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NRC Issues Possession License to U.S. Army for Depleted Uranium at Multiple Installations

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has added 15 installations to a license authorizing the U.S. Army to possess depleted uranium (DU). The original license, issued in October 2013, applied to two sites in Hawaii. The Army will use the same programs for environmental monitoring, radiation safety and physical security at all sites.

The DU comes from “spotting rounds” used with the Davy Crockett weapons system to assist with targeting accuracy. The Army trained with this system at the sites in the 1960s. The license allows the Army to possess and manage up to 12,567 pounds of DU and limits the amount at each site. It requires the Army to comply with NRC regulations and standards for protecting the public and the environment from radiation, and is subject to NRC inspections and periodic reviews. The license does not authorize the Army to use the DU or decommission the sites without additional review and approval by the NRC.

A license allowing the Army to manufacture and distribute the DU spotting rounds issued by the NRC’s predecessor, the Atomic Energy Commission, expired in 1978, at the Army’s request. Under the earlier license, the Army distributed the spotting rounds to a number of Army installations for testing, training and deployment. Each round contained about six ounces of DU.

The Army told the NRC in November 2006 it had discovered DU fragments at the Schofield Barracks on the island of Oahu. Following that discovery, the Army reviewed old records and determined the Davy Crockett system was tested at other installations. The Army has enough DU at these sites that, under the Atomic Energy Act and NRC regulations, it is required to have a possession license.

The initial license applied to Schofield Barracks on the island of Oahu and the Pohakuloa Training Area on the island of Hawaii. The amended license now also applies to Forts Benning and Gordon (Georgia); Forts Campbell and Knox (Kentucky); Fort Carson (Colorado); Fort Hood (Texas); Joint Base Lewis-McChord/Yakima Training Center (Washington); Fort Bragg (North Carolina); Fort Polk (Louisiana); Fort Sill (Oklahoma); Fort Jackson (South Carolina); Fort Hunter Liggett (California); Fort Wainwright (Alaska); Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst (New Jersey); and Fort Riley (Kansas).