

June 3, 2003

Tom Ridge  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Ridge,

We write to express our opposition to the use of hollow point or “controlled expansion” bullets used by immigration personnel at the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

Last year, immigrant rights groups were informed by Michael Sheehan, Chief of Policy of the Firearms and Force Board of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), that all INS law enforcement officers were issued S&W .40 caliber 155-grain ammunition with a controlled expansion projectile. Since then the INS has transitioned into the DHS, and the National Firearms Unit has indicated that stockpiles of this ammunition are low. The Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) of the DHS is currently soliciting proposals for up to 225 million rounds (Solicitation Number ACB-3-R-0029) of new ammunition. While the specifications of the ammunition are very detailed, the Contract Specialist for this solicitation confirmed that it is not determined whether or not the ammunition is to be hollow point. This presents the DHS with an opportunity to acquire effective ammunition that is not associated with the heightened lethality of hollow point bullets.

As you may know, hollow point bullets expand upon hitting a target. The impact forces the bullet to mushroom open, expanding to 160 percent its original size. This causes a large wound cavity, and usually results in death. Originally designed by the British for hunting big game, hollow point bullets have been controversial for more than a century. During the Hague Disarmament Conference of 1899, representatives of 26 nations decided to disallow the use of hollow-point bullets during wartime (Declaration III). The subsequent Versailles and Geneva peace treaties also outlawed the use of the ammunition.

Although many police departments in major cities use hollow point bullets, their justifications for doing so do not apply to immigration personnel at DHS. The New York City Police Department argues that this type of ammunition is less likely to ricochet or pass through a target, thus reducing the likelihood of hitting innocent bystanders. In a report to the New York City Civilian Complaint Review Board by the Committee on Hollow-Point Bullets, the Committee noted that “Ricochet bullets were particularly problematic in the steel and concrete environments of housing project halls and subway stations. Pass-through bullets were particularly problematic in crowded urban situations.” These justifications do not hold true in the border area patrolled by DHS agents, which is characterized by remote, unpopulated areas. Furthermore, according to a

1989 study published in the Journal of Forensic Sciences, 80 percent of the shots fired in police shoot-outs miss their targets. Innocent bystanders are much more likely to be hit by a missed shot than a pass-through bullet, and in the case of hollow point ammunition, they are much more likely to die.

The DHS has an important duty to protect the borders of our nation, however this role can be effectively accomplished without the use of hollow point ammunition. Thank you for your attention to this matter, we look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

AHA Refugee Assistance Program, Seattle, WA  
Alianza Indígena Sin Fronteras, Tucson, AZ  
BANDU, Tucson, AZ  
Border Action Network, Tucson, AZ  
Borderwatch, Arivaca, AZ  
Capuchin Justice, Peace and Ecology Office, Detroit, MI  
CASA of Maryland, Takoma Park, MD  
Catholic Charities of Albany, NY  
Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of Dubuque, Iowa  
Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans, LA  
Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, MN  
Catholic Charities Community and Immigrant Services, Honolulu, HI  
Catholic Charities Immigration Clinic, Jackson, MS  
Catholic Charities, Immigration Services, Diocese of St. Petersburg, FL  
Catholic Charities Migration and Refugee Services, Hartford, CT  
Catholic Charities Refugee and Immigrant Services, San Diego, CA  
Catholic Charities USA, Alexandria, VA  
Catholic Immigration Services, Springdale, Arkansas  
Catholic Immigration Services, Inc., Washington, DC  
Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc., Washington, DC  
Catholic Migration Office, Brooklyn, NY  
Citizens for Border Solutions, Bisbee, AZ  
Coalición de Derechos Humanos, Tucson, AZ  
Committee for Inter-American Human Rights, Washington, DC  
Detention Resource Project, Philadelphia PA  
Diocese of Tucson Social Mission, Tucson, AZ  
The Florence Immigrant and Refugee Rights Project, Florence, AZ  
Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center (FIAC), Miami, FL  
Frensdorff Chapter, Episcopal Peace Fellowship, Tucson, AZ  
Fundación México, Tucson, AZ  
Healing Our Borders, Douglas, AZ  
Hispanic Alliance of Montgomery County, MD  
Hispanic Apostolate, Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge, Baton Rouge, LA  
Immigration and Refugee Services, Catholic Charities, Wichita, KS

International Center, Bowling Green, KY  
Justice and Peace/Integrity of Creation Office, Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Washington, DC  
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement, Brighton, MA  
Latin America Network, Tucson, AZ  
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law of Texas, San Antonio, TX  
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, Baltimore, MD  
Marks & Katz LLC, Silver Spring, MD  
McDonald Dyer, P.C., Attorneys & Counselors at Law, Richmond, VA  
Medical Mission Sisters Alliance for Justice, Washington, DC  
Migration and Refugee Services, Catholic Social Services of Phoenix, AZ  
Migration and Refugee Services, Diocese of Trenton, NJ  
National Conference on Peace Making and Conflict Resolution, Tucson, AZ  
National Council of La Raza, Washington, DC  
National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers Guild, Boston, MA  
National Organization for Women, Tucson Chapter  
Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala (NISGUA), Washington, DC  
Northwest Immigration Rights Project, Seattle, WA  
Office of Hispanic Ministry, Catholic Diocese of Jackson, MS  
Office of Social Concern: Springfield Catholic Charities, Springfield, MA  
Pledge of Resistance, Tucson, AZ  
Political Asylum/Immigration Representation Project, Boston, MA  
Presbyterian Church, USA, Washington Office  
Refugee and Immigration Services, Catholic Diocese of Richmond, Roanoke, VA  
Refugee Assistance Program/USCCB, Seattle, WA  
Salt of the Earth Labor College, Tucson AZ  
Samaritans, Tucson, AZ  
SOA Watch collective, School of the Americas Watch, Washington, DC  
SOA Watch Southwest, Tucson, AZ  
Society of Jesus (Jesuits), New Orleans Province, New Orleans, LA  
SOFIA Immigration Services, San Diego CA  
St. Anthony Foundation, San Francisco, CA  
St. Francis United Methodist Church Outreach, Tucson, AZ  
Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees- Tucson Chapter, Tucson, AZ  
TPC, Tucson, AZ  
Tucson Peace Action Coalition, Tucson, AZ  
Universal Unitarian Church of Tucson, Tucson, AZ  
University of Arizona MEChA, Tucson, AZ  
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