

Marines say trek avoided chemical site

Exams failed to show signs of contamination

STAFF REPORT

A Marine Corps spokesman said Friday that 37 troops performing a night training exercise aboard Camp Lejeune on April 27 were not exposed to dangerous chemical pollutants and that physical exams have failed to show any signs of contamination.

According to Maj. Stuart Wagner, director of Joint Public Affairs, members of Kilo Company, 3rd Battalion, 8th Marines came no closer than 700 meters to a site suspected of containing hazardous materials.

One Marine complained of having fever like symptoms, headache and general malaise after the exercise. Following examination by the battalion surgeon, the Marine was diagnosed as suffering from dehydration and an upper respiratory ailment not related to exposure to hazardous chemicals, Wagner said.

"Because all the Marines in the platoon were fully aware of the chemical site, and one of the Marines was subsequently ill, many in the platoon erroneously assumed they had walked through the site," Wagner said.

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the platoon, all the Marines have since been examined by Naval doctors," he added.

The physicals revealed no signs of chemical exposure, and subsequent treatment would depend on the results of blood tests, which will be available soon, according to the spokesman. Blood samples will also be retaken in thirty days, he said.

Two dump sites at local military bases are suspected of being envi-

ronmental "hot spots," according to Stephany Del Rey, an environmental specialist hired by the Marine Corps to help clean up hazardous waste sites.

One site is a chemical landfill at a rifle range near Sneads Ferry on Camp Lejeune. According to a 1983 study, records on the site have been lost, but PCBs, pesticides and metals were disposed there from the mid-1950s to about 1976.

Marines safe

During the evening of April 26, until about 5 a.m. April 27, 37 Marines from Kilo Co., 3rd Bn., 8th Marines were participating in a night training exercise in the rifle range area of Camp Lejeune.

While on foot moving from one position to another, the platoon commander, to avoid the known location of a hazardous waste site in the vicinity east of his position, moved the platoon west toward a creek marked on his map, according to Maj. Stuart Wagner, director of the Joint Public Affairs Office here. The platoon followed the creek for about 200 meters, at times waist and chest deep, until they could go no farther and had to turn around. The platoon returned to the point where they entered the creek and then proceeded northwest until they found a road which eventually led them out and they were picked up by their unit.

At the pickup point, one Marine complained of having feverlike symptoms, headache, and general malaise. The Marine was brought in from the field and examined by the battalion surgeon who determined that the Marine was dehydrated and suffering from an upper respiratory infection, not related to any chemical contamination.

Because all the Marines in the platoon were fully aware of the chemical site, and one of the Marines was subsequently ill, many in the platoon erroneously assumed they had walked through the site. At no time was the platoon in the site and the closest they came was about 700 meters. Because of an increased anxiety by the Marines in the platoon, all the Marines have since been examined by Naval doctors. Exams consisted of a full physical and blood samples.

Results of the physical are all normal and the results of the blood tests will be available soon. Once all the results are known, follow-up treatment, if necessary, will be conducted. At a minimum, blood samples will be retaken in 30 days.

No Marine has indicated any sign of illness attributable to chemical contamination, nor has any Marine reported that blood has been observed in his stool.

The site is one that has been identified for clean-up under the Installation Restoration Program.