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**Sent:** 30 September 2006 22:07  
**Subject:** [iraqcampaign] Depleted Uranium – Far Worse Than 9/11

## **Depleted Uranium – Far Worse Than 9/11**

Doug Westerman



September 29, 2006

# **Depleted Uranium Dust – Public Health Disaster For The People Of Iraq and Afghanistan**

by Doug Westerman

*In 1979, depleted uranium (DU) particles escaped from the National Lead Industries factory near Albany, N.Y., which was manufacturing DU weapons for the U.S military.*

*The particles traveled 26 miles and were discovered in a laboratory filter by Dr. Leonard Dietz, a nuclear physicist. This discovery led to a shut down of the factory in 1980, for releasing more than 0.85 pounds of DU dust into the atmosphere every month, and involved a cleanup of contaminated properties costing over 100 million dollars.*

*Imagine a far worse scenario. Terrorists acquire a million pounds of the deadly dust and scatter it in populated areas throughout the U.S. Hundreds of children report symptoms. Many acquire cancer and leukemia, suffering an early and painful death. Huge increases in severe birth defects are reported. Oncologists are overwhelmed.*

*Soccer fields, sand lots and parks, traditional play areas for kids, are no longer safe. People lose their most basic freedom, the ability to go outside and safely breathe. Sounds worse than*

02/10/2006

*9/11? Welcome to Iraq and Afghanistan.*

Dr. Jawad Al-Ali (55), director of the Oncology Center at the largest hospital in Basra, Iraq stated, at a recent (2003) 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.

For example, leukemia and cancer of the stomach. We had one patient with 2 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. Dr Yasin, a general Surgeon here has two uncles, a sister and cousin affected with cancer.

Dr Mazen, another specialist, has six family members suffering from cancer. My wife has nine members of her family with cancer".

"Children in particular are susceptible to DU poisoning. 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."

"We were accused of spreading propaganda for Saddam before the war. When I have gone to do talks I have had people accuse me of being pro-Saddam. Sometimes I feel afraid to even talk. Regime people have been stealing my data and calling it their own, and using it for their own agendas. The Kuwaitis banned me from entering Kuwait – we were accused of being Saddam supporters."

## **The arrogance of the Pentagon people is incredible**

John Hanchette, a journalism professor at St. Bonaventure University, and one of the founding editors of USA Today related the following to DU researcher Leuren Moret.

He stated that he had prepared news breaking stories about the effects of DU on Gulf War soldiers and Iraqi citizens, but that 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, The World Health Organization's 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.

The information released by the U.S. Dept. of Defense is not reliable, according to some sources even within the military.

In 1997, while citing experiments, by others, in which 84 percent of dogs exposed to inhaled uranium died of cancer of the lungs, Dr. Asaf Durakovic, then Professor of Radiology and Nuclear Medicine at Georgetown University in Washington was quoted as saying, "The [US government's] Veterans Administration asked me to lie about the risks of incorporating depleted uranium in the human body."

At that time Dr. Durakovic was a colonel in the U.S. Army. He has since left the military, to found the Uranium Medical Research Center, a privately funded organization with headquarters in Canada.

PFC Stuart Grainger of 23 Army Division, 34th Platoon, (names and numbers have been changed) was diagnosed with cancer after returning from Iraq. Seven other men in the Platoon also have malignancies.

## **The Pentagon's "dirty" bomb**

Doug Rokke, U.S. Army contractor who headed a clean-up of depleted uranium after the first Gulf War states:

"Depleted uranium is a crime against God and humanity."

Rokke's own crew, a hundred employees, was devastated by exposure to the fine dust. He stated: "When we went to the Gulf, we were all really healthy." After performing clean-up operations in the desert (mistakenly without protective gear), 30 members of his staff died, and most others, "including Rokke himself", developed serious health problems. Rokke now has reactive airway disease, neurological damage, cataracts, and kidney problems.

"We warned the Department of Defense in 1991 after the Gulf War. Their arrogance is beyond comprehension. Yet the D.O.D still insists such ingestion is "not sufficient to make troops seriously ill in most cases."

