded containers for safe transport to a licensed disposal facility. Any potential radiation dose risk to the public will be minimized using engineering controls and standard industry practices.

In regards to the lease agreement between the Malin International Shipyard and the Board of Trustees of the Galveston Wharves, we will continue to work with the Port of Galveston to ensure the STURGIS project is in compliance with Malin's lease. We plan to follow all applicable local, state and federal laws and regulations in place to ensure that this project is done in a safe and effective manner.

Mr. Bevill also stated that the "Sturgis is slated to arrive in Galveston around Dec. 15." This date has recently changed. At this point, we are willing to delay the towing of the STURGIS. During the next few months, we will work with the City Council to address project concerns. We are considering the impacts of this delay in towing but we need to gather all of the required input that will allow for us to commit to a specific date for putting the STURGIS under tow. We will continue to study the request and will update the City Council and the community once we have all of the information necessary to support the decision.

The Corps of Engineers is committed to continuing to address the City Council's concerns and to keeping all channels of communication open. We share the City Council's goal of keeping the community informed about the project and will continue to reassure people that the project will not pose a health hazard.