

Green Ammo with Colonel Stan Lillie

Hernandez: Last year, the army unveiled its latest innovation: environmentally friendly bullets. US Environmental Center Commander Colonel Stan Lillie joins us to tell us how it works and why the army made the change.

Sir, thanks for joining us.

Lillie: Thank you, Javier.

Hernandez: So what is green ammunition and what is it used for?

Lillie: To really understand what green bullets are, you have to understand the bullets we have now. Our 5.56 millimeter, 7.62 millimeter and 9 millimeter rounds which are used in our rifles, machine guns and pistols contain a lead core, and our 50 caliber ammunition, although it has a steel core, it still has a seal on it that contains lead. So, what were trying to do with the green ammunition is to remove that toxic substance, lead, from the ammunition and we've come up with a new metal alloy, it's a tungsten alloy, and we're replacing lead in all of our small arms ammunition.

Hernandez: Are these in training grounds, or are they going to be used in combat.

Lillie: We're going to train as we fight. The new rounds have the same ballistic characteristics as the old rounds and they'll be just as lethal, so we'll use them not only for training but in combat as well.

Hernandez: Now, we've already started fielding the 5.56-millimeter ammunition, what's the status of the rest of the program?

Lillie: Well, that's right already fielded the 5.56 ball ammunition; Lake City Army Ammunition in Missouri is producing those rounds. We're currently working on tracer ammunition for the 5.56 and we're continuing to work on the 7.62 and the 9-millimeter. In the near future we will finish the program with a 50-caliber ammunition.

Hernandez: Now this sounds like it has a lot to do with range sustainment versus just being an environmental program.

Lillie: Well, the green ammunition program really is designed to do three things, first we want to make sure we're maintaining a readiness by preserving the training areas. Two, we want to reduce the lifecycle cost of ammunition, and three we want to make sure that we're complying with the applicable environmental laws. Massachusetts military reservation, for example, was closed for three years, because of problems with lead contamination, and it's only because we went to the green ammunition that the ranges there are back open again. So, it's very important that we look at this as a long-term solution to keeping the ranges open. If we have to go in and clean up a range, the

cost of doing that is in the neighborhood of hundreds of dollars per ton of dirt, and you can imagine that a rifle range is a pretty large piece of property so it can easily escalate into the millions of dollars if we have to shut a range down and go in and clean it up and that's just the financial cost. The cost of training, the cost of readiness for shutting ranges down is really inestimable.

Hernandez: So Sir, it sounds like it's a great program.

Lillie: We're really excited about the program, and the whole point of the program is to ensure that we can continue to enhance readiness, preserving our training areas, to reduce cost of ammunition so that we can use that money for other readiness and training programs and to make sure that we're following and complying with the applicable environmental laws and we're not polluting the environment.

Hernandez: Well, thanks a lot for joining us sir.

Lillie: Thank you, Javier.

Hernandez: We've been talking about green ammo with Colonel Stan Lillie, the manager of the U.S. Army Environmental Center. For a closer look, I'm Javier Hernandez.