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NEWS MEDIA ADVISORY

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Sailor discharged for role in NAS Oceana jet fuel spill; Navy continues remediation efforts

NORFOLK, VA (NRMA) – A Sailor who pleaded guilty in November to charges connected to the jet fuel spill at Naval Air Station (NAS) Oceana in May, has been discharged from the Navy.

The Sailor, assigned to the Naval Supply Systems Command Fleet Logistics Center Norfolk, received an other-than-honorable discharge and was separated from the Navy, Monday, Dec. 4 after accepting responsibility for his actions. He has been administratively separated from the Navy in lieu of court-martial.

The Navy has been committed to holding all responsible individuals fully accountable for their actions that led to the spill. A total of nine uniformed military personnel, ranging in grade from junior enlisted Sailors to senior officers, received disciplinary or adverse administrative actions as a result of this incident.

The range of adverse administrative actions include administrative reassignment of duties, non-punitive letters, and administrative separation from the Navy. Disciplinary actions included reductions in rank, forfeiture of pay, extra duties and punitive reprimands. Additionally, one civilian employee received an adverse administrative action in the form of a written reprimand.

The disciplinary and administrative actions followed the Navy's investigation into the spill which cited multiple instances of human error, dereliction of duty and local oversight failure as causing the chain of events that led to the spill. The redacted Navy administrative investigation (JAGMAN) in conjunction with the incident was also publicly released today and is available at www.cnic.navy.mil/oceanafuelspill.

“We have a responsibility to be good stewards of the resources the American public entrusts to us to defend the nation,” said Commander, Navy Region Mid-Atlantic, Rear Adm. Jack Scorby. “We take these responsibilities seriously and we hold people accountable when they don't. We set high standards for our people and we won't tolerate those who fall short of those standards.”

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Navy Region Mid-Atlantic is responsible for the operation of Navy installations from North Carolina to Maine and providing support programs and services for the fleet, fighter and family.

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“As we’ve said from the start, we’re also committed to preventing future such accidents, to restoring the environment and taking care of the residents in the affected neighborhoods. This will continue as long as required,” Scorby said.

The May 11 jet fuel spill allowed 94,000 gallons to leak at the base fuel farm and 25,000 gallons to leak into the nearby streams. The Navy credits quick action by local first responders with halting the spill and preventing further damage.

In the immediate aftermath of the spill, the Navy doubled the number of watch stander personnel from 20 to 40 personnel, and conducted a safety stand-down held to review processes and procedures.

The Navy also convened a working group to identify the best practices and procedures to be put in place, not only at NAS Oceana, but everywhere the Navy operates. The Navy also changed fuel management processes so accidents such as this do not happen again.

A Navy-convened working group looked at personnel, training and qualifications, processes and procedures and materiel.

Personnel now conduct increased rounds during fueling operations in two-person teams, one Sailor and one civilian.

Engineers added a spring loaded drain valve, in addition to the existing manually set valve that automatically stops the fuel flow when personnel release the lever.

An overfill prevention valve was installed in the recovery tank that cuts off the fuel flow once the amount of fuel reaches 95 percent.

To the extent possible, fuel deliveries are now being made between the hours of 7:30 a.m. and 9:30 p.m. to avoid increased risk with overnight fueling operations through the pipeline.

The Navy also reviewed the way Sailors are selected, trained and qualified for duty in the bulk fuels facility.

Monitoring of the wetlands and environment in the spill area continue. Visual inspections of the marsh/wetland areas has been conducted monthly.

The Navy is scheduled to conduct follow-up environmental testing and monitoring of areas affected by the fuel spill later this month.

The focus of this testing is to determine if any fuel remains in soil, groundwater sediment, or surface water in the affected areas. The study will include 20 shallow groundwater monitoring wells that will be installed on the installation near the fuel farm and in the grassy area along London Bridge Rd., inside and outside the fence. Traffic should not be impeded by the study.

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Test results will be included in the report the Navy will submit to the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). Based on results, DEQ will determine what level and frequency of continued monitoring and/or remediation is necessary.

The cost of the response for cleanup efforts and support to affected families was about \$3.8 million.

“The Navy is committed to the continued monitoring and assessment until we are confident we’ve done everything we can,” said Scorby. “Getting this right and being transparent are important to us, because we live and work in the community as well. Naval Air Station Oceana and the surrounding community have been good neighbors for a long time. The Navy is committed to maintaining and regaining the community’s trust.”

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