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Sioux Gateway Airport

## THE SIOUX CITY AIR BASE PLAYED A VITAL ROLE DURING WORLD WAR II. BUT LONG AFTER THE WAR ENDED, IT WAS DISCOVERED FUEL HAD POLLUTED THE FACILITY. ALL THESE YEARS LATER, THE CITY AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CAN'T AGREE ON WHO SHOULD PAY THE \$1.47 MILLION TAB, ALL WHILE ... CONTAMINATED LAND REMAINS

Sioux City, corps at odds over contamination cleanup at airport

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Sioux Gateway Airport Director Curt Miller shows monitoring wells at the airport on Monday. City leaders continue to believe the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers should pay part of the \$1.47 million cost to clean up soil and water contamination at the facility. Some may date to when the airport was a World War II military base.

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Dawn J. Sager, Sioux City Journal



**SIOUX CITY |** During World War II, bombers zoomed through the skies of Siouxland as young pilots and their crews trained to go to war at the air base on the south side of Sioux City.

Once the war was over, the bombers left, and much of the air base property eventually became Sioux Gateway Airport. Few structures from those days remain, but the long runways are still there, as are memories of Sioux City's role in the long-ago war effort.



Mach

City leaders believe that era left behind more than just memories. Soil and groundwater contamination caused by fuel spills was discovered at the airport in the early 1990s, leading to a dispute still to be resolved over who should be responsible for the \$1.47 million that cleaning up the pollution is expected to cost.

The city believes the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers should pay part of the cost.



Scott

But the corps appears unwilling to help clean up the fuel spills, which may date to the 1940s, when B-17 and B-29 bombers ruled Sioux City's skies.

The city and corps disagree about when the fuel leaks occurred. The corps claims the pollution was caused by city and private users after the site was no longer an air base.

"The corps' stance at this time is we have not yet seen any evidence that the petroleum product is tied to the Department of Defense use in the 1940s or 1950s. There's nothing that's linking the contamination now to use by a Department of Defense entity," said Tom Tracy, deputy district counsel with the corps, which handles environmental cleanup at former Department of Defense installations.

The city claims that one of the two polluted sites has not been used by the airport or private entities since the military left.

"Our contention is we have documentation that on at least one site, the city or fixed-base operator never used it," said Rick Mach, Sioux City Water Plant superintendent.

Both sides have asked the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 7 office in Lenexa, Kan., to help resolve the dispute.

"EPA Region 7 has exchanged information with the agencies involved and is currently evaluating all available information to determine the next steps," EPA spokesman David Bryan said.

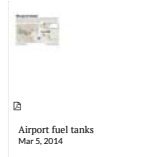
Sioux City Mayor Bob Scott said the city awaits an EPA decision to decide how to proceed.

"I've suggested we probably begin litigation (against the corps)," Scott said, adding that would probably be a last resort.

The corps seems content to wait for an EPA opinion.

"That's kind of where we're at right now. We're cooperating with (the EPA)," Tracy said. "The corps' position has always been we're willing to look at any new information or facts that may indicate why we should become actively involved."

Groundwater and soil contamination were found at the airport in the early 1990s, when 110 underground fuel tanks, most of them dating to World War II, were removed.



Airport fuel tanks  
Mar 5, 2014



EPA may help mediate Sioux City fuel cleanup dispute

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