Then why did it make the clean up crew seriously or terminally ill in nearly all cases?

## **Particles one-tenth of a micron are dispersed into the atmosphere**

Marion Falk, a retired chemical physicist who built nuclear bombs for more than 20 years at Lawrence Livermore Lab, was asked if he thought that DU weapons operate in a similar manner as a dirty bomb.

"That's exactly what they are. They fit the description of a dirty bomb in every way."

According to Falk, more than 30 percent of the DU fired from the cannons of U.S. tanks is reduced to particles one-tenth of a micron (one millionth of a meter) in size or smaller on impact.

"The larger the bang" the greater the amount of DU that is dispersed into the atmosphere, Falk said. With the larger missiles and bombs, nearly 100 percent of the DU is reduced to radioactive dust particles of the "micron size" or smaller, he said.

## **Bombs with DU are the perfect weapons for killing lots of people**

When asked if the main purpose for using it was for destroying things and killing people, Falk was more specific:

"I would say that it is the perfect weapon for killing lots of people."

When a DU round or bomb strikes a hard target, most of its kinetic energy is converted to heat " sufficient heat to ignite the DU. From 40% to 70% of the DU is converted to extremely fine dust particles of ceramic uranium oxide (primarily dioxide, though other formulations also occur). Over 60% of these particles are smaller than 5 microns in diameter, about the same size as the cigarette ash particles in cigarette smoke and therefore respirable.

Because conditions are so chaotic in Iraq, the medical infrastructure has been greatly compromised. In terms of both cancer and birth defects due to DU, only a small fraction of the cases are being reported.

## **Birth defects are now commonplace**

Doctors in southern Iraq are making comparisons to the birth defects that followed the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in WWII. They have numerous photos of infants born without brains, with their internal organs outside their bodies, without sexual organs, without

spines, and the list of deformities goes on and on. Such birth defects were extremely rare in Iraq prior to the large scale use of DU. Weapons.

Now they are commonplace. In hospitals across Iraq, the mothers are no longer asking, "Doctor, is it a boy or girl?" but rather, "Doctor, is it normal?" The photos are horrendous. They can be viewed on the website <http://www.xs4all.nl/~stgvisie/VISIE/extremedeformities.html>

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."

Prior to her death from leukemia in Sept. 2004, Nuha Al Radi, an accomplished Iraqi artist and author of the "Baghdad Diaries" wrote:

"Everyone seems to be dying of cancer. Every day one hears about another acquaintance or friend of a friend dying. How many more die in hospitals that one does not know? Apparently, over thirty percent of Iraqis have cancer, and there are lots of kids with leukemia."

"The depleted uranium left by the U.S. 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."

This excerpt in her diary was written in 1993, after Gulf War I (approximately 300 tons of DU ordinance, mostly in desert areas) but before Operation Iraqi Freedom, (est. 1700 tons with much more near major population centers). So, it's 5–6 times worse now than it was when she wrote that diary entry!!

## **Over one million pounds of dust scattered throughout Iraq**

Estimates of the percentage of D.U. which was 'aerosolized' into fine uranium oxide dust are approximately 30–40%. That works out to over one million pounds of dust scattered throughout Iraq.

As a special advisor to the World Health Organization, the United Nations, and the Iraqi Ministry of Health, Dr. Ahmad Hardan has documented the effects of DU in Iraq between 1991 and 2002.

"American forces admit to using over 300 tons of DU weapons in 1991. The actual figure is closer to 800. This has caused a health crisis that has affected almost a third of a million people. As if that was not enough, America went on and used 200 tons more in Bagdad alone during the recent invasion.

I don't know about other parts of Iraq, it will take me years to document that.

"In Basra, it took us two years to obtain conclusive proof of what DU does, but we now know what to look for and the results are terrifying."

By far the most devastating effect is on unborn children. Nothing can prepare anyone for the sight of hundreds of preserved fetuses, scarcely human in appearance. Iraq is now seeing babies with terribly foreshortened limbs, with their intestines outside their bodies, with huge bulging tumors where their eyes should be, or with a single eye-like Cyclops, or without eyes, or without limbs, and even without heads.

