

DU: depleted uranium.

Articolo lungo e in inglese, ma decisamente interessante.

Death By Slow Burn -
How America Nukes Its Own Troops
What 'Support Our Troops' Really Means
By Amy Worthington - The Idaho Observer

On March 30, an AP photo featured an American pro-war activist holding a sign: "Nuke the evil scum, it worked in 1945!" That's exactly what George Bush has done. America's mega-billion dollar war in Iraq has been indeed a NUCLEAR WAR.

Bush-Cheney have delivered upon 17 million Iraqis tons of depleted uranium (DU) weapons, a "liberation" gift that will keep on giving. Depleted uranium is a component of toxic nuclear waste, usually stored at secure sites. Handlers need radiation protection gear.

Over a decade ago, war-makers decided to incorporate this lethal waste into much of the Pentagon's weaponry. Navy ships carrying Phalanx rapid fire guns are capable of firing thousands of DU rounds per minute.(1) Tomahawk missiles launched from U.S. ships and subs are DU-tipped.(2) The M1 Abrams tanks are armored with DU.(3) These and British Challenger II tanks are tightly packed with DU shells, which continually irradiate troops in or near them.(4) The A-10 "tank buster" aircraft fires DU shells at machines and people on the battlefield.(5)

DU munitions are classified by a United Nations resolution as illegal weapons of mass destruction. Their use breaches all international laws, treaties and conventions forbidding poisoned weapons calculated to cause unnecessary suffering.

Ironically, support for our troops will extend well beyond the war in Iraq. Americans will be supporting Gulf War II veterans for years as they slowly and painfully succumb to radiation poisoning. U.S and British troops deployed to the area are the walking dead. Humans and animals, friends and foes in the fallout zone are destined to a long downhill spiral of chronic illness and disability. Kidney dysfunction, lung damage, bloody stools, extreme fatigue, joint pain, unsteady gait, memory loss and rashes and, ultimately, cancer and premature death await those exposed to DU.

Award-winning journalist Will Thomas wrote: "As the last Gulf conflict so savagely demonstrated, GI immune systems reeling from multiple doses of experimental vaccines offer little defense against further exposure to chemical weapons, industrial toxins, stress, caffeine, insect repellent and radiation leftover from the last war. This is a war even the victors will lose."(6)

When a DU shell is fired, it ignites upon impact. Uranium, plus traces of plutonium and americium, vaporize into tiny, ceramic particles of radioactive dust. Once inhaled, uranium oxides lodge in the body and emit radiation indefinitely. A single particle of DU lodged in a lymph node can devastate the entire immune system according to British radiation expert Roger Coghill.(7)

The Royal Society of England published data showing that battlefield soldiers who inhale or swallow high levels of DU can suffer kidney failure within days.(8) Any soldier now in Iraq who has not inhaled lethal radioactive dust is not breathing. In the first two weeks of combat, 700 Tomahawks, at a cost of \$1.3 million each, blasted Iraqi real estate into radioactive mushroom clouds.(9) Millions of DU tank rounds litter the terrain. Cleanup is impossible because there is no place on the planet to put so much contaminated debris.

Bush Sr.'s Gulf War I was also a nuclear war. 320 tons of depleted uranium were used against Iraq in 1991.(10) A 1998 report by the U.S. Agency for Toxic Substances confirms that inhaling DU causes symptoms identical to those claimed by many sick vets with Gulf War

Syndrome.(11) The Gulf War Veterans Association reports that at least 300,000 Gulf War I vets have now developed incapacitating illnesses.(12) To date, 209,000 vets have filed claims for disability benefits based on service-connected injuries and illnesses from combat in that war.(13)

Dr. Asaf Durakovic, a professor of nuclear medicine at Georgetown University, is a former army medical expert. He told nuclear scientists in Paris last year that tens of thousands of sick British and American soldiers are now dying from radiation they encountered during Gulf War I. He found that 62 percent of sick vets tested have uranium isotopes in their organs, bones, brains and urine.(14) Laboratories in Switzerland and Finland corroborated his findings.

In other studies, some sick vets were found to be expressing uranium in even their semen. Their sexual partners often complained of a burning sensation during intercourse, followed by their own debilitating illnesses.(15)

Nothing compares to the astronomical cancer rates and birth defects suffered by the Iraqi people who have endured vicious nuclear chastisement for years.(16) U.S. air attacks against Iraq since 1993 have undoubtedly employed nuclear munitions. Pictures of grotesquely deformed Iraqi infants born since 1991 are overwhelming.(17) Like those born to Gulf War I vets, many babies born to troops now in Iraq will also be afflicted with hideous deformities, neurological damage and/or blood and respiratory disorders.(18)

As an Army health physicist, Dr. Doug Rokke was dispatched to the Middle East to salvage DU-contaminated tanks after Gulf War I. His Geiger counters revealed that the war zones of Iraq and Kuwait were contaminated with up to 300 millirems an hour in beta and gamma radiation plus thousands to millions of counts per minute in alpha radiation. Rokke recently told the media: "The whole area is still trashed. It is hotter than heck over there still. This stuff doesn't go away."(19)

DU remains "hot" for 4.5 billion years. Radiation expert Dr. Helen Caldicott confirms that the dust-laden winds of DU-contaminated war zones "will remain effectively radioactive for the rest of time."(20) The murderous dust storms which ensnared coalition troops during the first few days of the current invasion are sure to have significant health consequences.

