



Posted on: Friday, January 6, 2006

Schofield uranium find prompts call for probe

By [Rod Ohira](#)
Advertiser Staff Writer

A coalition of environmental and Native Hawaiian rights groups are calling for an independent investigation and disclosure by the Army of depleted uranium munitions use in Hawai'i based on recently obtained information confirming its presence at Schofield.

The Army said yesterday that the depleted uranium in question poses no threat.

The coalition DMZ Hawai'i/ Aloha 'Aina cited a Sept. 19 e-mail message from Samuel P. McManus of the U.S. Army Engineering and Support Center in Huntsville, Ala., to Ronald Borne, an Army employee involved with preparations for the Stryker brigade at Schofield Barracks. The e-mail involved the high cost of unexploded ordnance removal in preparation for the construction of a new Stryker brigade battle area complex at Schofield. In the e-mail, McManus noted, "We have found much that we did not expect, including the recent find of depleted uranium."

DMZ Hawai'i/Aloha 'Aina believes the e-mail obtained with a Freedom of Information Act request is reason for concern since "it means either the records are inaccurate or the U.S. Army's representatives misled the public" in repeatedly denying depleted uranium use here, most recently in the March 2005 draft environmental impact statement for Makua and at a public hearing for the Stryker brigade EIS in 2004.

The Army confirmed yesterday that in August, 15 tail assemblies from spotting rounds made of D-38 uranium alloy, also called depleted uranium, were found by Zapata Engineering while the contractor was clearing a range area of unexploded ordnance and scrap metal. The tail assemblies are remnants from training rounds associated with an obsolete weapon system that was on O'ahu in the 1960s, and their low-level radioactivity represents no danger, the Army said.

The Army also stated that other than the armor-piercing rounds for the Abrams tank and Bradley fighting vehicle, there are no other weapons in its current stockpile that use depleted uranium. "There is no record of the Abrams and Bradley DU rounds ever being stockpiled in Hawai'i or being fired on Army ranges in Hawai'i," the statement said.

The 15 tail assemblies recovered have been triple-bagged, stored in metal containers and secured pending disposition instructions, the Army said.

The Army statement was issued several hours after a DMZ Hawai'i/Aloha 'Aina news conference announcing the e-mail findings, which was attended by representatives of six groups and concerned residents.

Depleted uranium munitions have raised concerns because they generate aerosolized particles on impact that can lead to lung cancer, kidney damage and other health problems.

Ann Wright, a retired diplomat and retired Army colonel, said she supports passage of a bill before the Legislature that calls for helping Hawai'i National Guard troops returning from Iraq and the Persian Gulf in obtaining federal treatment services that include health screenings capable of detecting low levels of depleted uranium.

Gail Hunter, a registered nurse, cancer survivor and Makaha resident for more than 20 years, wants more proof that there's no depleted uranium at training sites in Makua, Kahuku, Schofield and Pohakuloa that could be threatening drinking water, land and air.



The Army confirmed yesterday that this tail remnant and 14 like it from training munitions made of depleted uranium were found at Schofield.

U.S. Army

"We're downwind of the (brush) fires in Wai'anae so I want to know if we're breathing it in," Hunter said.

Kyle Kajihira, program director for American Friends Service Committee, called on the state Health Department to begin investigating and testing for military toxins. He said the revelation about depleted uranium being found in Hawai'i "is very disturbing because it may just be the tip of the iceberg. This is a smoking gun in a sense that there has been depleted uranium expended in our environment. We don't know how much, we don't know where and we don't know what its effects are."

Of the Health Department, he said: "We are asking them to be more aggressive in protecting public health. There are methods of testing but they require resources and some commitment. There should be testing of the environment and health screenings in the community (for military toxins) to determine if people have been exposed."

Reach Rod Ohira at rohira@honoluluadvertiser.com.

[**Back**](#)

© COPYRIGHT 2006 The Honolulu Advertiser, a division of [Gannett Co.](#) Inc.

All materials contained on this site are protected by United States copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, published or broadcast without the prior written permission of The Honolulu Advertiser. You may not alter or remove any trademark, copyright or other notice from copies of the content.