Significantly, some of the defects are almost unknown outside textbooks showing the babies born near A-bomb test sites in the Pacific.

## **US prevent scientific exchange**

Dr. Hardan also states:

"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."

Not only are we poisoning the people of Iraq and Afghanistan, but we are making a concerted effort to keep out specialists from other countries who can help. The U.S. Military doesn't want the rest of the world to find out what we have done.

Such relatively swift development of cancers has been reported by doctors in hospitals treating civilians following NATO bombing with DU in Yugoslavia in 1998–1999 and the US military invasion of Iraq using DU for the first time in 1991. Medical experts report that this phenomenon of multiple malignancies from unrelated causes has been unknown until now and is a new syndrome associated with internal DU exposure.

Just 467 US personnel were wounded in the three-week Persian Gulf War in 1990–1991. Out of 580 400 soldiers who served in Gulf War I, 11 000 are dead, and by 2000 there were 325 000 on permanent medical disability. This astounding number of disabled vets means that a decade later, 56 percent of those soldiers who served in the first Gulf War now have medical problems.

## **Tokyo tribunal, guided by the principles of International Criminal Law and International Humanitarian Law, found Bush guilty of war crimes**

Although not reported in the mainstream American press, a recent Tokyo tribunal, guided by the principles of International Criminal Law and International Humanitarian Law, found President George W. Bush guilty of war crimes. On March 14, 2004, Nao Shimoyachi, reported in "The Japan Times" that President Bush was found guilty "for attacking civilians with indiscriminate weapons and other arms," and the "tribunal also issued recommendations for banning Depleted Uranium shells and other weapons that indiscriminately harm people." Although this was a "Citizen's Court" having no legal authority, the participants were sincere in their determination that international laws have been violated and a war crimes conviction is warranted.

Troops involved in actual combat are not the only servicemen reporting symptoms. Four soldiers from a New York Army National Guard company serving in Iraq are among several members of the same company, the 442nd Military Police, who say they have been battling persistent physical ailments that began last summer in the Iraqi town of Samawah.

"I got sick instantly in June," said Staff Sgt. Ray Ramos, a Brooklyn housing cop. "My health kept going downhill with daily headaches, constant numbness in my hands and rashes on my stomach."

## **Uran Medical Research Center: Air, soil and water samples contained "hundreds to thousands of times" the normal levels of radiation**

Dr. Asaf Durakovic, UMRC founder, and nuclear medicine expert examined and tested nine soldiers from the company says that four "almost certainly" inhaled radioactive dust from exploded American shells manufactured with depleted uranium. Laboratory tests revealed traces of two manmade forms of uranium in urine samples from four of the soldiers.

If so, the men – Sgt. Hector Vega, Sgt. Ray Ramos, Sgt. Agustin Matos and Cpl. Anthony Yonnone – are the first confirmed cases of inhaled depleted uranium exposure from the

current Iraq conflict.

The 442nd, made up for the most part of New York cops, firefighters and correction officers, is based in Orangeburg, Rockland County.

Dispatched to Iraq in Easter of 2003, the unit's members had been providing guard duty for convoys, running jails and training Iraqi police. The entire company is due to return home later this month.

"These are amazing results, especially since these soldiers were military police not exposed to the heat of battle," said Dr. Asaf Durakovic, who examined the G.I.s and performed the testing.

In a group of eight U.S. led Coalition servicemen whose babies were born without eyes, seven are known to have been directly exposed to DU dust. In a group (250 soldiers) exposed during the first Gulf war, 67% of the children conceived after the war had birth defects.

Dr. Durakovic's UMRC research team also conducted a three-week field trip to Iraq in October of 2003. It collected about 100 samples of substances such as soil, civilian urine and the tissue from the corpses of Iraqi soldiers in 10 cities, including Baghdad, Basra and Najaf. Durakovic said preliminary tests show that the air, soil and water samples contained "hundreds to thousands of times" the normal levels of radiation.

"This high level of contamination is because much more depleted uranium was used this year than in (the Gulf War of) 1991," Durakovic told The Japan Times.

