



U.S. Army Test and Evaluation Command

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 5, 2013

APG's Super Pond closed indefinitely

ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND, Md. – Following two accidents at the Aberdeen Test Center Underwater Explosion Test Facility, or Super Pond, ATC Commander Col. Gordon A. Graham ordered the facility closed indefinitely for all military and civilian dive operations here Feb. 26.

The Super Pond, which opened in 1995, was constructed when the Navy sought a more environmentally friendly site to conduct its open water tests. It provides the Army with the capability and expertise to conduct a wide range of Department of Defense, academia and private industry shock test programs, as well as other research and development and test and evaluation efforts without impact on the environment.

Since that time no recordable injuries or fatalities have occurred there until the latest accidents claimed three personnel.

“The U.S. Army Test and Evaluation Command and Aberdeen Test Center are troubled by the loss of two Navy divers February 26, and our personal loss January 30,” said Maj. Gen. Genaro Dellarocco, ATEC Commanding General. “Right now, members of the APG community are mourning the loss of these two servicemen. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families and the shipmates of the Navy Divers.”

On Jan. 31 Graham ceased operations supporting civilian dive operations and ordered an immediate safety stand down in addition to ATC's scheduled monthly stand downs. Each month ATC personnel conduct safety reviews where they evaluate operating procedures and processes and discuss best practices.

The Navy dive operation, which was planned prior to Jan. 30, remained scheduled through an agreement between the Navy and ATC. The Navy military dive team would conduct their dive operations in the UTF using their own procedures, equipment, and personnel. The Navy team was briefed on the Jan. 30 accident prior to their operation. In line with policy, the Navy performed the appropriate risk assessments and ensured proper safety measures were in place in accordance with the U.S. Navy Diving Manual.

Prior to any testing or training activity at the pond, ATC and its customers perform risk assessments, to include safety, and construct detailed planning of operations.

“We conduct risk assessments prior to any training or testing event and review safety procedures for those events,” said Graham. “The health and safety of our workforce is our number one priority, and these assessments allow us to mitigate risk as best as we can.”

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Super Pond Closed

The UTF has supported a variety of tests to include the shock testing of vessels, submarine systems and subsystems, torpedoes, missiles, warheads, amphibious vehicles, Remotely Operated Vehicles, underwater gun firing and acoustics. The UTF is also used to support joint test and training exercises.

The two accidents remain under investigation. The U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Division, the Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center, and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration conducted the Jan. 30 accident investigation; the second accident is being investigated by the Naval Criminal Investigative Service with cooperation from the Army.

“We are cooperating with all investigation agencies,” said Dellarocco. “Should the results determine that we need to take corrective action, we will do so expeditiously for the safety of all personnel working at the Super Pond. Our people are our most valuable resource, and we are committed to ensuring their safety.”

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Attachments:

- (1) Official Photo, Diver. (Released. File Photo/2008)
- (2) Official Photo, Littoral Warfare Weapon. (Released. File Photo/July 2009)
The Littoral Warfare Weapon, a developmental counter-attack Air-to-Air Missile, is launched from underwater within Aberdeen Test Center’s Underwater Explosion Test Facility. The successful launch demonstrated progress in submarine self-defense capability.
- (3) Official Photo, DDG-1000. (Released. File Photo/April 2005)
A quarter-scale model of the [then] developmental U.S. Navy Destroyer --dubbed DD(X), now known as the DDG-1000-- undergoes an underwater explosive-shock qualification event at Aberdeen Test Center’s Underwater Explosion Test Facility. The USS Zumwalt Class Destroyer (DDG-1000) is currently in production with the first ship to be delivered in 2014.