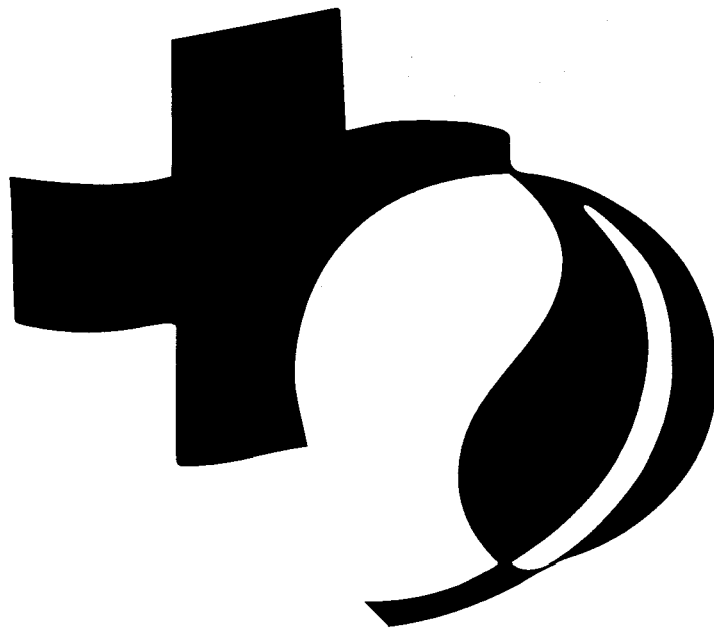

MOVING TOWARD SUSTAINABLE BASE CONVERSION

*Global Green USA's Third Annual Forum on
Military Toxic Contamination Cleanup and Base Conversion*



Global Green USA

The American Affiliate of Green Cross International

October 3-4, 1996

Presidio Officers' Club

Presidio of San Francisco, California

SUMMARY REPORT

"Moving Toward Sustainable Conversion" The Third Annual *Global Green USA Legacy Program* National Forum on Military Toxic Cleanup and Base Conversion

October 3 & 4, 1996
The Presidio, San Francisco, CA

BACKGROUND

Global Green USA, the American affiliate of Green Cross International, hosted the third annual Forum on Military Toxic Cleanup and Base Conversion, titled "Moving Toward Sustainable Conversion," at the Presidio Officers' Club in San Francisco on October 3-4, 1996. The Forum brought together a broad cross section of over 200 citizens, officials from local, state and federal government, defense and service branch personnel, non-profit groups and others working on military base cleanup and conversion issues. The event was covered by print, radio, and television media. The Forum also included site visits to Treasure Island, Mare Island, and the Presidio of San Francisco, affording participants on-site observations of innovative cleanup and reuse programs in the Bay Area.

PURPOSE

The four main objectives of the Forum were to:

- Highlight innovative programs in the San Francisco Bay Area as models for national military base cleanup.
- Enhance existing networks and facilitate increased communication of all stakeholders.
- Establish consensus on public policy initiatives and identify strategies to successful cleanup and conversion.
- Stimulate media attention toward environmental cleanup and sustainable conversion at military facilities.

OVERVIEW

The Forum was uniquely structured mixing panel presentations with workshop discussions covering topics from local to global significance. The day was highlighted by Green Cross International President and Nobel Laureate Mikhail Gorbachev who gave an enthusiastically received speech on "The Environmental Legacy of the Cold War: The Challenge to Communities and the World." Mr. Gorbachev was introduced by fellow Nobel winner Oscar Arias Sanchez, the former president of Costa Rica. Participant feedback in facilitated discussions was emphasized as one of the most valuable products of the Forum. The Resource Exchange Bank (REB), a computer database networking tool, was used in the Forum as an innovative way to identify the skills of individual participants and their needs in proactive effort to match peer-based resources with demand. An REB was set up on-line at the Forum to enable participants to pinpoint other people and resources to meet their specific needs.

AGENDA HIGHLIGHTS

Bay Area Experiences

The first panel, facilitated by Moira Scheck, identified obstacles and opportunities in the Bay Area to base cleanup and sustainable reuse. Carl Anthony, president of the Earth Island Institute and former chair of the East Bay Conversion and Reinvestment Commission, summarized the three major challenges faced by a community in detailing his experience with the closure of the Alameda Naval Air Station in Oakland, CA.

- **Crisis management:** Immediately upon closure communities are faced with large-scale job losses and severe environmental contamination. Programs must be implemented quickly on the local level to alleviate this crisis.
- **Economic redevelopment:** Communities must devise ways to rebuild their local economies. By building ties with growth sectors of the economy and bringing in skilled people from local universities and industry a community can chart a smooth course toward economic redevelopment.
- **Transition to a sustainable economy:** Communities must quickly change from an unsustainable economy one that is ecologically sensitive and takes a balanced approach to development.

AGENDA HIGHLIGHTS, CONTINUED

Keynote Address by Mikhail Gorbachev

In his keynote address, "The Environmental Legacy of the Cold War: The Challenge to Communities and the World," Mr. Gorbachev explained that environmental degradation was a priority for him even in the early days of his political career. "Even since my years as a regional leader in the Caucasus, I saw how that jewel of nature, the Caucasus, was being destroyed...then I understood that the era when man was the king of nature was coming to an end." He also emphasized the ability of citizens at the grassroots to change institutions. He related the events that took place during the 1980s in Chapaevsk when thousands of citizens turned out to block plans by the Ministry of Defense to construct a chemical weapons destruction plant. Subsequently, the Ministry agreed to destroy chemical weapons on-site and not to transport them to a central facility. Mr. Gorbachev expressed a desire for people throughout the world to take advantage of the end of the cold war to increase economic prosperity and push for greater environmental well-being.

