

# DU—A GIFT FROM BUSH

**Pauline Paulinson**

Dr Jawad Al-Ali, director of the Oncology Center at the largest hospital in Basra, Iraq stated at a 2003 medical conference in Japan: “Two strange phenomena have come about in Basra which I have never seen before. The first is double and triple cancers in one patient. The second is the clustering of cancer in families. Children in particular are perceptible to Depleted Uranium (DU) poisoning. They have a much higher absorption rate.. .Cancers.. .rarely been seen before the age of 12 is now also common.” The Japanese began studying DU effects in southern Iraq in 2003. During their visit, a local hospital was treating up to 600 children per day, many of whom suffered symptoms of internal poisoning by radiation. Dr Yuko Fujita, assistant professor at Keio University, Japan said, ‘As a result of the Iraq war, the situation will be desperate in some 5-10 years.’ Award-winning scientist, Dr Rosalie Bertell led UN medical commissions and has studied ‘low-level’ radiation for 30 years. She found that DU damages DNA and causes cell mutations which lead to cancer. Moreover, these particles are absorbed by body fluids and travel through the body damaging more than one organ. Also, she found that this particular type of radiation can cause the body’s communication systems to break down, leading to malfunctions in many vital organs of the body.

Dr Alim Yacoub of Basra University conducted a study into incidences of malignancies in children in the Basra area bombed with DU during the first Gulf War. He found from 1990-1999, there was a 242% rise. That was before the recent invasion. Because conditions now are so chaotic in Iraq, only a small fraction of both cancer and birth defects due to DU are being reported. There are, however, many photos of infants born without brains, with their internal organs outside their bodies, without sexual organs, without spines, with terribly shortened limbs, with huge bulging tumours where their eyes should be, or with a single eye, or without eyes, or without limbs, and even without heads. Such birth defects are now commonplace. Doctors are making comparisons to birth defects that followed the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in WW II. As a special advisor to the WHO, the UN, and the Iraqi Ministry of Health, Dr Ahmad Hardan has documented the effects of DU in Iraq from 1991-2002: “I arranged for a delegation from Japan’s Hiroshima Hospital to come and share their expertise in the radiological diseases we are likely to face over time. The delegation told me the Americans had objected and they decided not to come. Similarly, a world famous German cancer specialist agreed to come, only to be told later that he would not be given permission to enter Iraq.” Ross B Mirkarimi, a spokesman at The Arms Control Research Centre stated: “Unborn children of the region are being asked to pay the highest price, the integrity of their DNA. Apparently, over 30% of Iraqis already have cancer, and there are lots of kids with leukemia. The depleted uranium left by the US bombing campaign has turned Iraq into a cancer-infested country. For hundreds of years to come, the effects of the uranium will continue to wreak havoc on Iraq and its surrounding areas.’”

US forces admit to using over 300 tons of DU weapons in 1991. The actual figure is closer to 800. Also the US used 200 tons more in Baghdad alone during the recent invasion with a total of 1500 tons in all of Iraq. And this time it wasn't limited to anti-tank weapons but was extended to guided missiles, large bunker busters and big 2000-pound bombs used in Iraq's cities. This means that Iraq's cities have been blanketed in lethal particles. Japanese professor, Dr Yagasaki, calculated that 800 tons of DU is the atomicity equivalent of 83,000 Nagasaki bombs. The US has used more DU since 1991 than the atomicity equivalent of 400,000 Nagasaki bombs. The "smog of war" from the 1991 Gulf War was found in deposits in South America, the Himalayas and Hawaii. In addition, the use of DU in huge bombs which throw the deadly particles higher and wider in huge plumes of smoke means that billions of deadly particles have been carried high into the air swept worldwide by the winds. In June 2003, the WHO announced in a press release that global cancer rates will increase 50% by 2020. In 1997, while citing experiments in which 84% of dogs exposed to inhaled uranium died of lung cancer, Dr Asaf Durakovic, then Professor of Radiology and Nuclear Medicine at Georgetown University in Washington said : "The US Veterans Administration asked me to lie about the risks of incorporating depleted uranium in the human body." Dr Durakovic's UMRC (Uranium Medical Research Center) research team also conducted a 3-week-trip to Iraq Oct/03 in 10 cities, including Baghdad, Basra and Najaf. He said preliminary tests showed that the air, soil and water samples contained "hundreds to thousands of times" the normal levels of radiation. Durakovic told *The Japan Times* : "They are hampering efforts to prove the connection between DU and the illness." Since then, Dr Durakovic was warned to stop his work, then he was fired from his position, then his house was ransacked, and he has also repeatedly received death threats. ([www.sfbayview.com/du](http://www.sfbayview.com/du)) After Gulf War I, the UK Atomic Energy Authority (AEA) came up with estimates for the potential effects of the DU contamination left by the conflict. It calculated that "this could cause "500,000 potential deaths". The AEA's calculation was made in a confidential memo to the privatized munitions company, Royal Ordnance, in April '91. This study was made prior to the more recent invasions of both Afghanistan and Iraq where DU munitions were used on a larger scale in and near many of the most populated areas. Since 1991, the US has staged four nuclear wars using DU. Vast regions in the Middle East and Central Asia have been permanently contaminated with radiation. Extrapolating the UK AEA estimate with this recent amount gives a figure of potentially 3 million extra deaths from inhaling DU dust in Iraq alone, not including Afghanistan. Dr Dan Bishop, a chemist for IDUST feels that this estimate may be low, if the long life of DU dust is considered.

