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## DTRA PSSM Global Efforts to Reduce Stockpile Threats

by John Schmitt [ Defense Threat Reduction Agency ]

*While international efforts to reduce the amount of military-grade weapons among civilian populations are increasing, the storage, security and management of the resulting weapon stockpiles present a new set of challenges and dangers. The United States Defense Threat Reduction Agency has a lead role within the U.S. government in making sure the solution to one problem does not create another.*

How do you motivate a nation to seriously address a stockpile of increasingly old, unstable and useless conventional ammunition?

- Ask them nicely.
- Demand that they take action.
- Show a PowerPoint slide to the nation's chief executive demonstrating that his home would be completely destroyed if the aging ammunition in the neighboring depot were to catastrophically explode.



Bill Johnson discusses ammunition handling procedures with noncommissioned officers during a technical seminar in Quito, Ecuador, April 2008.  
All photos courtesy of DTRA

In this true story, the answer was "C" and, yes, it did get the leader's attention. Fortunately (or perhaps unfortunately), the dangers posed by aging and unstable stockpiles of conventional ammunition are not nearly as attention-grabbing at such high levels of government but are instead insidious powder kegs that are simply awaiting the proper spark. Sadly, most of these powder kegs are adjacent to poor, at-risk populations that receive little attention until the keg goes off.

### DTRA's Origins in PSSM

The U.S. Department of Defense's Defense Threat Reduction Agency's On-site Inspection Directorate went into the physical security and stockpile management business after a deadly explosion in 2000 at Camp Groomes, Guyana. Prior to this event, DTRA's on-site activities were primarily focused on arms-control treaties such as the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty and Cooperative Threat Reduction activities in the former Soviet Union. The concept of assisting foreign nations safely secure and store stockpiles of arms, ammunitions and explosives was not at the top of DoD's or DTRA's list of priorities before 2001.

When the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy received the request for assistance in Guyana from the U.S. Department of State, the OUSD/P turned to DTRA because of the agency's expertise in operating and executing sensitive military missions in austere environments. From this first *ad hoc* mission, the role and contribution of DTRA PSSM expertise has grown significantly as the types and numbers of small arms and light weapons and conventional ammunition assessment missions have expanded. In less than 10 years, DTRA conducted more than 66 PSSM

assessment missions in 45 countries around the world. That first mission in 2000 was a reactionary, post-tragedy clean-up effort, while a 2010 assessment mission is a proactive accident-prevention and avoidance effort.

Although it is one thing to identify a potentially hazardous stockpile of SA/LW or conventional ammunition and recommend solutions, it is something completely different to fund the destruction of CA or build secure facilities to store SA/LW. Despite DTRA's growth in the worldwide PSSM area, it is our partner, the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement in the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM/WRA), that has the funding and mandate to run the long-term capacity-building PSSM infrastructure programs following the DTRA team's assessments. Still, DTRA and DoD identified not only the need to meaningfully assist foreign nations with their stockpile management, but to also build lasting relations in the countries that we have assessed.



Major Sulev Suvari discusses proper storage procedures for weapons and ammunition to executive managers in Dushanbe.

### PSSM Seminars

In 2003, recognizing the need to build on the assessment missions and further develop lasting bilateral relationships, DTRA began offering follow-on PSSM orientation seminars. The primary goal of these seminars is to assist nations in ensuring their national SA/LW and CA holdings are properly secured and managed. The seminars seek to counter the illicit proliferation of SA/LW, while also raising awareness of the dangers of aging stockpiles. Through this educational process, governments can determine what stocks are in excess of legitimate defense needs and develop a plan to destroy obsolete weapons and munitions. By effectively and efficiently managing their resources, governments are able to meet the old military axiom to "do more [defend the nation/populace] with less [SA/LW, CA, and troops]."

The DTRA orientation seminars are based on the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's internationally-recognized "Handbook of Best Practices on Conventional Ammunition"<sup>1</sup> and

the "Handbook of Best Practices on Small Arms and Light Weapons."<sup>2</sup> DTRA has conducted nearly 70 seminars in 35 countries. As the demand for these seminars has grown, DTRA has developed a two-tiered approach to presenting the annually updated content. The agency has a technical seminar designed for low- to mid-level weapons and ammunition stockpile workers, covering topics such as ammunition handling, safe storage, compatibility, transportation and security. DTRA also has an executive-level seminar designed for mid- to high-level officials with management responsibilities. Topics for this seminar include SA/LW policy, national priorities, risk management, funding management and long-term planning.

