

What is Depleted Uranium?

- Depleted Uranium (DU) is waste from production of “enriched” natural Uranium used in nuclear weapons or fuelling of nuclear reactors.
- DU is an extremely heavy and hard metal (1.7 times denser than lead), and makes very effective armour-piercing munitions.
- The US and UK military used DU munitions in the 1991 Gulf War, in the Balkans in 1999, and over 1000 tonnes in Iraq since 2003. They have also probably been used in Afghanistan from 2001, and by Israel in Lebanon, 2006.
- The US and UK governments and military claim that DU munitions pose no health problems. However, *they are very secretive about using them, and have refused to allow independent field research in Iraq or Afghanistan.*

Why is DU a Health Hazard?

- On impact DU ignites, burning at a very high temperature, forming Uranium Oxide, and creating a cloud of fine dust like smoke which can pass through gas masks and into the body.
- Uranium Oxide dust causes both heavy-metal and radiation poisoning.
- About one third of the 800,000 veterans of the 1991 Gulf War now claim disability benefits for mystery illnesses consistent with radiation exposure.
- There was a sharp increase in cancers and child deformities in Iraq after 1991 and 2003, and in Afghanistan after 2001.

Genetic Damage from DU

- Alpha particles radiating from dust in vulnerable tissues can damage DNA, leading to cancer, birth defects and other health effects (see www.llrc.org).
- Uranium can bind chemically to DNA, where it also causes damage.
- Evidence for this comes from a study of US veterans’ children conceived since the Gulf War: 67% of the children exhibit rare illnesses and genetic problems.

What Has Been Done About It?

- The NZ Defence Force (NZDF) does not have any DU munitions. NZDF personnel returning from Iraq or Afghanistan have to provide urine samples for testing for Uranium levels. However, more sensitive testing is needed.
- Since 2004, the Christchurch-based DU Education Team (DUET) have been campaigning to raise awareness about the “Agent Orange of the 21st century”.
- The International Campaign to Ban Uranium Weapons (ICBUW) has drafted an enforceable global treaty along the lines of the Conventions banning chemical and biological weapons (see www.bandepleteduranium.org).

Why Sign This Petition?

- *On 22 March 2007, Belgium became the first state in the world to impose a national ban on all aspects of DU munitions.*
- *The international campaign would receive a major boost if nuclear free New Zealand, which is also leading the campaign to ban cluster munitions, emulated Belgium’s lead.*
- ***By signing this petition, you can help our Parliament decide to adopt a similar ban here.***