

DEPLETED URANIUM WEAPONS IN IRAQ

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The occupation of Iraq, the occupation of Afghanistan, the entire war (to promote) terror... can these no longer be trotted out in consequence-free abstraction, but as the high-tech malevolence they are, actively continuing the incalculable devastation of countries and their populations?

The bodies keep piling up, the toxic horrors spread. Hasn't anyone in this place ever heard of depleted uranium? Is the health crisis in Iraq and, indeed, throughout the Middle East and Central Asia, not to mention Kosovo and among returning vets for the last four American wars, somehow irrelevant to "the course" charted by Bush? "Two strange phenomena have come about in Basra. The first is double and triple cancers in one patient. For example, leukemia and cancer of the stomach. There was one patient with two cancers—one in his stomach and kidney. Months later, primary cancer was developing in his other kidney—he had three different cancer types. The second is the clustering of cancer in families. We have 58 families here with more than one person affected by cancer.... My wife has nine members of her family with cancer." This is Dr Jawad Al-Ali, director of the oncology center at the largest hospital in Basra, speaking in 2003 at a peace conference in Japan. Why is it that only peace activists are able to hear people like this? Why hasn't he been asked to testify before Congress as its members debate the future of this war and the next?

"Children in particular are susceptible to DU poisoning," he went on. "They have a much higher absorption rate as their blood is being used to build and nourish their bones and they have a lot of soft tissues. Bone cancer and leukemia used to be diseases affecting them the most. However, cancer of the lymph system, which can develop anywhere on the body and has rarely been seen before the age of 12, is now also common."

Depleted uranium—DU—is the Defense Establishment euphemism for U-238, a byproduct of the uranium enrichment process and the ultimate dirty weapon material. It's almost twice as dense as lead, catches fire when launched and explodes on impact into microscopically fine particles, or "nano-particles," which are easily inhaled or absorbed through the skin; it's also radioactive, with a half-life of 4.468 billion years.

And America makes bombs and bullets out of it—it's the ultimate penetrating weapon. The American war machine dropped at least 300 tons of it on Iraq during Gulf War I (the first time it was used in combat) and created Gulf War Syndrome. This time around, the estimated DU use on defenseless Iraq is 1,700 tons, far more of it in major population centers. Remember shock and awe? Bush and Blair pounding Baghdad, in those triumphant early days, with low-grade nuclear weapons, raining down cancer, neurological disorders, birth defects and much, much more on the people America claimed to be liberating, they weren't spreading democracy, they were altering the human genome.

As the Bushes "protected ourselves," from, Iraq's non-existent weapons of mass destruction, they opened their own arsenal of WMD on them, contaminating the

counuy's soil and polluting its air - indeed, unleashing a nuclear dust into the troposphere and contaminating the whole world.

"We used to think (DU) traveled up to a hundred miles," said Chris Busby the other day. Busby, a chemical physicist and member of the British government's radiation risk committee, as well as the founder of the European Committee of Radiation Risk, has monitored air quality in Great Britain. Based on these findings, "It looks like it goes quite around the planet," he said.

While Bush mouths ironic whoppers—"We will be standing with the people of Afghanistan and Iraq until their hopes for freedom and liberty are fulfilled," he told the UN General Assembly a while back—his actions pass, in the words of former Livermore Labs scientist Leuren Moret, "a death sentence on the Middle East and Central Asia." A war crime of unprecedented dimension is unfolding. Perhaps it's simply too big to see, or to grasp. Meanwhile, the contagion spreads, the children die, the planet becomes uninhabitable. ~~del del del del~~