Former Costa Rican Mr. Oscar Arias gave a moving address in which he spoke of his recent efforts to stem the current flow of arms to the developing world. Mr. Arias described chilling facts about the global arms bazaar and proclaimed that "the time has come to make people more important than arms." Mr. Arias introduced and praised Mr. Gorbachev and stated that peace in Central America is "an example of the great opportunities that Mikhail Gorbachev's policies have provided to humanity." He also cited Mr. Gorbachev for his visionary leadership that ended the cold war and made large-scale disarmament possible. In turn, Mr. Arias stated that "demilitarization and disarmament constitute necessary processes in order to substantially reduce environmental decay."

Conversion Challenges Faced by California

The Forum offered an opportunity to highlight the particular challenges faced by California and the innovative strategies developed in state to handle those challenges. Bill Tuohy, representing the East Bay Conversion and Reinvestment Commission, emphasized that California experienced the greatest number of base closures, many with extreme environmental contamination. The heavily defense dependent economy was faced with layoffs in both public and private sectors. Because of major pollution problems at many facilities California also takes the lion's share of federal defense environmental cleanup appropriations. However, many programs in the state have taken advantage of the conversion process and turned it into an asset for the community. These include:

- Efforts to use bases in California as national pilot projects for conversion programs.
- Collaborative efforts between state and federal government and local communities to agree on cleanup schedule and oversight.
- Active Restoration Advisory Boards (RABs) around the state that facilitate community input into environmental remediation decisions.

Public-Private Partnerships

Speakers and participants suggested that base cleanup and closure is an ideal opportunity to reinvent the way the federal government works. Commander Al Elkins, Base Transition Coordinator for the San Francisco Bay Area, used his panel to give a presentation on his Locally Directed Industry Managed Conversion initiative. The initiative would encourage a rapid reinvestment of property through stakeholder involvement by giving communities and private industry a lead in the cleanup and redevelopment of military facilities. Under the plan a local community and private industry (architectural, engineering, environmental cleanup firms, etc.) would take over a site and responsibility for planning, cleanup, and conversion at a substantial savings to the federal government. The federal government would continue to provide oversight and some financial backing, but the money saved could be directed toward retraining dislocated workers. The program is currently being developed for the Hunter's Point Naval Shipyard in San Francisco and other facilities are also interested.

Environmental Justice and Federal Facility Conversion

Sally Gallegos of the United Indian Nations emphasized the need for Native American interests to have an opportunity to use land parcels transferred under the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) program. It was also noted that the conversion and cleanup process works in communities where public participation is high, but in economically or socially disadvantaged communities there is often less success. A further concern was expressed that in rural areas, especially Alaska, Native American subsistence patterns are not considered when transfer agreements are made.

AGENDA HIGHLIGHTS, CONTINUED

Changing Institutions

Forum participants emphasized that a major hurdle in the base cleanup and conversion process was changing the way institutions like the military, federal, state and local governments and community groups worked. These institutions are forced to devise creative solutions to respond to the new priorities of a post-cold war world. Programs such as the RABs, cleanup agreements between federal and state government, and community partnerships in conversion pilot programs were cited as effective means of increasing communication in most cases on cleanup and conversion programs.

FEEDBACK AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Bridgin the gap between cleanup and conversion

While the Forum concentrated on successful initiatives in the process of military base cleanup and conversion, it also presented an opportunity to suggest areas of improvement. A particular area of concern was the disconnect between environmental cleanup at military facilities and their sustainable conversion. Specific suggestions were:

- **Bridging cleanup, conversion and development.** Conflicts occur between RABs, which provide oversight on cleanup at military facilities, and Local Reuse Authorities (LRAs) which promote redevelopment. RABs and LRAs should coordinate their efforts to address differences early in the conversion process.
- **Demonstrating cleanup technologies.** Military facilities should be used as venues for the testing and demonstration of environmental cleanup technology and for innovative sustainable building practices.
- **Training and retraining qualified personnel.** Participants remarked that the most highly qualified personnel working on cleanup and conversion projects turn over quickly. Long-term stability in cleanup and conversion efforts can only be met by holding on to these personnel.

Strategies for Communication

Participants suggested that communication between DoD and communities be improved. Avenues for communication and building trust were described as the most essential components of successful cleanup and conversion programs.

- **Facilitating local stakeholder input.** External decisions often take precedence over the plans and wishes of communities. Federal agencies should initiate mechanisms to facilitate greater local input into planning decisions.
- **Establishing trust.** Lack of disclosure also led to some distrust DoD. Some remarked that they trusted DoD more when the military was honest and open about what problems they were facing rather than continually assuring communities that everything was fine.
- **Building transparency.** Federal agencies should facilitate the flow of information to especially regarding cleanup policies and decisions.

Public policy and networking strategies

New cooperative efforts were also proposed, including:

- **Organizing congressional oversight.** Participants also emphasized the need for higher level congressional visibility on defense environmental cleanup and conversion. The establishment of a caucus-type organization at the congressional level was suggested to facilitate communication between constituents and Capitol Hill on cleanup and conversion issues.
- **Facilitating regional networks.** Forming a network of regionally affected communities to elevate the concerns of an individual installation to a regional or national level. This would alert other communities to pitfalls and facilitate cleanup and conversion in other communities.
- **Establishing site coordinators.** Also suggested was establishing a coordinator to work with all stakeholders (government agencies, local citizens, interest groups, potential new users of sites, funding entities, etc.) at a particular closure facility or network of facilities.
- **Creating networking opportunities.** Others felt that cooperation was greatly enhanced through events like the Forum that afforded participants the opportunity to share successful strategies and programs. One participant remarked that she had never previously attended a meeting with representatives from such a diverse range of organizations and agencies.