Rokke and his cleanup team were issued only flimsy dust masks for their dangerous work. Of the 100 people on Rokke's decontamination team, 30 have already "dropped dead." Rokke himself is ill with radiation damage to lungs and kidneys. He has brain lesions, skin pustules, chronic fatigue, continual wheezing and painful fibromyalgia. Rokke warns that anyone exposed to DU should have adequate respiratory protection and special coveralls to protect their clothing because, he says, you can't get uranium particles off your clothing.

The U.S. military insists that DU on the battlefield is not a problem. Colonel James Naughton of the U.S. Army Material Command recently told the BBC that complaints about DU "had no medical basis."(21) The military's own documents belie this. A 1993 Pentagon document warned that "when soldiers inhale or ingest DU dust they incur a potential increase in cancer risk."(22) A U.S. Army training manual requires anyone who comes within 25 meters of DU-contaminated equipment to wear respiratory and skin protection.(23) The U.S. Army Environmental Policy Institute admitted: "If DU enters the body, it has the potential to generate significant medical consequences."(24) The Institute also stated that, if the troops were to realize what they had been exposed to, "the financial implications of long-term disability payments and healthcare costs would be excessive."(25) For pragmatic reasons, DOD chooses to lie and deny.

Dr. Rokke confirms that the Pentagon lies about DU dangers and is criminally negligent for neglecting medical attention needed by DU-contaminated vets. He predicts that the numbers of American troops to be sickened by DU from Gulf War II will be staggering.(26) As they gradually sicken and suffer a slow burn to their graves, the Pentagon will, as it did after Gulf War I, deny that their misery and death is a result of their tour in Iraq.

Dr. Rokke's candor has cost him his career. Likewise, Dr. Durakovic's radiation studies on Gulf War I vets were not popular with U.S. officials. Dr. Durakovic was reportedly told his life was in danger if he continued his research. He left the U.S. to continue his research abroad.(27)

Naive young coalition soldiers now in Iraq are likely unaware of how deadly their battlefield environment is. Gulf War I troops were kept in ignorance. Soldiers handled DU fragments and some wore these lethal nuggets around their necks. A DU projectile emits more radiation in five hours than allowed in an entire year under civilian radiation exposure standards. "We didn't know any better," Kris Kornkven told Nation magazine. "We didn't find out until long after we were home that there even was such a thing as DU."(28)

George Bush's ongoing war in Afghanistan is also a nuclear war. Shortly after 9-11, the U.S. announced it would stockpile tactical nuclear weapons including small neutron bombs, nuclear mines and shells suited to commando warfare in Afghanistan.(29) In late September, 2001, Bush and Russian president Vladimir Putin agreed that the U.S. would use tactical nuclear weapons in Afghanistan while Putin would employ nuclear weapons against the Chechnyans.(30)

Describing the Pentagon's B-61-11 burrowing nuke bomb, George Smith writes in the Village Voice: "Built ram tough with a heavy metal casing for smashing through the earth and concrete, the B-61 explodes with the force of an estimated 340,000 tons of TNT. It is lots of bang for the buck, literally two apocalypse bombs in one, a boosted plutonium firecracker called the primary and a heavy hydrogen secondary for that good old-fashioned H-bomb fireball."(31)

Drought-stricken Afghanistan's underground water supply is now contaminated by these nuclear weapons.(32) Experts with the Uranium Medical Research Center report that urine samples of Afghans show the highest level of uranium ever recorded in a civilian population. Afghani soldiers and civilians are reported to have died after suffering intractable vomiting, severe respiratory problems, internal bleeding and other symptoms consistent with radiation poisoning. Dead birds still perched in trees are found partially melted with blood oozing from their mouths.(33)

Afghanistan's new president, Hamid Karzai, is a puppet installed by Washington. Under the protection of American soldiers, Karzai's regime is setting a new record for opium production. Both UN and U.S. reports confirm that the huge Afghani opium harvest of 2002 makes Afghanistan the world's leading opium producer.(34) Thanks to nuclear weapons, Afghanistan is now safe for the Bush-Cheney narcotics industry.(35) ABC News asserts that keeping the "peace" in Afghanistan will require decades of allied occupation.(36) For years to come, "peacekeepers" will be eating, drinking and breathing the "hot" carcinogenic pollution they have helped the Pentagon inflict upon that nation for organized crime.

As governor of Arkansas during the Iran-Contra era, Bill Clinton laundered \$multi-millions in cocaine profits for then vice-president George Bush Sr.(37) As a partner in the Bush family's notorious crime machine, President Clinton committed U.S. troops to NATO's campaign in the Balkans, a prime heroin production and trans-shipment area. DOD's campaign to control and reorganize the drug trade there for the Bush mafia was yet another nuclear project.

