

Remarks from RADM Scorby from Media Availability at NAS Oceana 19 May

Good morning. I am Rear Admiral Jack Scorby, Commander of the Navy's Mid-Atlantic Region. Thank you all for being here. I appreciate your reporting to keep the public informed as we continue the cleanup.

A lot of team work and coordination has taken place since the fuel spill incident occurred, so today I'd like to give you an update on how we got here, where we are and the way ahead. I'd also like to thank all of our partners here for their hard work and support as we clean up the 94,000 gallons of jet fuel that spilled on this base and into our community last week.

I'd like to send a special thanks to the residents for your patience, support, cooperation, and understanding as we work to get the fuel spill cleaned up in the neighborhoods. **The residents and the off-base cleanup have been – and will continue to be – our NUMBER ONE priority.**

Our initial estimate of 48-hours for the clean time was obviously overly optimistic. As we deployed emergency responders and environmental experts, we learned that the amount of time and effort for a thorough cleanup would require more time than originally thought. The heavy rains last weekend coupled with the time required it took to reopen London Bridge Road in time for the Monday morning commute also hampered our efforts. The important thing is that we will take whatever time is needed to ensure the spill is completely cleaned up.

Some have also asked why the relocation of residents did not occur sooner.

I want to be clear, at no time did we believe anyone in the neighborhoods was exposed to any health risk and the environmental readings supported that. However, following Monday's information meeting, multiple residents in the area reported some discomfort as a result of the fumes.

On Tuesday, we put into motion the process necessary to allow us to offer the residents the option to voluntarily and temporarily relocate at the government's expense.

On Wednesday afternoon, we began the voluntary relocations. Our NAS Oceana Sailors went door-to-door, visiting 200 households, meeting face-to-face with 158 residents. As of Thursday afternoon, 48 families have requested temporary relocation. And, we are working hard to get our neighbors back to their homes as quickly as possible.

The emergency response will continue until we are able to transition to the remediation phase. The remediation phase will occur when there is little to no recoverable product left. The objective is to recover the product with the least amount of environmental impact. I cannot give you an exact date when this will occur, but we are working round the clock and are optimistic that this will occur next week.

We urge residents in the community to notify us immediately if they observe any fuel in the area. We will dispatch teams immediately to investigate and take all appropriate response actions.

I want to be clear, we will continue to keep the mitigation of the spill in the neighborhoods our top priority.

The fuel spill is under investigation and the investigation is still ongoing. I cannot get into the details about WHY the fuel spill occurred. I can, however, provide some additional information as to how it occurred.

The fuel for our jets is stored in three 880-thousand gallon tanks on the air station. It is moved to the tanks from a fuel barge on the Inter-Coastal Waterway via an above ground pipeline to the tanks at the base. Initial indications are that during a routine refueling of the tanks last Wednesday evening, May 10th, a fuel switch was in the incorrect position. Instead of routing the fuel into the large tanks, which are surrounded by a containment barrier, the fuel flowed to a smaller 2,000 gallon tank and overflowed for several hours outside of the containment area and was discovered around 6 a.m. Thursday.

Unfortunately, 94,000 gallons had spilled from this tank at the Fuel Farm, and we estimate 25,000 gallons went off the installation into our community. Exactly how the switch was in the incorrect position is remains under investigation.

The investigation will also provide recommendations to ensure that this will not happen again here, or any other location. I don't have the timeline when the investigation will be completed, or released, because we want to ensure a careful and thorough review is conducted.

In the meantime, we have taken some immediate corrective actions at the fuel farm. For example, we have doubled the number of people managing the tanks and fueling operations. Additionally, an immediate stand down was held with personnel to review our processes and procedures.

For the way forward ... we have established, and will keep updated, a fuel spill website, and we have provided residents with email addresses and phone numbers to keep them informed. This information is in your media package.

As you may be aware, air and water testing began immediately after the spill and will continue as long as needed to ensure the health and safety of the residents. This monitoring will continue until we are confident we've done everything we can to clean up.

I can tell you that the air quality readings in the affected neighborhoods have tested near zero since Tuesday afternoon in the residential areas. That's good news.

I understand that the fuel spill created a terrible situation that we are working hard to make better. We know it's important to you, and it's equally important to us. We live and work in the community as well.

NAS Oceana and the surrounding community have been good neighbors for a long time. We want to maintain this important relationship and we're doing everything possible to keep you informed and to make sure we have processes in place so this type of incident never happens again.

I'm here to tell you the Navy knows the inconvenience the fuel spill has caused. We are responsible for the spill, we own it and we are committed to making it right.

Thank you again for your time.

I, along with our unified team, will be happy to answer your questions at this time.