Report on Environmental Remediation

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**Information Paper submitted by the United Kingdom**

Summary

In November 2019, an environmental remediation of an abandoned cache of equipment and fuel at ‘Blue One Camp’, was successfully completed in accordance with Annex III of the Environment Protocol.

Background

1. Between November 1996 and January 1999, the private company Polar Logistics (a sister company of Adventure Network International), was permitted by the United Kingdom to operate a blue ice runway in the Dronning Maud Land region of Antarctica, which they named ‘Blue One’. During the 5 seasons of operation, 10 intercontinental flights were completed from Cape Town, South Africa, by C-130 and IL-76 aircraft.
2. On 12 February 2001, the camp was packed in wooden crates and heavy canvass tent bags in one small area over a freezer hole filled with foods. 378 empty 200L drums and 15 full drums of Jet A1 were tied together with rope about 60m away from the cache. 2 skidoos and Komatik sleds were similarly deployed within 60m of the cache.
3. The runway has subsequently been operated by the British company, White Desert, who call the runway ‘Wolf’s Fang’.

Environmental Remediation Operation

1. The remediation work was led by a former member of Polar Logistics (now operating as High Latitude Services Ltd), supported by four staff from the Antarctic logistics operators ALCI. The team flew into the site on 24 November 2019, where they received further assistance from White Desert staff.
2. The snow and ice in the last 18 years had sublimated by about a metre, leaving the cache on a snow pinnacle. It was easy to remove 1 plane-load of the less secure equipment that morning and transport it to Novolazarevskaya Runway for sorting.
3. In the afternoon, the team removed two more aircraft loads from within the crates and from a frozen food storage pit. Despite the lids of most of the crates being well screwed down, they were packed full of snow that had turned to ice, and much of the equipment was frozen in place, so the crates had to be broken open.
4. On 25 November, the team started on the cache of empty drums, 160 of which were iced-in to at least 1/3 of the way up. The day was spent with pickaxes and large hammers removing and flying out the empty drums in two loads. No drums were found with any fuel in them, and there was no indication of any leakage. It is assumed that full drums of fuel have been removed previously.
5. On the morning of 26 November, the team flew out the last load of drums and removed all traces of broken wood and other debris. At midday on 26 November, the team left the site.
6. At Novo, all equipment was sorted and either retained or sent back to Cape Town for disposal. Of the 378 drums left in 2001, some had already been removed. The team removed the remaining 230 drums.
7. The operation was conducted in such a manner as to minimise environmental impacts involved in the removal. The team of five camped overnight on site in two small mountain tents. A portable ‘Pactor’ toilet was established on site. All food and human waste was removed.

Current Site

1. The photographs below document the successful removal of the abandoned site. Where there remained some discolouration of snow following the operation, this is believed to have originated from rust or paint on the outside of the drums, and from accumulated dust particles. This discolouration is expected to fade in the next few years as the ice sublimates and any remaining particulate is spread out by the wind. In accordance with Article 1(5b) of Annex III, the team considered that efforts to remove this discolouration would introduce more contaminate into the Antarctic than would be removed.

Conclusion

1. **The United Kingdom welcomes the comprehensive and successful remediation of this abandoned work site, and commends the cooperation of High Latitude Services, ALCI and White Desert in completing this important work to restore the Antarctic environment to its pristine condition.**

Annex - Photographs

**Camp cache**

Before:  After: 

 

**Drums cache**

Before:  After: 