

Britain, U.S. Using Radioactive ‘Dirty Bombs’

World’s foremost expert on the U.S. military’s use of depleted uranium speaks out

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While U.S. and British military personnel continue using illegal uranium munitions—America’s and England’s own “dirty bombs”—Department of Energy (DOE) and Department of Defense (DOD) officials deny that there are any adverse health and environmental effects as a consequence of the manufacture, testing and use of uranium munitions. The reason for the doubletalk is obviously to avoid criminal liability for the willful and illegal dispersal of a radioactive and toxic material—depleted uranium (DU).

How do I know this? Fourteen years ago, I was asked by the U.S. military to clean up the initial DU mess from Gulf War I.

Following that, I headed the Depleted Uranium Project for the DOD, which created a series of manuals and training videos to teach soldiers about the hazards associated with handling DU munitions.

Still, DOD officials and others attempt to justify uranium munitions use while ignoring mandatory requirements that are already in place to deal with the contamination.

I am dismayed that DOD and DOE officials and their representatives continue personal attacks aimed to silence or discredit those of us who are demanding that medical care be provided to all DU casualties and that environmental remediation be completed in compliance with government regulations.

The Pentagon arrogantly refuses to comply with its own orders and directives that require the DOD to provide prompt and effective medical care to all exposed individuals, as cited in military reports.

They also refuse to clean up dispersed radioactive contamination as required by Army Regulation AR 700-48, titled Management of Equipment Contaminated With Depleted Uranium or Radioactive Commodities, and U.S. Army Technical Bulletin TB 9-1300-278, which notes the “Guidelines For Safe Response To Handling, Storage, And Transportation Accidents Involving Army Tank Munitions Or Armor Which Contain Depleted Uranium.”

Specifically, section 2-4 of Army Regulation AR 700-48, dated Sept. 16, 2002, requires that:

- “Military personnel “identify, segregate, isolate, secure, and label all RCE” (radiologically contaminated equipment).
- “Procedures to minimize the spread of radioactivity will be implemented as soon as possible.”
- “Radioactive material and waste will not be locally disposed of through burial, submersion, incineration, destruction in place, or abandonment”; and

- “All equipment, to include captured or combat RCE, will be surveyed, packaged, retrograded, decontaminated and released. . . .”

In addition, medical care must be provided by DOD to all individuals affected by the manufacturing, testing and use of uranium munitions. A thorough environmental cleanup must also be completed without further delay.

The use of uranium weapons, the release of radioactive components in destroyed U.S. and foreign military equipment and releases of industrial, medical and research facility radioactive materials have resulted in unacceptable exposures.

Therefore, decontamination must be completed, as required by Army regulation, and should include releases of all radioactive materials resulting from military operations.

Americans should realize that adverse health and environmental effects of uranium weapons contamination are not limited solely to combat zones. Any facility and site where uranium weapons have been manufactured or tested should be checked, also. These include Vieques, Puerto Rico; Colonie, N.Y.; Concord, Mass.; Jefferson Proving Grounds in Indiana; and the Schofield Barracks, Hawaii.

The willful dispersal of tons of solid radioactive and chemically toxic waste in the form of uranium munitions is illegal. Beyond that, it does not even pass the common sense test.

Even the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) notes that DU is a dirty bomb. DHS issued “dirty bomb” response guidelines on Jan. 3, 2006, for incidents within the United States.

They specifically state: “A radiological incident is defined as an event or series of events, deliberate or accidental, leading to the release, or potential release, into the environment of radioactive material in sufficient quantity to warrant consideration of protective actions.”

The first step in putting this terrible situation right should be for Bush and Blair to set up medical care for all casualties.

They should then demand a thorough environmental assessment of the level of DU contamination around testing facilities, munitions plants and battlegrounds. They should also call for an immediate cessation of retaliation against all of us who demand compliance with medical care provisions. And, finally, the two leaders should order an immediate stop to the already illegal use of DU munitions.

Doug Rokke, Ph.D. (ret.) is a veteran of the first Gulf War and is the former director of the U.S. Army’s Depleted Uranium Project, which developed a series of training videos and manuals about DU munitions for the military. The materials were intended to teach servicemen and women about the use of and hazards associated with DU munitions. However, the military never instituted the program. Today, Dr. Rokke has become one of the leading critics of the U.S. government’s continued use of DU

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