

Depleted Uranium Updates

156.5 Tons of DU Shot Into Iraq During 2003 Invasion

CADU News, by the Campaign against Depleted Uranium and the UK Uranium Weapons Network, in Manchester, England reports that in the 2003 invasion of Iraq, at least 142,000 kilograms of depleted uranium were used by U.S. and UK militaries. In U.S. terms that's about 313,000 pounds of DU, or 156.5 tons.

Pentagon Worried About DU Effects As Early As 1993

In July, Mike Ludwig, an intern at Truthout.org reported on a little-known Pentagon memo by then-Brigadier General Eric Shinseki (now the Secretary of Veterans Affairs) that indicates the military was seriously worried about radioactive contamination by DU and that the Department of Defense had required medical testing for personnel exposed to it.

The August 19, 1993 memo was titled "Review of Draft to Congress – Health and Environmental Consequences of Depleted Uranium in the U.S. Army – Action memorandum."

On July 27, Veterans for Common Sense demanded that Shinseki's department begin comprehensive research on the correlation between chronic illnesses and exposure to depleted uranium during the Gulf War. The issue of Gulf War Syndrome had come up during a House Veterans Affairs subcommittee hearing, and VCS made particular mention of the secretary's 1993 memo at the hearing. Of the 697,000 men and women who served in U.S. warfare in the Persian Gulf between 1990 and 1991, about 250,000 suffer from symptoms of Gulf War Syndrome.

Paul Sullivan, executive director of VCS, told Truthout that the medical tests ordered in the 1993 memo, which also called for personnel to be trained in dealing with contaminated equipment, were canceled after a training video scared soldiers.

VCS has also asked Shinseki to investigate the 2009 termination of a \$75 million research project on Gulf War illnesses at the University of Texas medical center. Last year the VCS filed a Freedom of Information Act request for records of alleged "internal sabotage" of the research and the intentional delaying of treatment, according to Sullivan.



AP photo

Workers in West Valley, NY prepare barrels of radioactive waste for transport to Energy Solutions' dump site in Utah

Waste "Recycling" Failure

West Valley Still Exposing Workers

WEST VALLEY, New York — Work at the West Valley Demonstration Project, 30 miles south of Buffalo, has always been dangerous. Employees have routinely received huge doses of radiation. Contract workers take over when permanent staff reach their quarterly maximum dose limits.

Clean up of the once privately-owned reactor fuel reprocessing site, on 3,345 acres, has been underway since the 1980s and will take another 10 years to complete. The factory separated uranium and plutonium from 630 tons of used military and commercial reactor fuel. Severely contaminated, it was closed in 1972; no area of the site was considered radiation-free including hallways, stairways, lobbies, soil, a nearby river and groundwater.

Today, 38 years later, workers must wear restrictive, highly sophisticated protective gear. Some of the locations on site are so radioactive that only robots can be utilized. Even so, on Aug. 1, a woman was contaminated when moisture seeped through her suit while cleaning a floor. She reportedly underwent decontamination using "soap and water."

It was the second time in less than three months that employees were contaminated. On May 21, four workers were exposed when radioactive waste pipes were being deposited in plastic bags. The property is owned by New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, and the state pays 10 percent of clean up costs and federal taxpayers cover the rest via the Energy Department.

Energy Solutions in Utah and the Nevada Test Site (formerly Envirocare), have received shipments of West Valley's radioactive waste by truck and train. Recovered uranium was sent to Fernald in Ohio, and plutonium was either shipped to Hanford in Washington or stored in a Plutonium Storage Facility nearby. Unprocessed fuel rods were sent to the Idaho National Laboratory. Approximately 20,000 steel drums of low-level waste remains onsite.

— WIVB-TV, and *Business Week & Buffalo News*, Aug. 4, 2010; Oak Ridge Associated Universities, Dose Reconstruction Project for NIOSH, Aug. 17, 2007

"The VA has yet to release any documents about the impeded research," Truthout reported.

Sullivan said that the DU "follow-up" program the VA consistently references was inadequate as it consisted of sporadic studies on only a small fraction of estimated 400,000 veterans exposed to the radioactive heavy metal.