"They are hampering efforts to prove the connection between Depleted Uranium and the illness," Durakovic said

"They do not want to admit that they committed war crimes" by using weapons that kill indiscriminately, which are banned under international law."

(Note about Dr. Durakovic; First, he was warned to stop his work, then he was fired from his position, then his house was ransacked, and he has also reported receiving death threats. Evidently the U.S. D.O.D is very keen on censoring DU whistle-blowers!)

## **Diagnostic distinction between natural uranium and DU using the technique of TIMS**

Dr. Durakovic, UMRC research associates Patricia Horan and Leonard Dietz, published a unique study in the August 2002 issue of Military Medicine Medical Journal. The study is believed to be the first to look at inhaled DU among Gulf War veterans, using the ultrasensitive technique of thermal ionization mass spectrometry, which enabled them to easily distinguish between natural uranium and DU.

The study, which examined British, Canadian and U.S. veterans, all suffering typical Gulf War Syndrome ailments, found that, nine years after the war, 14 of 27 veterans studied had DU in their urine. DU also was found in the lung and bone of a deceased Gulf War veteran. That no governmental study has been done on inhaled DU "amounts to a massive malpractice," Dietz said in an interview.

## **Small particle size and crystalline structure**

The Japanese began studying DU effects in the southern Iraq in the summer of 2003. They had a Geiger counter which they watched go off the scale on many occasions. During their visit, a local hospital was treating upwards of 600 children per day, many of which suffered symptoms of internal poisoning by radiation. 600 children per day? How many of these children will get cancer and suffer an early and painful death?

"Ingested DU particles can cause up to 1000 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 D.C.

It is this difference in particle size as well as the dust's crystalline structure that make the presence of DU dust in the environment such an extreme hazard, and which differentiates its properties from that of the natural uranium dust that is ubiquitous and to which we all are exposed every day, which seldom reaches such a small size. This point is being stressed, as comparing DU particles to much larger natural ones is misleading.

The U.S. Military and its supporters regularly quote a Rand Corp. Study which uses the natural uranium inhaled by miners.

Particles smaller than 10 microns can access the innermost recesses of lung tissue where they become permanently lodged. Furthermore, if the substance is relatively insoluble, such as the ceramic DU-oxide dust produced from burning DU, it will remain in place for decades, dissolving very slowly into the bloodstream and lymphatic fluids through the course of time. Studies have identified DU in the urine of Gulf War veterans nine years after that conflict, testifying to the permanence of ceramic DU-oxide in the lungs. Thus the effects are far different from natural uranium dust, whose coarse particles are almost entirely excreted by the body within 24 hours.

## **Over 10 trillion doses at 0.34 milligrams per dose are floating around Iraq and Afghanistan**

The military is aware of DU's harmful effects on the human genetic code. A 2001 study of DU's effect on DNA done by Dr. Alexandra C. Miller for the Armed Forces Radiobiology Research Institute in Bethesda, Md., indicates that DU's chemical instability causes 1 million times more genetic damage than would be expected from its radiation effect alone.

Studies have shown that inhaled nano-particles are far more toxic than micro-sized particles of the same basic chemical composition. British toxicopathologist Vyvyan Howard has reported that the increased toxicity of the nano-particle is due to its size.

For example, when mice were exposed to virus-size particles of Teflon (0.13 microns) in a University of Rochester study, there were no ill effects. But when mice were exposed to nano-particles of Teflon for 15 minutes, nearly all the mice died within 4 hours.

"Exposure pathways for depleted uranium can be through the skin, by inhalation, and ingestion," writes Lauren Moret, another DU researcher. "Nano-particles have high mobility and can easily enter the body. 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."

"When inhaled through the nose, nano-particles can cross the olfactory bulb directly into the brain through the blood brain barrier, where they migrate all through the brain," she wrote. "Many Gulf era soldiers exposed to depleted uranium have been diagnosed with brain tumors, brain damage and impaired thought processes. Uranium can interfere with the mitochondria, which provide energy for the nerve processes, and transmittal of the nerve signal across synapses in the brain."

Based on dissolution and excretion rate data, it is possible to approximate the amount of DU initially inhaled by these veterans.

