

U.S. police are stocking up on dum-dums

WASHINGTON (CPS) — Hundreds of U.S. police departments and some U.S. federal agencies have quietly approved the stocking and use of dum-dum bullets, a recent survey shows.

These high-velocity 38-calibre hollow point bullets have been outlawed for use in international warfare for more than half a century.

Lee Jurras, president of the Super-Vel Cartridge Corporation of Shelbyville, Ind., a firm which manufactures the bullets, estimated in an interview that 45 percent of all law enforcement agencies in the United States are stocking dum-dums. Jurras added

that since 1967, the U.S. Treasury Department, Secret Service, Bureau of Narcotics and the White House Police have been purchasing hollow point ammunition.

Police in Miami, Kansas City, Tucson, St. Louis and Nashville and sheriffs department in Los Angeles County and King County (Seattle) among many others, have acknowledged using dum-dum bullets.

The bullet takes its name from the old British Dum-Dum Arsenal in Calcutta, India. It has a copper-jacketed base and a soft, hollowed nose. The impact of the bullet causes the lead to collapse over the jacket, with an explosive

effect on its victim.

Use of the dum-dum has been classified as a war crime by a number of international conventions, including the Hague Declaration of 1907 signed by the United States. Police point out, however, that international agreements do not apply inside the United States. There are no domestic laws governing police ammunition.

Lt. Joseph Mackie of the King County Sheriff's Department responded to the survey by including his official report on a range test of hollow point bullets. "There is no real problem," the report said. "Hollow points are not

illegal. When we consider we are carrying a shotgun capable of tearing off a limb or disembowelling a person with one shot, it seems rather ridiculous to have qualms about the fact that there is a hole in the end of a pistol bullet."

Dum-dums came into police service not as a special riot measure, but from long-standing police dissatisfaction with the standard 38-calibre bullet.

Individual police officers have long been altering regulation bullets, clipping or notching them so that they shatter or expand upon contact. This was done at great sacrifice in range and accuracy until 1963 when Super-Vel, then a small Mid-Western arms firm, began making factory-standard dum-dums available to police.

"This is a touchy subject," Jurras, who developed the special bullet, explained. "A lot of minority groups might object. We like to keep the discussion within law enforcement circles."

A representative of the In-

ternational Association of Police Chiefs denied that dum-dums were being used.

"To my knowledge," Peter Silain, the director of the association's Centre for Law Enforcement Research, said, "no police department uses them."

"There's no point to it when you can use standard equipment like high-powered rifles and shotguns. Dum-dums can mutilate a man."

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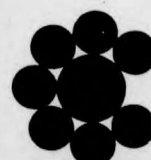


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