"The VA does not listen to expert scientists. The VA does not even listen to Congress," Sullivan told the subcommittee. "Two decades of inaction have already passed. Gulf War veterans urgently want to avoid the four decades of endless suffering endured by our Vietnam War veterans exposed to Agent Orange."

Japan Strengthens Call for UN Study

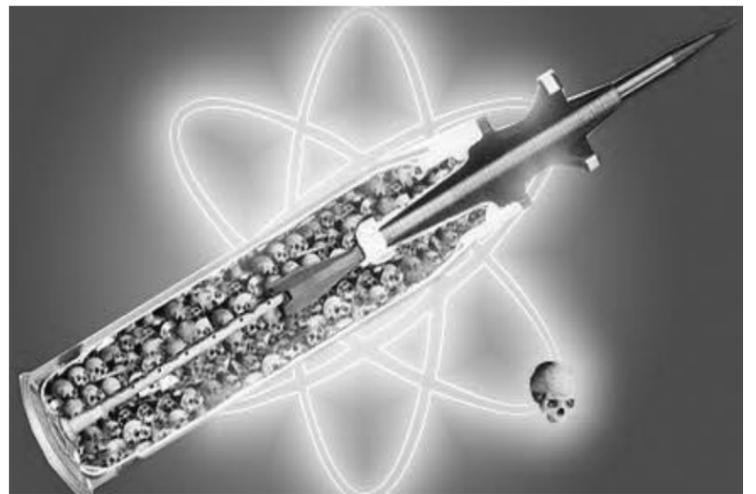
In 2008 the UN General Assembly resolved to solicit from member states official opinions on the effects of the use of depleted uranium weapons. After first submitting a generic dismissal (Japan does not make or use DU), the government this summer sent to the UN a more pointed assessment. It calls for "all relevant international organizations to conduct successive on-site studies and further information gathering including [the] latest scientific findings, with due attention to the opinions and activities of interested NGOs in this field, and to provide their views on the effects that the use of depleted uranium munitions may/can cause on the human body as well as the environment."

Iraqi Cancers "Linked to U.S. Weapons" in TV Special

World News Australia broadcast on August 16 a 30-minute special report produced by SBS Television on increasing numbers of terrible birth abnormalities and children with leukemia in Iraq, with locals blaming depleted uranium weapons used in U.S. attacks. The SBS Dateline special is reported by Fouad Hady, an Iraqi Australian. You can watch the report at: (<http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/1328172/Iraqi-child-cancer-linked-to-US-weapons>) — *JL*

Punjab Poisoning its Children

A small village in Punjab, Northern India, has been the focus of a study into alarming rates of uranium poisoning. In 2008 a visiting physician noticed a spike in the number of severe birth abnormalities and began taking hair, urine and well water samples. A dangerously high level of uranium



was found in all three and many children had 60 times the normal level of uranium. In the two years since the tests, there has been a steady increase in the number of birth defects. Understaffed clinics are filled with children suffering macrocephaly (enlarged heads), microcephaly (small heads), and others whose limbs cannot bend.

The source of the uranium has not been identified. Some scientists have proposed that the ground water may have been contaminated by contact with granite rock 150 miles away. Another possibility is fly ash from coal fired stations which contains concentrated levels of uranium. A new report published by Russia's leading nuclear research institution warns of an increased radiation hazard to people living near coal-fired power stations. Others have alleged that the contamination may have been exacerbated by depleted uranium carried on the wind from Iraq and Afghanistan. At a seminar in Amritsar in April, Admiral Vishnu Bhagwat, a former chief of India's Naval staff, suggested that areas within a 1,000-mile radius of Kabul — including Punjab — may be affected by depleted uranium. Regardless of the source, Punjab officials have been quick to bury the story, even threatening to shut down the clinics that care for the affected children. Though the source may never be known, the dangerous results of exposure to uranium are quite real and have affected Punjab families irrevocably. — *PV*

"Breathable" Plutonium Still Litters Rocky Flats

DENVER, Colorado — The 10-year long, \$7 billion project to, as they say "clean up" Rocky Flats — the now former plutonium bomb factory 16 miles from Denver, Colo. — appears frighteningly inadequate in view of the breathable plutonium that's been identified in on-site soil and in nearby homes.