For the handful of veterans studied, this amount averaged 0.34 milligrams. Knowing the specific activity (radiation rate) for DU allows one to determine that the total radiation (alpha, beta and gamma) occurring from DU and its radioactive decay products within their bodies comes to about 26 radiation events every second, or 800 million events each year. At .34 milligrams per dose, there are over 10 trillion doses floating around Iraq and Afghanistan.

How many additional deaths are we talking about? In the aftermath of the first Gulf War, the UK Atomic Energy Authority 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". This was "a theoretical figure", it stressed, that indicated "a significant problem".

The AEA's calculation was made in a confidential memo to the privatized munitions company, Royal Ordnance, dated 30 April 1991. The high number of potential deaths was dismissed as "very far from realistic" by a British defense minister, Lord Gilbert. "Since the rounds were fired in the desert, many miles from the nearest village, it is highly unlikely that the local population would have been exposed to any significant amount of respirable oxide," he said.

These remarks were 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. If the amount of DU ordinance used in the first Gulf War was sufficient to cause 500 000 potential deaths, (had it been used near the populated areas), then what of the nearly six times that amount used in operation Iraqi Freedom, which was used in and near the major towns and cities? Extrapolating the U.K. AEA estimate with this amount gives a figure of potentially 3 million extra deaths from inhaling DU dust in Iraq alone, not including Afghanistan.

This is about 11% of Iraq's total population of 27 million. Dan Bishop, Ph.d chemist for IDUST feels that this estimate may be low, if the long life of DU dust is considered. In Afghanistan, the concentration in some areas is greater than Iraq.

## The suffering of the veterans

What can an otherwise healthy person expect when inhaling the deadly dust? Captain Terry Riordon was a member of the Canadian Armed Forces serving in Gulf War I. He passed away in April 1999 at age 45. Terry left Canada a very fit man who did cross-country skiing and ran in marathons. On his return only two months later he could barely walk.

He returned to Canada in February 1991 with documented loss of motor control, chronic fatigue, respiratory difficulties, chest pain, difficulty breathing, sleep problems, short-term memory loss, testicle pain, body pains, aching bones, diarrhea, and depression.

After his death, depleted uranium contamination was discovered in his lungs and bones. For eight years he suffered his innumerable ailments and struggled with the military bureaucracy and the system to get proper diagnosis and treatment. He had arranged, upon his death, to bequeath his body to the UMRC. Through his gift, the UMRC was able to obtain conclusive evidence that inhaling fine particles of depleted uranium dust completely destroyed his health. How many Terry Riordans are out there among the troops being exposed, not to mention Iraqi and Afghan civilians?

Inhaling the dust will not kill large numbers of Iraqi and Afghan civilians right away, any more than it did Captain Riordan. Rather, what we will see is vast numbers of people who are chronically and severely ill, having their life spans drastically shortened, many with multiple cancers.

Melissa Sterry, another sick veteran, served for six months at a supply base in Kuwait during the winter of 1991–92. Part of her job with the National Guard's Combat Equipment Company "A" was to clean out tanks and other armored vehicles that had been used during the war, preparing them for storage.

She said she swept out the armored vehicles, cleaning up dust, sand and debris, sometimes being ordered to help bury contaminated parts. In a telephone interview, she stated that after researching depleted uranium she chose not to take the military's test because she could not trust the results. It is alarming that Melissa was stationed in Kuwait, not Iraq. Cleaning out tanks with DU dust was enough to make her ill.

## US-UK war alliance: war criminals

In, 2003, the Christian Science Monitor sent reporters to Iraq to investigate long-term effects of depleted uranium. Staff writer Scott Peterson saw children playing on top of a burnt-out tank near a vegetable stand on the outskirts of Baghdad, a tank that had been destroyed by armor-piercing shells coated with depleted uranium. Wearing his mask and protective clothing, he pointed his Geiger counter toward the tank. It registered 1000 times the normal background radiation. If the troops were on a mission of mercy to bring democracy to Iraq, wouldn't keeping children away from such dangers be the top priority?

