



Media Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Army to destroy recovered chemical munitions

SCHOFIELD BARRACKS, Hawaii—U.S. Army experts plan to safely destroy 71 legacy chemical munitions here, beginning April 15, using a state-of-the-art contained detonation system called the Transportable Detonation Chamber (TDC).

The TDC is a total containment chamber, so neither the health nor the safety of the Schofield Barracks or neighboring communities is at risk.

The TDC uses a combination of explosives to destroy a munition and its chemical agent fill and a pollution abatement system to process any off gases from the destruction process. The TDC's operations are continuously monitored to ensure the complete destruction of the munition's fill.

“As with anything we do, the cornerstone of our efforts is and will continue to be safety,” said Col. Matthew Margotta, commander, U.S. Army Garrison, Hawaii (USAG-HI). “The Army's procedures for handling, storing and disposing of recovered chemical munitions begin and end with safety.”

The TDC system provides total containment of the process, including containment of any vapors generated when a munition is destroyed within the TDC. However, as added protection, the system is located inside an enclosure (the system enclosure) that would contain any vapors released, should the TDC system have a release. This enclosure, which is completely monitored by both video cameras and air monitors, provides an additional safeguard to the TDC, which is also continuously monitored.

In terms of safety, the TDC and the system enclosure were designed to provide redundant containment capabilities.

“The Army's use of total containment technology, within a system enclosure, to destroy these recovered chemical munitions ensures the protection of our workers, the public and the environment,” said David Hoffman, TDC program manager, Office of the Project Manager for Non-Stockpile Chemical Materiel, U.S. Army Chemical Materials Agency (CMA).

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The Army is using the TDC to destroy one munition that has a chloropicrin fill. Chloropicrin causes tearing, vomiting and choking. It is also used in insecticides and fumigants. The remaining 70 munitions are filled with phosgene. Phosgene causes choking and was used extensively during World War I. Phosgene is also used commercially to make plastics and pesticides.

“The Army has been in Hawaii and has trained on some of these ranges, longer than I, or most other people, have been alive,” Margotta said. “The chemical munitions we recovered are historical munitions, dating back to WWI and WWII. These munitions are no longer used.”

As a signatory to the Chemical Weapons Convention, the U.S. is prohibited from developing, producing, stockpiling or using chemical weapons.

“When the U.S. finds and identifies a munition as a chemical munition, the U.S. is required to declare it to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, and destroy it,” said Hoffman.

Accordingly, USAG-HI officials immediately initiated actions to safeguard and declare these recovered chemical munitions that were found and identified between 2005 and 2007 during range clearance operations here.

Army officials have extensively coordinated this effort with local, state and federal agencies, including the Centers for Disease Control, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Hawaii State Department of Health, and the City and County of Honolulu. This deliberative and collaborative effort ensures that safeguards are in place to protect the health of the community and the environment.

Currently, the 71 recovered chemical munitions are in safe, secure storage on Schofield Barracks. The munitions are packaged in Department of Transportation-approved containers that are designed to contain a potential leak.

Hoffman expects all 71 munitions to be destroyed in 15 days, provided the weather cooperates. The crew and TDC will be here for roughly one month.

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MEDIA NOTE: Preparation and final set-up of the TDC is ongoing; however, media will have the opportunity to tour the system Monday, April 14 at 12 p.m. Interested media should contact the USAG-HI Public Affairs Office, Ms. Stefanie Gardin, at (808) 656-3160 for more information.