With now over 10 trillion doses of DU in Iraq and Afghanistan, it comes as no surprise that widespread field studies in Afghanistan point to the existence of a large scale public health disaster. UMRC is the first independent research organization to find DU in the bodies of US, UK and Canadian Gulf War I veterans and following 'Operation Iraqi Freedom', they found DU in the water, soils and atmosphere of Iraq as well as in Iraqi civilians. In May/02, the UMRC examined hundreds of people with acute symptoms characteristic of radiation poisoning along with chronic symptoms of internal uranium contamination including deformity in newborns. Two additional scientific study teams were sent to Afghanistan in June/02 and Oct/02. The teams found that in both Jalalabad and Kabul, DU was causing high levels of illness with tests showing radiation concentrations 400% to 2000% above normal; amounts not

recorded in civilian studies before. Without exception, at every bombsite investigated, people are ill. In Afghanistan, unlike Iraq, UMRC lab results indicated high concentrations of Non-Depleted Uranium, with concentrations much higher than in DU victims from Iraq. Afghanistan was used as a testing ground for new 'bunker buster' bombs containing high concentrations of other uranium alloys. The Pentagon/DOD, UN regulatory agencies (WHO, UNEP, IAEA, CDC, DOE, etc) and the military and the weapons industry have all interfered with UMRC's ability to have its studies published by managing a persistent misinformation program in the press against UMRC and destroy the reputation of its scientific staff, physicians and laboratories.

UMRC is not alone. "Ingested DU particles can cause up to 1,000 times the damage of an X-ray", said Mary Olson, a nuclear waste specialist and biologist at the Nuclear Information and Resource Service in Washington DC. Also, a 2001 study of DU's effect on DNA done by Dr Alexandra C Miller for the Armed Forces Radiobiology Research Institute shows DU causes 1 million times more genetic damage than from its radiation effect alone. Just 467 US personnel were wounded in the 3 week Persian Gulf War in 1990-1991. However, out of 580,400 soldiers who served, 11,000 are now dead, and by 2000 there were 325,000 on permanent medical disability. This means that a decade later, 56% of those soldiers who served in Gulf War I now have medical problems. DU is also in the semen of soldiers. In a group of 251 soldiers from a study group in Mississippi who all had normal babies before the Gulf War, 67% of their post-war babies were born with severe birth defects. The Department of Veterans Affairs has stated they do not keep records of birth defects occurring in families of veterans. The American Free Press (2005) reported that 40% of the soldiers in a unit that served in 2003 have developed malignancies in just 16 months. Marion Fulk, a nuclear physical chemist retired from the Livermore Nuclear Weapons Lab and formerly involved with the Manhattan Project, interprets the new and rapid malignancies in soldiers from the 2003 war as "spectacular...and a matter of concern. ...I would say that it [DU] is the perfect weapon for killing lots of people." Writes Leuren Moret, another DU researcher, ...Inhalation of nano-particles of depleted uranium is the most hazardous exposure, because the particles pass through the lung-blood barrier directly into the blood... through the nose... directly into the brain... Many Gulf era soldiers have brain tumours, brain damage and impaired thought processes. John Hanchette, a journalism professor at St Bonaventure University, and one of the founding editors of USA TO-DAY told Moret that he had prepared news-breaking stories about the effects of DU on Gulf War soldiers and Iraqi citizens but each time he was ready to publish, he received a phone call from the Pentagon asking him not to print the story. He has since been replaced as editor of USA TODAY. Dr Keith Baverstock, WHO chief expert on radiation and health for 11 years and author of an unpublished study has charged that his report "on the cancer risk to civilians in Iraq from breathing uranium contaminated dust" was also deliberately suppressed. [San Francisco Bay View, March/05 Depleted Uranium: A Death Sentence Here and Abroad by Leuren Moret.]

A medical doctor reported being trained by the Pentagon months before Gulf War II to diagnose and treat soldiers returning from the 2003 war for mental problems only. Medical professionals treating returning soldiers were threatened with \$10,000 fines and with jail if they talked about the soldiers or their medical problems. Reporters have also been prevented access to the thousands of medically evacuated soldiers since the 2003 war who are in the Walter Reed Hospital near Washington DC. In 1996 and 1997

UN Human Rights Tribunals condemned DU weapons for illegally breaking the Geneva Convention and classed them as 'weapons of mass destruction'. Since then, following leukemia in European troops in the Balkans and Afghanistan (where DU was also used), the EU has twice called for DU weapons to be banned. Yet, far from banning DU, the US and Britain stepped up their denials. The British authorities have even abolished military hospitals so that specialized research on the effects of DU and treating DU among the soldiers is impossible. The current House of Commons briefing paper on DU hazards says "it is judged that any radiation effects from possible exposures are extremely unlikely to be a contributory factor to the illnesses currently being experienced by some Gulf war veterans." Over a quarter of a million sick and dying US and UK vets are called 'some'. In the days before the UK and the US first used DU, its hazards were no secret. One US 1990 study said DU was 'linked to cancer when exposures are internal, [and to] chemical toxicity-causing kidney damage'. Another study openly warned that exposure to these particles under battlefield conditions could lead to cancers of the lung and bone, kidney damage, non-malignant lung disease, neuro-cognitive disorders, chromosomal damage and birth defects. Indeed, one must take heed of the Union of Concerned Scientists (more than 60 scientists including 20 Nobel laureates) who have issued a statement asserting that the Bush administration has systematically distorted scientific fact in the service of policy goals on the environment, health, biomedical research and nuclear weapons at home and abroad. ~~del del del~~