



Last Chemical Weapon Destroyed at Blue Grass Army Depot

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For Immediate Release

BLUE GRASS ARMY DEPOT, Ky. – The last chemical weapon stored at the [Blue Grass Army Depot](#) (BGAD) was destroyed July 7, said **Dr. Candace Coyle**, [Blue Grass Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant](#) (BGCAPP) site project manager. The munition was an M55 rocket containing GB [nerve agent](#).

“Destruction of the GB rockets not only marks the elimination of all chemical weapons at the Blue Grass Army Depot, but the destruction of all chemical weapons in the U.S. stockpile,” said Coyle. “It is a historic moment not only for us in Kentucky, but the United States and across the world. With this last munition, the Chemical Weapons Convention mandate to eliminate all declared chemical weapons stockpiles is now globally achieved.”

Plant workers destroyed more than 101,000 rockets and projectiles throughout [five munition destruction campaigns](#). A campaign refers to destruction of a particular type of chemical weapon. Destruction operations began in Kentucky June 2019, with more than 523 U.S. tons of chemical agent destroyed. Throughout chemical weapons destruction operations, the BGCAPP team worked closely with BGAD and [Blue Grass Chemical Activity](#) (BGCA) partners to destroy the chemical weapons. Workers from BGCA supported delivery of the last chemical weapons from storage to the plant July 3.

The M55 rockets containing GB nerve agent represented more than 50% of the original chemical weapons stockpile safely stored at BGAD. Five different kinds of chemical agent-filled weapons were originally stored at the depot: 155mm projectiles containing mustard agent, 155mm projectiles containing VX nerve agent, 8-inch projectiles containing GB nerve agent, M55 rockets containing VX nerve agent and M55 rockets containing GB nerve agent.

The accomplishment has been reported to the [Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons](#), an intergovernmental organization that implements the [Chemical Weapons Convention](#) treaty. The [Program Executive Office, Assembled Chemical Weapons Alternatives](#) (PEO ACWA) was responsible for eliminating the U.S. chemical weapons stockpile by the treaty commitment date of Sept. 30, 2023.

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Last Chemical Weapon Destroyed at Blue Grass Army Depot (continued)



Reactions:

"Our constant theme throughout every munitions campaign at Blue Grass has been to safely destroy the weapons," said **Ron Hink**, [Bechtel Parsons Blue Grass](#) (BPBG) project manager. "Our team has safely completed every campaign, successfully completing our mission of destroying every chemical weapon stored in Kentucky."

"I am so proud of the entire Blue Grass Army Depot team to include the depot, BGCA, PEO ACWA and BGCAPP," said **Col. Brett Ayvazian**, BGAD commander. "Team BGAD has collaborated for decades to store, safeguard and ultimately destroy the last of the U.S. chemical weapons stockpile. What a great team accomplishment for Kentucky, the Army and the world to have finally eradicated these weapons. I am thankful to have played a part in this team effort and am excited for what is ahead for BGAD and Madison County in the future."

"All of the past and present members of the Blue Grass Chemical Activity that have supported the safe and secure storage of these chemical munitions, celebrate this historic accomplishment with all of our partners," said **Lt. Col. Tyler McKee**, BGCA commander.

"Having advocated on behalf of the community's interest for almost 40 years, it is thrilling to witness the completion of this monumental effort," said **Craig Williams**, [Kentucky Chemical Demilitarization Citizens' Advisory Commission and Chemical Destruction Community Advisory Board](#) co-chair. "Kudos to everyone involved in what can only be seen as a model of government, contractor and citizen cooperation to accomplish such an important objective."

Background:

Under the observation of trained operators, automated equipment disassembled the majority of the chemical weapons stored at BGAD. The chemical agent was drained from the munitions and [neutralized](#) by mixing it with water and caustic to produce hydrolysate. After the agent was confirmed destroyed, the hydrolysate was pumped into holding tanks. The hydrolysate is being [safely shipped](#) via tanker trucks and further processed at Veolia Environmental Services in Texas.

As part of the VX and GB rocket destruction campaigns, the drained rocket warheads were containerized and placed in temporary storage at BGAD. Marked as agent-contaminated secondary waste, they are being destroyed in [Static Detonation Chamber](#) (SDC) units located at BGCAPP. The drained warheads that remain in storage are considered surety material, because they may contain residual chemical agent. The [Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program](#) will continue until the surety mission is complete. The non-contaminated rocket motors are being shipped to [Anniston, Alabama](#), to be destroyed in an SDC.

SDC units were also used to destroy the entire mustard munition stockpile at BGAD, as well as rockets that had leaked in the past and were placed in overpack containers and other M55 rockets found unsuitable for processing in the main plant. The SDC units use thermal destruction technology to process the munitions and munition components.

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Last Chemical Weapon Destroyed at Blue Grass Army Depot (continued)



PEO ACWA was responsible for destroying the remaining U.S. chemical weapons stockpile in [Colorado](#) and Kentucky. The last chemical weapon stored at the [U.S. Army Pueblo Chemical Depot](#) was destroyed June 22, 2023. PEO ACWA oversees the contract for design, construction, systemization, operation and closure of BGCAPP with BPBG and teaming partners Amentum, Battelle Memorial Institute and GP Strategies.

In June 2019, the BGCAPP team began destroying more than 15,000 155mm projectiles containing mustard agent using an SDC. The mustard agent destruction campaign was completed in September 2021. The other four campaigns were completed in the main plant. From January through May 2020, nearly 4,000 8-inch projectiles containing GB nerve agent were destroyed. From January through May 2021, nearly 13,000 155mm projectiles containing VX nerve agent were destroyed. From July 2021 through April 2022, more than 17,000 M55 rockets containing VX nerve agent were destroyed. From July 2022 through July 2023, more than 51,000 M55 rockets containing GB nerve agent were destroyed.

The stockpile sites in Colorado and Kentucky accounted for the last 10% of what was originally a national stockpile of more than 30,000 tons of chemical weapons. The [U.S. Army Chemical Materials Activity](#) (then Agency) destroyed the initial 90%, which was stored at seven other sites across the U.S. and on Johnston Atoll in the Pacific.

The next step of the BGCAPP project is the [closure phase](#), which is anticipated to take an additional three to four years. This includes disposal of secondary wastes, decontamination and decommissioning of facilities and equipment, disposition of property, demolition of some facilities, and close-out of contracts and environmental permits. During closure, the safety of the workforce, public and environment will remain the project's top priority. BGAD will continue its conventional weapons missions beyond the BGCAPP closure phase.

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Photo caption: Operators place the last M55 rocket containing GB nerve agent on an input conveyor to begin the destruction process at the Blue Grass Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant July 7, 2023. This was the last munition destroyed in the U.S. chemical weapons stockpile. (U.S. Army photo)