



## Just the Facts...

## Clearing Military Vehicles for U.S. Entry

### Introduction

Items entering or being returned to the United States (U.S.) must meet strict health and safety standards before they are certified for entry back into this country. Ships, aircraft, personnel, cargo (including ordnance), packing material, privately owned vehicles, personal effects, and overseas mail must be free of prohibited and restricted plants, animals, and plant and animal products when returned to the U.S. These same standards apply to military vehicles. This fact sheet provides background information about the entry process for military vehicles entering the U.S., and offers resources for more information.

### What laws and regulations are the Department of Defense (DOD) required to follow before vehicles are allowed into the U.S.?

The Federal Plant Protection Act 2000 (Title IV of Public Law 106-224) prohibits introducing any animal, plant or material considered harmful to this country's agriculture. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Plant Protection and Quarantine Division, is the enforcement authority for this Act. All federal agencies, to include the Department of Defense (DOD), are required to comply with this law. DOD has gone a step further by developing additional procedures or guidelines to ensure compliance with this law and to help facilitate the return of military items to the U.S.:

- DOD 4500.9-R (Defense Transportation Regulation Part V), Chapter 506 provides customs inspection and agricultural pre-clearance guidelines.

- A combined military service instruction (SECNAVINST 6250.2A/AR 40-12/ AFJI 48-104) that defines DOD quarantine policies and procedures as dictated by the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services, Agriculture, Treasury, Interior, and Commerce. These regulations are intended to prevent diseases of humans, plants and animals from being introduced and spreading within the U.S.

### What cleaning procedures does DOD follow before these vehicles are allowed into the U.S.?

USDA inspection standards allow only a thin film of road dust on vehicles and equipment arriving at the final port of entry here in the U.S. All military vehicles are cleaned with high-pressure fresh water or steam before leaving a deployment location, and must be certified clean by a USDA inspector before being allowed to enter the U.S. Particular attention is paid to removing soil from a vehicle's undercarriage, fender wells, axles, springs, bumpers, wheels and recessed areas. For tracked vehicles, all soil impacted in the treads, around the rubber cleats, in the tread connectors, between and behind tread guides and roller supports, and all other spaces must be removed. Each vehicle is then thoroughly inspected by a USDA inspector, or someone trained and certified by a Customs and Border Clearance Agent or Military Customs Inspector-Excepted (an individual designated by an Army Installation Commander to perform specified customs functions at ports of entry at continental U.S. military locations only) to ensure that all soil has been removed.

## **How are battle-damaged vehicles that may have depleted uranium (DU) residues on them treated and prepared prior to being returned to the U.S.?**

Battle-damaged vehicles have been and are identified in theater in Southwest Asia, and are radiologically surveyed by the Army Contaminated Equipment Retrograde Team (ACERT) before coming to the U.S. Those identified as contaminated with DU are wrapped in plastic and tarps (encased) to prevent the spread of any removable contamination or residues. They are then shipped through the Port of Charleston, South Carolina, to the U.S. Army's Aberdeen Proving Ground (APG), Maryland. Here, the vehicles are assessed for decontamination and repair, or for recovery of parts. Any waste generated from the process at APG is disposed of at a state- or federally licensed low-level radioactive waste burial site. No other U.S. port of entry has been used to ship DU-contaminated vehicles back to the U.S.

## **What laws and regulations are the U.S. military required to follow before vehicles contaminated with DU are allowed into the U.S.?**

The U.S. military complies with several federal and DOD regulations when shipping back DU-contaminated vehicles. DOD 4500.9-R (Defense Transportation Regulation, Part II), Chapter 204, discusses Hazardous Materials (HAZMAT) transportation and says, "All DOD personnel (military, civilians, contractors) participating in the shipment/movement of HAZMAT must comply with the rules of regulatory bodies governing the safe transportation of HAZMAT for modes of transportation." DOD personnel also comply with Title 49 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Transportation, unless otherwise authorized by approved exceptions. Army

Regulation (AR) 11-9 (Section 2-6.b) states, "Domestic shipments of radioactive material will be in accordance with applicable Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC, 10 CFR 71), Department of Transportation (DOT) (49 CFR), and U.S. Postal Service (39 CFR) regulations and per DOD 4500.9-R (Part II). International shipments of radioactive material will be per applicable U.S. and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) transportation regulations." AR 700-48, "Management of Equipment Contaminated with Depleted Uranium or Radioactive Commodities," and its associated pamphlet, "Handling Procedures for Equipment Contaminated with Depleted Uranium or Radioactive Commodities," are the applicable Army documents.

## **Where can I get more information about these cleaning procedures?**

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Plant Protection and Quarantine Division

<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/>

Armed Forces Pest Management Board Technical Guide 31, Retrograde Washdowns: Cleaning and Inspection Procedures (*November 2004*)

<http://www.afpmb.org/pubs/tims/tg31/tg31.pdf>

U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine (USACHPPM) Entomological Sciences Program

<http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil/ento/>

USACHPPM Health Physics Program

<http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil/hp/>

U.S. Department of Defense DeploymentLINK

<http://deploymentlink.osd.mil/>

U.S. Department of Defense Depleted Uranium

Library [http://deploymentlink.osd.mil/du\\_library/](http://deploymentlink.osd.mil/du_library/)