

**Proposed Installation and Operation of an Explosive Destruction Technology Facility
at the
U.S. Army Pueblo Chemical Depot, Pueblo Colorado
Finding of No Significant Impact**

Background

August 13, 2012

The Pueblo Chemical Depot (PCD) currently stores a stockpile of munitions consisting of mustard agent (types HD and HT) contained in 155mm and 105mm artillery projectiles and 4.2 inch mortar rounds. PCD currently stores 2,611 tons of chemical agent in igloos that are monitored through an ongoing inspection program.

The destruction of the entire U.S. stockpile of chemical weapons that contain lethal, unitary chemical agents is required by U.S. public law and by an international treaty. The U.S. Army is in the process of completing the destruction of this chemical weapons stockpile at the depots where the agents and munitions are stored. The current plan to accomplish the demilitarization of the stockpile at PCD consists of utilizing the Pueblo Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant (PCAPP).

The mission of the PCAPP, which is expected to become operational in 2015, is to pilot test a technology that is capable of destroying the stockpile of mustard agents stored at the PCD. The PCAPP would employ chemical neutralization processes to destroy these mustard agents after they have been drained from the munitions; however, not all of the munitions in storage at the PCD are anticipated to be suitable for processing at the PCAPP. This includes all the overpacked munitions (leaking items and the intrusively inspected items) that are currently in storage at the PCD. The conditions of some of the munitions at the PCD would prevent them from being safely disassembled to provide adequate access to the mustard agent prior to processing in the PCAPP. Because this condition may not be discovered until the munitions undergo pre-processing operations at the PCAPP, such munitions would be categorized as “rejects.” Furthermore, any additional leaking munitions (i.e., beyond the number of munitions presently stored in overpack containers at the PCD) encountered during pre-processing operations at the PCAPP would also be categorized as “rejects.” All of these problematic munitions would be destroyed under the proposed action described below. The proposed action also includes the destruction of explosive components (such as propelling charges, bursters, and fuzes) that have been or will be removed from the munitions in the PCD stockpile.

Proposed Action

The proposed action is to deploy and operate specialized Explosive Destruction Technology (EDT) equipment for the safe and timely destruction of overpacked mustard-filled chemical munitions currently being stored at the PCD and anticipated “reject” munitions (as described above), and to treat explosive components and associated wastes, in an environmentally acceptable manner. The proposed EDT facility would be constructed and operated within the boundaries of the PCD.

Three separate commercial vendors can each provide EDT systems capable of destroying the explosive components and the “reject” munitions at PCD. These commercial vendors include the Static Detonation Chamber (SDC), the Transportable Detonation Chamber (TDC), and the Detonation of Ammunition in Vacuum Integrated Chamber (DAVINCH). The U.S. Army also currently possesses and operates an Explosive Destruction System (EDS) that can accomplish the proposed action.

Reason for Preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA)

The Army’s implementing National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Regulation, Title 32 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 651 paragraph 33 requires an EA to be prepared whenever a project involves the construction and operation of a major new fixed facility. This EA has been prepared by the Army in compliance with these regulations to determine whether significant impacts to the environment are likely to result from the construction and operation of an EDT at PCD.

Summary of NEPA Documentation

Destruction of the PCD stockpiled chemical agent munitions was addressed in previous Environmental Impact Statements as described below:

- Program Manager for Assembled Chemical Weapons Assessment. *Final Environmental Impact Statement for Design, Construction, and Operation of One or More Pilot Test Facilities for Assembled Chemical Weapons Destruction Technologies at One or More Sites April 2002.*
- Program Manager for Chemical Demilitarization. *Final Environmental Impact Statement for Destruction of Chemical Munitions at Pueblo Chemical Depot, CO, March 2002.*

In addition, several other NEPA documents were reviewed and referenced in this EA, including the following:

- Anniston Chemical Agent Disposal Facility, *Proposed Installation and Operation of an Explosive Destruction Technology at the Anniston Army Depot, Anniston, AL, April 2009.*
- Chemical Materials Agency, *Proposed Installation and Operation of the Pine Bluff Explosive Destruction System at Pine Bluff Arsenal, AR, June 2004.*
- Chemical Materials Agency, *Proposed Destruction of Recovered Chemical Munitions at Schofield Barracks, O’ahu, Hawai’i, January 2008.*
- U.S Army Element, Program Manager for Assembled Chemical Weapons Assessment, *Proposed Installation and Operation of Explosive Destruction System and Explosive Destruction Technology at the Pueblo Chemical Depot, Pueblo, CO (Withdrawn), February 2010.*

Determination

The information and analysis presented in this Environmental Assessment “*Proposed Installation and Operation of an Explosive Destruction Technology Facility at the Pueblo Chemical Depot, Pueblo Colorado*” indicate that the proposed action of constructing and operating an EDT facility at the PCD for the destruction of problematic mustard-agent munitions (i.e., overpacked munitions and “rejects”) and explosive components would produce no significant environmental impacts. This finding applies to an EDT facility that incorporates any one of the four types of EDT units that were evaluated in this EA: the SDC, TDC, DAVINCH and EDS.

After an extended public comment period and several meetings on the documents to aid public review and understanding of the EA, 11 persons or organizations provided comments on the EA. A discussion of each comment can be found on the ACWA website at https://www.pmacwa.army.mil/pcapp/pcapp_edt.html. I have considered all public and government regulatory agency comments, and determined that no additional analysis is necessary for this proposed action under NEPA.

Based on the analysis provided in the above referenced EA, the Proposed Action will have no significant impact on land use, air quality, surface water resources, groundwater resources, human health and safety, aquatic resources and wetlands, terrestrial ecological resources, socioeconomic resources, aesthetics, cultural resources, environmental justice, noise, waste management, transportation of waste, or resource requirements.

I have determined that in accordance with the Army’s implementing NEPA regulations and in consideration of the EA prepared by subject-matter experts and all of the supporting documentation that no significant impacts would result from the proposed action.



Timothy M. Greenhaw
Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army
Commanding
U.S. Army Pueblo Chemical Depot