### Foreign Partners

As a DoD combat-support agency, DTRA supports the United States' regional Combatant Commands (European Command [EUCOM], Central Command [CENTCOM], Northern Command [NORTHCOM], African Command [AFRICOM], Southern Command [SOUTHCOM], and Pacific Command [PACOM])<sup>3</sup> through bilateral security cooperation missions, as well as supports PM/WRA in its global efforts. However, DTRA often cooperates and collaborates with other like-minded nations' arms control and verification agencies in providing PSSM assessment and seminar missions around the globe. For example, DTRA has had German, Swiss, Austrian and Canadian PSSM experts as integral members of its teams in places such as Albania, Mozambique, Sierra Leone and Suriname. Additionally, DTRA has supported multilateral organizations including the United Nations, NATO, the Multinational Small Arms and Ammunition Group, and the OSCE in places like Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Moldova and Tajikistan.

### Conclusion



DTRA's SA/LW branch conducted two iterations of the PSSM Technical-level Seminar in Guatemala City, Guatemala, January 2009. MAJ Richard Hobeck and participants are completing a transportation planning exercise.

The need for DTRA's PSSM expertise

continues to expand as a result of the growing demand around the world for SA/LW and CA assistance programs and the increasing proliferation threat posed by these weapons. Large stockpiles of ammunition built up during the Cold War continue to deteriorate around the world, threatening the safety and well-being of the very people the ammunition was intended to protect. DTRA remains committed to decreasing the availability of weapons and ammunition to terrorists and insurgents, reducing regional exposure to destabilizing cross-border weapons transfers, and minimizing the risk of catastrophic ammunition accidents. ↕

### Biography



**John Schmitt** is an International Relations Specialist in the Defense Threat Reduction Agency's Office for Small Arms and Light Weapons. He

coordinates DTRA's Physical Security and Stockpile Management assessment and seminar programs for the United States European and Central Command Combatant Commands. Schmitt is a retired Air Force officer who served as a qualified B-1 and B-52 Navigator and as a Liaison Officer with the U.S. Army's 10th Mountain Division. He holds a Bachelor of Science from the University of Maryland and a Master of Science from Embry Riddle Aeronautical University.

### SIDENOTES:

**AFRICOM Spotlight: Burundi** Since 2006, DTRA has conducted three assessments and four seminars in Burundi, orienting more than 150 members of the Burundi National Defense Force to international PSSM best-practice standards for SA/LW. Following the assessments, PM/WRA provided over US\$1 million to Burundi for physical security upgrades and weapons and ammunitions destruction, including the destruction of 312 man-portable air-defense systems (MANPADS), thousands of small arms and tons of munitions.

**PACOM Spotlight: Cambodia** In December 2003, DTRA, in conjunction with PM/WRA, conducted a PSSM assessment of Cambodia's SA/LW stockpiles. As a result of this mission, PM/WRA funded the destruction of 233 MANPADS, along with physical security upgrades to Cambodia's SA/LW storage facilities.

**EUCOM Spotlight: Croatia** In July 2008, the government of Croatia and the U.S. Embassy-Zagreb agreed on a plan to dispose of more than 900 excess MANPADS and to secure the balance with improved physical security upgrades. A DTRA PSSM team assessed Croatian sites and made recommendations to PM/WRA and the Croatian Ministry of Defence on the best ways to improve the security of the remaining stockpile. As a result of the DTRA assessment, PM/WRA has invested more than \$1 million to destroy and secure MANPADS in Croatia.

**SOUTHCOM Spotlight: Ecuador** Over the past two years, DTRA has conducted four seminars, resulting in more than 80 participants from the Ecuador Ministry of Defense learning international PSSM best-practice standards. In August 2009, at the request of Ecuador, a DTRA/Department of State team assessed the conditions of SA/LW identified for destruction. This assessment will directly result in PM/WRA assistance in the destruction of unstable ammunition and security upgrades to existing ammunition storage facilities.**CENTCOM**

**Spotlight: Tajikistan** As part of DTRA's ongoing support to Tajikistan, the SA/LW Branch conducted a PSSM seminar in 2009. This examination of munitions storage safety and security helped junior officers and noncommissioned officers that handle and maintain arms and ammunition on a daily basis to understand and incorporate best-practices at their facilities. This seminar was also attended by PSSM experts of the Austrian, Belgian, French, German, Spanish and Swiss Arms Control Offices.

### Endnotes

1. "Handbook of Best Practices on Conventional Ammunition." *The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe*. 25 October 2007. [http://www.osce.org/publications/fsc/2008/09/32978\\_1178\\_en.pdf](http://www.osce.org/publications/fsc/2008/09/32978_1178_en.pdf). Accessed 19 May 2010.
2. "Handbook of Best Practices on Small Arms and Light Weapons." *The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe*. 19 September 2003. [http://www.osce.org/publications/fsc/2003/12/13550\\_29\\_en.pdf](http://www.osce.org/publications/fsc/2003/12/13550_29_en.pdf). Accessed 19 May 2010.
3. U.S. Unified Combatant Commands are joint military commands with forces from two or more branches that have persistent, long-term goals. UCCs can be subdivided into commands focused on either purpose or geography.

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ISSN 2154-1485

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