



# U.S. Army Environmental Command

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## Bring Home the 3Rs of Explosives Safety

*Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md.*—"I thought it was harmless." That was all a California man could say last year as he fought through his tears. He had given a piece of unexploded ordnance, a war souvenir, to some neighborhood children. They were killed when they played with it.

Harmless? Hardly.

An old rocket, grenade, or mortar round can be a dangerous enticement to any child. Even adults find an allure in unexploded "duds" as souvenirs, conversation pieces, or historical collections.

However, duds can be anything but safe.

The Army trains under realistic battle conditions, similar to the battlefield environment. "'Train as you fight' has been the watchword for generations of Soldiers," said Col. Michael P. O'Keefe, commander of the U.S. Army Environmental Command. "But, live-fire training through the decades has left behind unexploded ordnance, discarded munitions and munitions debris."

All three of these dangers remain, to some degree, at many impact areas, training ranges and formerly used defense sites. These sites could be on or off post. Most are known, but historical records are not complete. So, Soldiers need to be aware of this potential hazard and educate their families as well as themselves.

That's where Sgt. Woof comes in.

Sgt. Woof enlisted in 2006 as the "spokesdog" for the Army's unexploded ordnance safety campaign. Through posters, coloring books and other materials, this friendly German shepherd teaches children to "Recognize, Retreat, and Report" – the "3Rs" of explosives safety – any dangerous munitions they might encounter.

The "3Rs" safety campaign is designed to be easy for both adults and children to remember according to O'Keefe. The "3Rs" teach them to recognize a suspicious item they may come across as dangerous, retreat from it for their safety, and report what they found to a trusted adult or police authorities.

Sgt. Woof stars in a series of products for parents and teachers to use to introduce children to the dangers of UXO. He promotes safety awareness to children who may find remnants of bombs while playing or exploring. His message is true for all ages.

"Regardless of size, type, age, or condition, all military munitions should be considered extremely dangerous," O'Keefe said. He explained that Soldiers and their Families need to remember the "3Rs" of explosives safety to protect themselves and their friends and neighbors:

- Recognize - when you may have encountered a munition;
- Retreat – do not touch, move or disturb it, but leave the area; and
- Report – call 911 and advise the police what you saw and where you saw it.

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Soldiers and veterans who have served in combat zones are especially tempted to keep munitions as keepsakes of their service, according to O'Keefe. Because the UXO may have been previously handled, this can lead individuals to falsely believe the souvenir is safe.

Regardless of how long they have been around, war souvenirs or keepsakes remain dangerous, especially when years of handling give a sense of false security.

If you or your family has a souvenir munition or relic munition from any war, please report it. Even Civil War relics are still dangerous. A collector was seriously injured in Georgia in 2006 when a 142-year-old artillery shell exploded in his home. An Army explosive ordnance disposal team had to dispose of live ordnance in his collection.

Although usually found outdoors in fields or forests, unexploded ordnance can turn up in unusual places. A man brought in a bucket of grenades to a Delaware police station in 2004. He found them in a shipment of crushed clamshells he had bought to pave his driveway. Military and police bomb experts evacuated the police station and removed the grenades which had been dredged by commercial fishermen from a long-forgotten disposal site off shore.

Only qualified ordnance experts should ever handle military munitions. Therefore, be sure to bring home the "3Rs" of explosives safety: Recognize, Retreat, Report.

"Share the message and save a life," O'Keefe emphasized.

#### **UXO Safety Education Campaign Website**

For more information about unexploded ordnance, discarded munitions, munitions components, the Military Munitions Response Program, and to download the Sgt. Woolf safety tools, please visit the U.S. Army Environmental Command's UXO Safety Education Web page at <http://aec.army.mil/usaec/cleanup/mmrp02.html>

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