

Depleted Uranium

is a long-term life-threatening **nuclear weapon** that the U.S. currently uses that meets the definition of weapon of mass destruction in two out of three categories under U.S. Federal Code (Title 50 Chapter 40 Section 2302).

- DU's efficacy against standard armor had been researched and "proven" back in the late '60s, and subsequently used in Kosovo, the first Gulf War, Afghanistan and the second Gulf War. These munitions are a uniquely hazardous material, consisting of a radioactive penetrator which breaks down into small particles when burned, and an explosive charge or combustible propellant in the shell of the cartridge. In an accident scenario, DU munitions can burn and spread radioactive material.
- DU is 99.75 percent uranium 238 and 60 percent as radioactive as natural uranium. Some uranium atoms are more radioactive than others and are partially removed from natural uranium to make enriched uranium, which is why what's left over is called "depleted"—but it is still radioactive and quite hazardous.
- DU on the battlefield has three effects on living systems: it is a heavy metal "chemical" poison, a "radioactive" poison and has a "particulate" effect due to the very tiny size of the particles that are 0.1 microns and smaller.



Common DU munitions

Refs: <http://www.rv-vfp156.org/Uranium.html> and "Support the Truth," by Dennis Kyne

As with the birth defects in Vietnam from Agent Orange, the birth defect effects in Kosovo and Iraq from DU are rapidly becoming known.



In Fallujah, Iraq, which bore the brunt of two massive U.S. military operations in 2004, as many as 25 percent of newborn infants have serious



physical abnormalities. Cancer rates in Babil, an area south of Baghdad, have risen from 500 cases in 2004 to more than 9,000 in 2009.

In some studies of U.S. soldiers who had normal babies before the war, 67 percent of the post-war babies are born with severe birth defects – missing brains, eyes, organs, legs and arms, and blood diseases.

Following are excerpts from an Australian newspaper article:

UNITED STATES: Expert: 'Depleted uranium use is a war crime'
Green Left Weekly, by James Patton, Wednesday, July 23, 2003 - 10:00 <http://www.greenleft.org.au/node/29427>

Major Douglas Rokke joined the US Army in 1967 and served in Vietnam. In 1986, he became a nuclear, biological and chemical warfare instructor. After 1990, Rokke worked extensively with depleted-uranium (uranium-238) weapons, becoming one of the Pentagon's foremost experts in the field.

In 1991, Rokke received a US Army Commendation Medal Citation for outstanding work as a health physicist in the area of uranium contamination clean up and medical care to Gulf War veterans. In 1995, the US Army highly praised Rokke's work as director of the Depleted Uranium Project, commending him as the army's "expert on the effects of depleted uranium on the battlefield". Rokke was

praised as an "outstanding officer" and its recommendation was to "promote him immediately".

Internal documents show that the US Department of Defense (DoD) has known about the harmful environmental and health consequences of radioactive weapons since 1943. Despite this, the DoD has denied medical care to people exposed to DU, refused to clean up the environmental mess left behind by the weapons and has continued to lie about the adverse health effects for people exposed to depleted uranium.

The purpose of this cover-up is to ensure the continued use of uranium munitions in combat and during training and testing, and to escape legal liability for the damage caused. Rokke warns that Australian personnel involved in combat during the 1991 Gulf War (where it was first used on a large scale by the US military), the Balkans conflicts during the 1990s and most recently in Afghanistan and Iraq, may already be sick.

The harmful effects of DU exposure include respiratory and neurological problems, rashes, cancers, kidney and lung damage, joint and muscle pain, fibromyalgia, cataracts, memory loss, changes in the RNA in DNA, causing genetic birth defects, and a host of other conditions associated with exposure to heavy metal toxicity and radiation.

Potentially, hundreds of thousands of people in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Balkans and other places are already sick or will become sick due to exposure to DU contamination.

In the 1950s, the US DoD became interested in using DU metal in weapons because of its extreme density. The US military uses DU in M-16 machine gun rounds, cluster bombs, tank shells and even in the huge "bunker-buster" bombs. DU weapons are also contaminated with plutonium, neptunium and americium. An A-10 "tank buster" aircraft can fire over one tonne of deadly DU into its targets every minute.

Rokke was tasked to head a team to clean up the contamination left behind by depleted uranium during the 1991 Gulf War. What he found was a toxicological and radiological mess beyond

comprehension. He discovered that doctors and nurses didn't know how to handle the medical cases they were seeing, and there simply was no way to treat all the victims or to clean up the mess left behind. "How do you bury all of Iraq in a hole?", he asked. "How do you bury all of Afghanistan in a hole?"

Of the 700,000 US troops who were in the Gulf during 1991 war, more than 200,000 are disabled from effects of Gulf War Syndrome, a condition believed to be caused by exposure to DU radiation, as well as factors including exposure to chemical agents, biological agents, pesticides, immunizations against anthrax and other diseases, and exposure to pollutants from oil-well fires.

The United Nations Commission on Human Rights has categorised DU weapons, alongside nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, napalm and cluster bombs, as a "weapon of indiscriminate effect". Iraqis are already suffering a host of health problems due to DU, and these will only increase over the coming decade.

Other resources dig much deeper into the disaster that DU is effecting wherever U.S. munitions are used, but this article from another country (as has become common, today, because of the centralized control of our mainstream media) hits the highlights and central facts on a number of key points. One thing that is not mentioned virtually anywhere, however, is that even the munitions handlers and loaders are exposed to heavy radiation doses.

Refs: "Depleted Uranium: A War Crime Within a War Crime,"
<http://www.countercurrents.org/bowles210310.htm>
"Support the Truth," by Dennis Kyne (self published)