

Expanding Bullets

An **expanding bullet** [^{1,2,3}] is a bullet designed to expand on impact, increasing in diameter to limit penetration and/or produce a larger diameter wound. Expanding bullets were given the name Dum-dum after an early British example produced in the Dum Dum Arsenal, near Calcutta, India, already in the middle of the 19th Century. The two typical designs are the hollow point bullet and the soft point bullet. Since both types were designed to expand upon impact, they are dealt with in common here.

Rather than penetrating the body, the bullet drives tissue in an ever broader diameter in the course of its progress (the bullet delivers more energy and increases thereby tissue damage). This tend to send the soldiers hit directly to the grave rather than to the hospital. Calling these bullets 'exploding' projectiles, the Declaration of Saint Petersburg (1868) was the first formal agreement prohibiting the use of certain weapons in war [⁴]. Also in 1899, it was decided to prohibit the future use of the dum dum bullet. The Hague Convention prohibits nations which are signatory from using expanding bullets in warfare. However, this convention does not apply to individuals in non-warfare situations, such as law enforcement, personal use and hunting.

In Norway 2011, Anders Behring Breivik by an exceptional mass-murder killed 69 young people by expanding bullets (victims of the preceding bomb in Central Oslo are not considered here); when the trunk was hit, regardless where, it usually meant instant death to the victims. This trend seems confirmed by the regularly occurring massacres in 'Land of the armed citizens,' except that each incident deals with smaller numbers (written Aug. 2012).

In their eager one day to kill masses of airline passengers, "terror exerts" (the true terrorists) recommend using expanding bullets for marshalls in (so far only American) airplanes. However, handheld guns are imprecise and it can be expected that only a minority actually hit the target; penetration of the cabin-wall is then likely, which in high altitudes means death to all onboard – and perhaps some on the ground. And all was made after the 9-11 tale, only there were no hijackers onboard in 2001 [⁵].

According to the S_IrUS-project (vain attempt to banish weapons causing "superfluous injury or unnecessary suffering" [⁶]), expanding bullets were banished by an initiative by Czar Alexander II in the 19th Century. Nowadays, weapons are developed without respect for this quality (e.g. causing collateral damage) and are later banished by all humanist countries – but not by producers/users. Undoubtedly, ethical standards have deteriorated since the czar's time.

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Expanding_bullet

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hollow-point_bullet

³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soft_point_bullet

⁴ <http://www.icrc.org/ihl.nsf/INTRO/130?OpenDocument>

⁵ <http://www.schou.de/terrorwar/Responsible%20for%209-11.pdf>

⁶ http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Military_Law/pdf/SIrUS-project.pdf