2M Pounds of Explosives Moved So Far at LA Site

DOYLINE, La. (AP) — The fifth day of operations to move explosives that were improperly stored at a northern Louisiana industrial site ended Wednesday with another 375,000 pounds safely put away, state police said.

That meant about 2 million pounds — out of an estimated 6 million — had been cleaned up.

A voluntary evacuation remained in effect for the nearby town of Doyline through Thursday. And it may be extended.

Authorities have said the material, including an artillery shell propellant known as M6, was found last week. Some of it was stuffed into corridors that connect storage buildings. Some was left in the open. The discovery has led to a criminal investigation. Company officials have not commented.

By the time work was suspended for nightfall, workers for Explo, supervised by state police, had removed another 375,000 pounds of the improperly stored propellant.

The status of the evacuation order will be re-evaluated at midday Thursday as the cleanup continues, state police said in a news release.

Though some of the material was found out in the open, authorities said there was little danger it could have been stolen from the former Army base that's still guarded by military police.

State Police spokeswoman Julie Lewis said the materials were being moved to a safe location at the Camp Minden industrial site in Webster Parish.

Doyline has a population of about 800. Initially, officials estimated about half had evacuated but by Wednesday many had returned to their homes as the work progressed.

Officials' primary concern was that a significant ignition source such as lightning or a wildfire could have set off the material left outside. They also worried that ignition in one of the storage buildings could spread to others in a chain reaction through the connecting corridors.

The site is now a state-owned industrial park that still houses National Guard operations. Lewis said the facility is guarded by military police and a series of checkpoints.

Lewis said guards even chased down a marked state police vehicle when it failed to

stop at a checkpoint.

"This is military police. They are not taking this lightly. It's a secure facility," Lewis said.

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