The laws of war prohibit the use of weapons that have deadly and inhumane effects beyond the field of battle. Nor can weapons be legally deployed in war when they are known to remain active, or cause harm after the war concludes. It is no surprise that the Japanese Court found President Bush guilty of war crimes.

Dr. Alim Yacoub of Basra University conducted an epidemiological study into incidences of malignancies in children under fifteen years old, in the Basra area (an area bombed with DU during the first Gulf War). They found over the 1990 to 1999 period, there was a 242% rise. That was before the recent invasion.

In Kosovo, similar spikes in cancer and birth defects were noticed by numerous international experts, although the quantity of DU weapons used was only a small fraction of what was used in Iraq.

## Field study results from Afghanistan

Verifiable statistics for Iraq will remain elusive for some time, but widespread field studies in Afghanistan point to the existence of a large scale public health disaster. In May of 2002, the UMRC (Uranium Medical Research Center) sent a field team to interview and examine residents and internally displaced people in Afghanistan. The UMRC field team began by first identifying several hundred people suffering from illnesses and medical conditions displaying clinical symptoms which are considered to be characteristic of radiation exposure. To investigate the possibility that the symptoms were due to radiation sickness, the UMRC team collected urine specimens and soil samples, transporting them to an independent research lab in England.

UMRC's Field Team found Afghan civilians with acute symptoms of radiation poisoning, along with chronic symptoms of internal uranium contamination, including congenital problems in newborns. Local civilians reported large, dense dust clouds and smoke plumes rising from the point of impact, an acrid smell, followed by burning of the nasal passages, throat and upper respiratory tract. Subjects in all locations presented identical symptom profiles and chronologies. The victims reported symptoms including pain in the cervical column, upper shoulders and basal area of the skull, lower back/kidney pain, joint and muscle weakness, sleeping difficulties, headaches, memory problems and disorientation.

Two additional scientific study teams were sent to Afghanistan. The first arrived in June 2002, concentrating on the Jalalabad region. The second arrived four months later, broadening the study to include the capital Kabul, which has a population of nearly 3.5 million people. The city itself contains the highest recorded number of fixed targets during Operation Enduring Freedom. For the study's purposes, the vicinity of three major bomb sites were examined. It was predicted that signatures of depleted or enriched uranium would be found in the urine and soil samples taken during the research. The team was unprepared for the shock of its findings, which indicated in both Jalalabad and Kabul, DU was causing the high levels of illness. Tests taken from a number of Jalalabad subjects showed concentrations 400% to 2000% above that for normal populations, amounts which have not been recorded in civilian studies before.

Those in Kabul who were directly exposed to US-British precision bombing showed extreme

signs of contamination, consistent with uranium exposure. These included pains in joints, back/kidney pain, muscle weakness, memory problems and confusion and disorientation. Those exposed to the bombing report symptoms of flu-type illnesses, bleeding, runny noses and blood-stained mucous. How many of these people will suffer a painful and early death from cancer? Even the study team itself complained of similar symptoms during their stay. Most of these symptoms last for days or months.

In August of 2002, UMRC completed its preliminary analysis of the results from Nangarhar. Without exception, every person donating urine specimens tested positive for uranium contamination. The specific results indicated an astoundingly high level of contamination; concentrations were 100 to 400 times greater than those of the Gulf War Veterans tested in 1999.

A researcher reported. "We took both soil and biological samples, and found considerable presence in urine samples of radioactivity; the heavy concentration astonished us. They were beyond our wildest imagination."

## **Fall 2002: 30% of those interviewed in Afghanistan display symptoms of radiation sickness**

In the fall of 2002, the UMRC field team went back to Afghanistan for a broader survey, and revealed a potentially larger exposure than initially anticipated. Approximately 30% of those interviewed in the affected areas displayed symptoms of radiation sickness. New born babies were among those displaying symptoms, with village elders reporting that over 25% of the infants were inexplicably ill.

How widespread and extensive is the exposure? A quote from the UMRC field report reads:

"The UMRC field team was shocked by the breadth of public health impacts coincident with the bombing. Without exception, at every bombsite investigated, people are ill. A significant portion of the civilian population presents symptoms consistent with internal contamination by uranium."

