



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on April 26, 2013

DHS Spokesman Waffles Over Huge Ammo Purchases

At a hearing at the House of Representatives on Thursday a spokesman for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) [did his best to defuse](#) growing concerns about excessive purchases of ammunition for its 72,000 agents. These purchases were necessary, insisted Nick Nayak, because of training needs not only for his agency, but also for the U.S. Coast Guard (41,000 employees) and other federal, state, local, and tribal enforcement personnel (70,000) who train at the [Federal Law Enforcement Training Center](#) (FLETC) of the DHS, located at the former naval air station in Glynco, Georgia.



Nayak said that one million law enforcement officers and agents have been trained at FLETC since 1970 and that by buying in bulk, the agency is just being good stewards with taxpayer monies:

DHS maintains a highly trained workforce to fulfill its mission for the American people in the most effective and efficient way possible. While DHS spending on ammunition represents less than one tenth of one percent of the DHS budget, we continue to pursue measures that leverage all of the Department's resources in order to best make use of taxpayer dollars.

Nayak noted in his prepared testimony that DHS purchases around 100 million rounds every year for training purposes and currently has 250 million rounds in its warehouse, about a two-and-one-half year supply.

Those remarks didn't satisfy Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah), chairman of the Subcommittee on National Security, which held the hearing. Chaffetz noted that the DHS is using roughly 1,000 rounds of ammunition more per person than the U.S. Army: While the Army goes through roughly 350 rounds per soldier, the DHS is burning through between 1,300 and 1,600 rounds per officer. Chaffetz declared, "It is entirely ... inexplicable why the Department of Homeland Security needs so much ammunition.... Their officers use what seems to be an exorbitant amount of ammunition."

When questioned about reports that the DHS had placed orders to buy more than a billion additional rounds of ammunition, Nayak replied that those reports were "simply not true," adding that the agency needs reasonable quantities for training purposes and that it usually buys in bulk to save money.

This assertion contradicts a statement Alex Newman of *The New American* [received](#) from another DHS spokesman, Marsha Catron, who said that there were two separate contracts to purchase ammunition: one for up to 750 million rounds for FLETC, and another one for 450 million rounds to be used separately by DHS "components," who include Border Patrol agents, U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers, Secret Service agents, uniformed division officers, physical security specialists, federal air marshals, Federal Protective Service officers, and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents and officers.



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She downplayed the size of the contracts, characterizing them as “a part of the Department’s strategic sourcing efforts to combine multiple contracts in order to leverage the power of the entire Department to efficiently procure equipment and supplies at significantly lower costs.”

Both of those statements contradict [the Associated Press announcement on February 15](#) that the DHS contracted to buy “more than 1.6 billion rounds” of ammunition over the next four or five years. The announcement included the now-familiar refrain that all of this is strictly routine. FLETC spokesman Peggy Dixon said these contracts were “strategic sourcing contracts” while at the same time noting that FLETC uses 15 million rounds a year in its training sessions.

As Ralph Benko noted [in his Forbes magazine article](#) (that has since gone viral with more than 880,000 views in the last 30 days):

At 15 million rounds (which, in itself, is pretty extraordinary and sounds more like fun target-shooting-at-taxpayer-expense than a sensible training exercise) ... that’s a stockpile that would last DHS over a century. To claim that it’s to “get a low price” for a ridiculously wasteful amount is an argument that could only fool a career civil servant.

During the hearing Nayak continued to be pressed hard by both Chaffetz and Darrell Issa (R-Calif.), who chairs the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee. Issa exclaimed:

There’s a serious question of waste and lack of accountability. The idea you have to have excess rounds in excess of what can be justified for training ... flies in the face of common sense.

What does not make sense in the information you provided is that Customs and Border Control used around 14 million rounds for operational purposes when they rarely fire their guns. It seems like it’s just walking out the door. There doesn’t seem to be accountability because of the exorbitant usage here.

Nayak countered, insisting that reports from the Associated Press were completely untrue. “We have not purchased 1.5 billion rounds of ammo. I have no idea where the billion or over [number] ever came from.”

House member Jim Jordan (R-Ohio) jumped in:

You said you have no idea where the one billion rounds number came from? You’ve got to have some idea!

You’ve got four news agencies reporting this number. And here you are under oath [and saying that] you have no clue. Are they just making it up?

Nayak then clarified that the contracts did exist but that they were only to allow the agency to purchase “up to” the amounts specified by the AP, not that they were actually going to be fulfilled.

On Friday, Senator Jim Inhofe (R-Okla.) and Representative Frank Lucas (R-Okla.) introduced a joint bill, called the Ammunition Management for More Obtainability Act, or the AMMO Act, to limit the amount of ammunition agencies such as DHS could purchase to the significantly lower averages they had on hand between 2001 and 2009. In explaining his sponsorship of the measure, Lucas said:

I was surprised to find out the DHS has the right to buy up to 750 million rounds of ammunition over the next five years, while it already has two years’ worth of ammo....

This is an issue that must be addressed and I am pleased [that] this legislation gives us the opportunity to do so.



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The lack of clarity and consistency, and the blatant display of disingenuousness in the DHS' defense of its large purchases of ammunition, successfully skirted answering the real questions behind those purchases: What danger is the agency preparing for? What risks to national security inside the United States do they perceive that warrant such purchases? What requires the type of ammunition [outlawed by the Geneva Convention](#) to be sought in such massive numbers? What risks require 72,000 armed DHS agents in the first place?

The AMMO Act, even if it is passed into law, does nothing to answer those questions. The only thing that will reduce Americans' anxiety over the determination of the DHS to purchase ammunition in such large quantities is to reduce the department's budget — or abolish the post-9/11 bureaucracy entirely. Otherwise the DHS will merrily continue to arm itself to the teeth, all in the name of "homeland security" and "training" — while claiming "fiscal responsibility."

A graduate of Cornell University and a former investment advisor, Bob is a regular contributor to The New American magazine and blogs frequently at www.LightFromTheRight.com, primarily on economics and politics. He can be reached at badelman@thenewamerican.com.



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