

# Pearl begins <sup>HA 2/17/87 A-3</sup> using toxic paint on ships

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Delayed by court order and then by rain, the controversial painting of a Navy warship began at Pearl Harbor yesterday and might be completed this morning.

"We've lost the battle but not the war," said David Waters of the state Attorney General's Office.

The state is opposed to the Navy's use of a paint that contains tributyltin, or TBT, a tin-based pesticide that keeps hulls clean but has uncertain environmental and health consequences.

Pearl Harbor is one of two sites nationwide where the Navy wants to test the environmental impact of TBT. Three ships are scheduled to be painted with TBT here in the next 12 months.

A federal judge issued a temporary restraining order Friday but rescinded it Sunday.

Lt. Cmdr Ron Morse, spokesman for Pearl

Harbor Naval Shipyard, said painting began at 3:15 p.m. yesterday when the rain let up and was scheduled to go on until it got dark.

Painting of the hull of the 438-foot frigate USS Badger probably will be completed this morning, Morse said.

Beginning work at 3:15 p.m. on a holiday might give the appearance that the Navy is trying to push the job through before more interference, but Morse said, "It is not uncommon for painting to be scheduled on weekends and other off-hours to avoid disruption to other work on the ship. All other work has to stop when painting is in progress."

Painters are required to wear a full body suit with respirator and receive special training for handling TBT paints, Morse said.

Even so, the union representing shipyard painters had said it wanted long-term health monitoring beyond the usual annual physical for those handling TBT. A spokesman for the union, the Metal Trades Council, could not be reached

for comment last night.

Waters said the state's next step is to try to gauge the environmental impact when the Badger leaves drydock and enters the water.

He also said "a moratorium (on TBT) is also being considered for private use."

TBT is widely used on commercial and pleasure boats, including those in Hawaii; the Navy estimated that civilian use of TBT in Hawaii is 65 times greater than that proposed by the Navy.

"The (state) Department of Health is studying the issue," Waters said. "Once that information is gained, we will take appropriate regulatory action."

TBT has been linked to deformities and breeding problems in marine life, particularly shellfish. Some East Coast shipyard workers who have handled it suffer from chronic skin inflammation, respiratory disorders and other ailments.

France, England, Japan, West Germany and Switzerland have restricted its use.