

Army Lab To Develop Energy-Saving Technology

John Flesher, Associated Press

TRAVERSE CITY, Mich. (AP) — A new Army laboratory will develop technology such as fuel cells and hybrid systems for combat vehicles as the Pentagon steps up its push for cleaner and more reliable energy, federal officials said Wednesday.

The complex near Detroit was opening as the Obama administration prepared to announce a series of initiatives to create a greener U.S. military, which officials said is intended not to just benefit the environment but also to improve fighting capabilities.

Among the initiatives is a competition to spur discoveries and a goal of generating enough renewable energy on military bases by 2025 to equal the output of three nuclear plants, according to administration officials who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to comment ahead of the announcement. The Pentagon previously has said it intends to meet one-quarter of its energy needs from renewable sources by then.

Officials were scheduled to discuss the projects during an opening ceremony at the Army's Ground Systems Power and Energy Laboratory in the Detroit suburb of Warren. The facility includes eight separate labs where research and testing will be conducted on electrical systems, heating and cooling components, fuel cells, hybrid electric powertrains and advanced batteries.

The labs will enable researchers to create a variety of environmental conditions for testing, including temperatures ranging from 60 degrees below zero to 160 degrees and winds up to 60 mph.

The military uses 90 percent of the energy consumed by the federal government, which accounts for about 2 percent of all U.S. energy consumption. Reducing reliance on fossil fuels will make the military more efficient and save lives, officials said, noting that many casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan involve convoys hauling fuel to battle areas.

Some of the technology developed in the labs might spur innovations for passenger and commercial vehicles, officials said. Industry and university experts will team up with military researchers on some projects.

Producing more energy on military bases will serve their national security mission by making them less dependent on the commercial power grid, officials said. They planned to announce a goal of generating 3 gigawatts of electricity — enough to power 750,000 homes — from renewable sources such as solar and wind on Army, Navy and Air Force bases.

Acknowledging the need to control federal spending, officials said meeting the goal

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would require billions in private sector financing.

Officials said the Energy Department would fund a \$30 million research competition to develop new types of batteries and other energy storage devices to reduce the need for refueling during combat, cut operation and maintenance costs and make Navy ships more efficient.

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