In August, State Rep. Wes McKinley, a Democrat, announced that plutonium and americium were found in potentially lethal amounts and called on state and federal authorities to delay opening the site as a "national wildlife refuge" pending further tests.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment have claimed that plutonium is not a hazard at Rocky Flats and plan to open the "refuge" to the public for recreation.

A group called the Boston Chemical Data Corp. analyzed the contaminated soil last spring.

Patricia Calhoun reports in the *Denver Westword* that 20 years ago, McKinley was a rancher and teacher from southeastern Colorado, who became "the foreman of the grand jury that reviewed evidence seized in the 1989 FBI raid of [Rocky Flats] which was still manufacturing plutonium triggers for bombs. The grand jury termed the plant 'an ongoing criminal enterprise' and wanted to indict officials with Rockwell International."

Investigative journalist Judy Pasternak reports that while the Energy Department announced the clean up complete in 2005, the department originally said the project would take 65 years and cost \$37 billion.

Pasternak, who interviewed Marco Kaltofen, the head of a Boston lab that identified the plutonium, wrote "The samples were collected in April by the Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Center, which has criticized the quality of the cleanup."

"Plutonium particles were present in dust from a crawl space in an older home near the plant, Kaltofen said."

Kaltofen also said he found traces of plutonium and americium which he called "significant, a huge amount. It would be a good project to check all these older homes," he added.

Writer Kristen Iversen, who will soon publish the book *Full Body Burden: Growing Up in the Shadow of Rocky Flats*, told the Environmental News Service, "If there's plutonium in the dust at one house downwind of Rocky Flats, there's probably plutonium in dust in many other homes, or perhaps even schools or libraries, located in the area known to be contaminated with plutonium released from Rocky Flats."

— Associated Press, Aug. 18; ABC News Denver, AOL News Service report by Judy Pasternak, and the Environment News Service, Aug. 4, 2010

This is now ...

To meet our growing energy needs, and prevent the worst consequence of climate change we'll need to increase our supply of nuclear power. It's that simple.

— Barack Obama, in Lanham, Maryland, announcing \$8 billion in loan guarantees for a new reactor, Feb. 16, 2010

Her Majesty's Astute Endangerment

FASLANE, Scotland — The *Scotland Sunday Herald* obtained reports under freedom of information legislation from the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) regarding Naval Base Clyde and its huge array of safety lapses including radioactive contamination, fires and nuclear accidents.

The Royal Navy identified 167 nuclear safety incidents, 17 leading to radiation releases including one from the nuclear submarine *HMS Torbay* into Gareloch. There have been 27 fires in the past two years alone, with 783 false alarms — about one-third blamed on faulty equipment. The Navy has also been called on the carpet for "shortfalls" in safety during the handling of H-bombs. Oil spills, sewage discharges and asbestos contamination are also on the list of health and environmental breaches. The base contains an aging radioactive waste facility that SEPA is worried about, and the Navy has until 2014 to replace it.

Britain has four *Vanguard*-class submarines carrying Trident missiles. The nuclear powered submarines dock at Coulport on Gareloch. The latest class submarine is under construction at Barrow-in-furness and its namesake, the *Astute*, is just now finishing up a year of sea trials — albeit not so jolly well. The sub is said to be more technically advanced than the space shuttle, but earlier this year had an electrical fire on-board that damaged its bridge fin. In August it returned to port with a broken anchor. Still the sub was expected to be commissioned into Her Majesty's Royal Navy at the end of August, if it is not recalled.

An emergency exercise conducted July 13 at the Barrow-in-Furness shipyard failed several safety requirements. The test revealed that the shipyard has no emergency plans for responding to radiation leaks from on-board reactors, leaving 56,000 workers especially vulnerable to nuclear accidents. The other *Astute* class subs *Ambush*, *Artful* and *Audacious* are all under construction at Barrow at a cost of \$1.5 billion each, five years late and 50 percent over budget. — *The Scotland Herald*, May 16 & July 25; *The Scottish Sun*, Aug. 11; *North West Evening Mail*, Aug. 16; *The Engineer*, Aug 2, 2010