

Carlisle Barracks backs paintball, not air rifles

Airsoft guns are in the news – but the news is not good

Football players at Riverside-Brookfield High School, Illinois, were charged in September after allegedly shooting airsoft guns at pedestrians as they drove by. "If that weapon was pointed at a police officer, we'd return fire," said Riverside Police Chief Thomas Weitzel.

In Bangor, Maine, a man allegedly flashed a gun while robbing area businesses on two September days. He was charged with two felony counts despite the fact that one was a plastic airsoft gun he had spray-painted black. "The fact that the guns were toys does not downgrade the armed robbery charge because the victims believed they were real," said Police Detective Sgt. Jay Munson.

In North Mankato, Minn, high school students were suspended and face expulsion after bringing airsoft guns onto school grounds recently and shooting at other students. Police Chief David Ulmen said it was a scary moment when police recovered the gun because it a close replica to the assault rifle he carries on duty. "It's just not a safe thing," he said.

New residents here raised questions recently about Airsoft guns on the installation.

Garrison Commander Lt. Col. Janet Holliday reviewed the question with her directors of safety and emergency services. She shot the gun, researched it exhaustively, and checked with other federal installations and surrounding communities. She found no reason to change the policy and multiple reasons to maintain it.

"I understand these guns are fun and that families like to use them for games," said Holliday. "I also understand they are used extensively for military re-enactments and to teach squad tactics.

"I wish Carlisle Barracks were large enough to establish an Airsoft range like some other installations have, but we could not find an area on Carlisle large enough to accommodate the 130 yard safe distance area that did not intersect with a playground, sidewalk, housing area, or the perimeter of the post," said Holliday.

Airsoft guns are not authorized at Carlisle Barracks. "For the safety of all personnel, carrying firearms, BB guns and air rifles on this installation is prohibited" with specific exceptions such as law

enforcement people on duty, according to post command policies.

Carlisle and our neighboring townships do not permit use of air rifles.

Pa. law prohibits youth under 18 to carry an air rifle on highways or public lands unless accompanied by an adult. Pa. law prohibits discharge of an air rifle from or across any highway or public land or any public place, except on a properly constructed target range.

Airsoft guns fire hard, round plastic pellets. They can reasonably be expected to cause bodily harm, according to Pa. law. Paintball guns are not considered air rifles and MWR sponsors the paintball arena.

"We offer our own paintball arena which we will set up once per month until the weather gets too cold," said Holliday who noted also that Youth Services offers trips to Round Top to play paintball. "While I realize this does not allow those who own Airsoft guns to shoot them, it does offer a similar alternative," said Holliday.

The paintball arena is scheduled for set up here on two Saturdays: October 10 and November 7, 2 – 5 p.m., behind the Youth Services building. Officials will monitor all games. Youths grades 6-12 are invited to participate. DFMWR will provide all necessary equipment and the event is being offered FREE of charge. Please call the Youth Services Office to register at 245-3801.