In Afghanistan, unlike Iraq, UMRC lab results indicated high concentrations of Non-depleted Uranium, with the concentrations being much higher than in DU victims from Iraq. Afghanistan was used as a testing ground for a new generation of "bunker buster" bombs containing high concentrations of other uranium alloys.

"A significant portion of the civilian population"? It appears that by going after a handful of terrorists in Afghanistan we have poisoned a huge number of innocent civilians, with a disproportionate number of them being children.

The military has found depleted uranium in the urine of some soldiers but contends it was not enough to make them seriously ill in most cases. Critics have asked for more sensitive, more expensive testing.

## **Italy**

According to an October 2004 Dispatch from the Italian Military Health Observatory, a total of 109 Italian soldiers have died thus far due to exposure to depleted uranium.

A spokesman at the Military Health Observatory, Domenico Leggiero, states "The total of 109 casualties exceeds the total number of persons dying as a consequence of road accidents. Anyone denying the significance of such data is purely acting out of ill faith, and the truth is that our soldiers are dying out there due to a lack of adequate protection against depleted uranium". Members of the Observatory have petitioned for an urgent hearing "in order to study effective prevention and safeguard measures aimed at reducing the death-toll amongst

our serving soldiers".

There were only 3000 Italian soldiers sent to Iraq, and they were there for a short time. The number of 109 represents about 3.6% of the total. If the same percentage of Iraqis get a similar exposure, that would amount to 936 000. As Iraqis are permanently living in the same contaminated environment, their percentage will be higher.

## **The Pentagon and its misinformation machine: They lie and denigrate**

The Pentagon/DoD have interfered with UMRC's ability to have its studies published by managing, a progressive and persistent misinformation program in the press against UMRC, and through the use of its control of science research grants to refute UMRC's scientific findings and destroy the reputation of UMRC's scientific staff, physicians and laboratories.

UMRC is the first independent research organization to find Depleted Uranium in the bodies of US, UK and Canadian Gulf War I veterans and has subsequently, following Operation Iraqi Freedom, found Depleted Uranium in the water, soils and atmosphere of Iraq as well as biological samples donated by Iraqi civilians. Yet the first thing that comes up on Internet searches are these supposed "studies repeatedly showing DU to be harmless."

The technique is to approach the story as a debate between government and independent experts in which public interest is stimulated by polarizing the issues rather than telling the scientific and medical truth. The issues are systematically confused and misinformed by government, UN regulatory agencies (WHO, UNEP, IAEA, CDC, DOE, etc) and defense sector (military and the weapons developers and manufacturers).

Dr. Yuko Fujita, an assistant professor at Keio University, Japan who examined the effects of radioactivity in Iraq from May to June, 2003, said : "I doubt that Iraq is fabricating data because in fact there are many children suffering from leukemia in hospitals," Fujita said. "As a result of the Iraq war, the situation will be desperate in some five to 10 years."

The March 14, 2004 Tokyo Citizen's Tribunal that "convicted" President Bush gave the following summation regarding DU weapons: (This court was a citizen's court with no binding legal authority)

1. Their use has indiscriminate effects;
2. Their use is out of proportion with the pursuit of military objectives;
3. Their use adversely affects the environment in a widespread, long term and severe manner;
4. Their use causes superfluous injury and unnecessary suffering.

Two years ago, President Bush withdrew the United States as a signatory to the International Criminal Court's statute, which has been ratified by all other Western democracies. The White House actually seeks to immunize U.S. leaders from war crimes prosecutions entirely. It has also demanded express immunity from ICC prosecution for American nationals.

## **Conclusions**

If terrorists succeeded in spreading something throughout the U.S. that ended up causing hundreds of thousands of cancer cases and birth defects over a period of many years, they would be guilty of a crime against humanity that far surpasses the Sept. 11th attacks in scope and severity. Although not deliberate, with our military campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, we have done just that. If the physical environment is so unsafe and unhealthy that one

cannot safely breath, then the outer trappings of democracy have little meaning. At least under Saddam, the Iraqi people could stay healthy and conceive normal children. Few Americans are aware that in getting rid of Saddam, we left something much worse in his place.

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