For years, the U.S. and NATO fired DU missiles, bullets and shells across the Balkans, nuking the peoples of Serbia, Bosnia and Kosovo. As DU munitions were slammed into chemical plants, the environment became hideously toxic, also endangering the peoples of Albania, Macedonia, Greece, Italy, Austria and Hungary. By 1999, UN investigators reported that an estimated 12 tons of DU had caused irreparable damage to the Yugoslavian environment, with agriculture, livestock and air water, and public health all profoundly damaged.(38)

Scientists confirm that citizens of the Balkans are excreting uranium in their urine.³⁹ In 2001, a Yugoslavian pathologist reported that hundreds of Bosnians have died of cancer from NATO's

DU bombardment.(40) Many NATO peacekeepers in the Balkans now suffer ill health. Their leukemias, cancers and other maladies are dubbed the "Balkans Syndrome." Richard Coghill predicts that DU weapons used in Balkans campaign will result in at least 10,000 cases of fatal cancer.(41)

U.S. citizens at home are also paying a heavy price for criminal militarism gone mad. DOD is a pollution monster. The General Accounting Office (GAO) found 9,181 dangerous military sites in USA that will require \$billions to rehabilitate. The GAO reports that DOD has been both slothful and deceitful in its clean-up obligations.(42) The Pentagon is now pressing Congress to exempt it from all environmental laws so that it may pollute and poison free from liability.(43)

The Navy uses prime fishing grounds off the coast of Washington state to test fire DU ammunition. In January, Washington State Rep. Jim McDermott chastised the Navy: "On one hand you have required soldiers to have DU safety training and to wear protective gear when handling DU...and submarines must stay clear of DU-contaminated waters. These policies indicate there is cause for concern....On the other hand the Department of Defense has repeatedly denied that DU poses any danger whatsoever. There has been no remorse about leaving tons of DU equipment in the soil in foreign countries, and there appears to be no remorse about leaving it in the waters of your own country."(44)

DU has been used in military practice maneuvers in Indiana, Florida, New Mexico, Massachusetts, Maryland and Puerto Rico. After the Navy tested DU weaponry on the Puerto Rican island of Vieques, one third of the island's population developed serious illness. Many people show high levels of uranium in their bodies. Hundreds have filed a class action suit against the Navy for \$100 million, claiming DU contamination has caused widespread cancers.(45)

The Navy's Fallon Naval Air Station near Fallon, Nevada, is a quagmire of 26 toxic waste sites. It is also a target practice zone for DU bombs and missiles. Area residents report bizarre illnesses, including 17 children who have contracted leukemia within five years. A survey of groundwater in the Fallon area showed nearly half of area wells are contaminated with radioactive materials.(46)

The materials for DU weaponry have been processed mainly at three nuclear plants in Kentucky, Ohio and Tennessee, where workers handling uranium contaminated with plutonium have suffered for decades with cancers and debilitating maladies similar to Gulf War Syndrome.(47)

Emboldened by power-grabbing successes made possible by his administration's devious 9-11 project, President Bush asserts that the U.S. has the right to attack any nation it deems a potential threat. He told West Point in 2002, "If we wait for threats to fully materialize, we will have waited too long."(48) Thus, it is certain that Bush-Cheney future pre-emptive nuclear wars are lined up like idling jets on a runway. Both Cheney's Halliburton Corp. and the Bush family's Carlyle Group are profiteers in U.S. defense contracts, so endless war is just good business.(49)

The Washington Post reported that the Pentagon will create special nuclear weapons for use on North Korea's underground nuclear facilities.(50) Next August, U.S. war makers will meet to consolidate plans for a new generation of "mini," "micro" and "tiny" nuclear bombs and bunker busters. These will be added to the U.S. arsenal perhaps for use against non-nuclear third-world nations such as Iran, Syria, Lebanon.(51)

The solution? Americans must stop electing ruthless criminals to rule this nation. We must convince fellow citizens that villains like Saddam Hussein are made in the U.S. as rationale for endless corporate war profits. Saddam was placed in power by the CIA.(52) For years U.S. government agencies, under auspices of George Bush Sr., supplied him with chemical and biological weapons.(53) Our national nuclear laboratories, along with Unisys, Dupont and Hewlett-Packard, sold Saddam materials for his nuclear program.(54) Dick Cheney was CEO of

Halliburton in the late 90s when its subsidiaries signed \$73 million in new contracts to further supply Saddam.(55) The wicked villain of Iraq was nurtured for decades as a cash-cow by U.S. military-industrial piranhas.

If America truly supports its troops, it must stop sending them into nuclear holocaust for the enrichment of thugs. Time is running out. If the DU-maniacs at the Pentagon and their coven of nuclear arms peddlers are not harnessed, America will have no able-bodied fighting forces left. All people of the earth will become grossly ill, hideously deformed and short-lived. We must succeed in the critical imperative to face reality and act decisively. Should we fail, there will be no place to hide from Bush-Cheney's merciless nuclear orgies yet to come or from the inevitable nuclear retaliation these orgies will surely breed.

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C'è di che riflettere.