

# White House Sending DU Weapons to Ukraine

The Biden administration will send depleted uranium (or DU) munitions to Ukraine, even though the weapons are radioactive and their use causes contamination hazardous to health and the environment. The armor-piercing munitions made of waste uranium-238 are part of a new military supply donation for Ukraine, according to Reuters, and the DU will be delivered to Ukraine in the coming weeks.

Uranium is extremely hard, a toxic heavy metal almost twice as dense as lead. It becomes “depleted” uranium or “DU” after most of the uranium-235 is separated for use in making nuclear reactor fuel and cores for nuclear weapons.

The U.S. military began testing DU about 40 years ago, and used it as a weapon on a mass scale for the first time in the 1991 bombardment and occupation of Iraq. As late as July 7, 2023 the Pentagon’s website says “DU has fewer risks than natural uranium because it is less radioactive.”

This disinformation appears on the same website (The Pentagon’s “Health Readiness & Combat Support” site) where the military admits that DU munitions and tank armor are contaminated with radioactive and hazardous metals besides uranium, including plutonium, americium, neptunium and technetium. The website notes that even after claiming to have studied the inclusion of the highly radioactive waste materials in the DU munitions, the military doesn’t know how much of today’s DU weapons (30-millimeter shells, 120-mm shells, and tank armor) is spiked with plutonium, etc. Back in the year 2000, when plutonium was first found to have contaminated the Balkans following the U.S./NATO bombings of 1994, 1995, and 1999, the Pentagon said it would find out what percentage of its DU munitions is contaminated with plutonium -- a substance called the most toxic known to science.

The above “Health Readiness & Combat Support” website includes official material about DU. It says in part: “The Department of Defense (DoD) began testing depleted uranium (DU) about 40 years ago, and first used it in a military operation in 1991. It has fewer risks than natural uranium because it is less radioactive. DoD and many other organizations have studied, and continue to study, the health, chemical, radiological and environmental effects and exposures of DU.”

Sydney Young reported in *Harvard International Review* Sept. 22, 2021, that DU “may pose a risk to both soldiers and local civilian populations. When ammunition made from depleted uranium strikes a target, the uranium turns into dust that is inhaled by soldiers near the explosion site. The wind then carries dust to surrounding areas, polluting local water and agriculture.”

“Researcher Al-Azzawi cites studies,” Young reported, “showing that children’s leukemia cases increased by 60 percent between 1990 and 1997 and that birth defects tripled between 1990 and 1998 in Basra, Iraq. Basra experienced massive U.S. bombardment in response to Iraq’s 1990 invasion of Kuwait. Al-Azzawi suggests that depleted uranium used during such conflicts is responsible for the rise in cancer and birth defects in the area.” —*JL*

# Xcel’s Leaks Threaten Mississippi River

*Continued from page 1*

days. Iodine-129 has a half-life of 16 million years. If the NRC official meant iodine-131 — Chandrathil didn’t specify — that isotope decays for 80 days. Neither does xenon-137 just “decay away” as the NRC public affairs officer said. It decays to cesium-137 which takes 300 years to “decay away.” Again Chandrathil didn’t report which isotope of xenon was leaking, Xe-133, Xe-137, or some other.

The Minn. Dept. of Health website report on this even notes, “A conservative assumption in radiation protection is that any radiation exposure could result in an increase in cancer occurrences in the population, with the risk increasing as exposure increases.” However Xcel has said there is “no” health risk to the public as the affected groundwater contains “very low levels” of tritium.

This reassurance is untrue. Even “very low levels” of radiation exposure create a risk as the Health Dept. noted. Radiobiologists all agree that we can no longer speak of a ‘safe’ radiation dose level. And every federal agency that regulates industrial releases and medical uses of ionizing radiation warns that exposure to radiation (external or internal), no matter how small, increases one’s risk of cancer and other illnesses. For example, the Environmental Protection Agency says, “There is no firm basis for setting a ‘safe’ level of exposure above background ...”, “Based on current scientific evidence, any exposure to radiation can be harmful (or can increase the risk of cancer). ... no radiation exposure is completely risk free.” And “[T]here is no level below which we can say an exposure poses no risk.”

Tritium emits ‘beta’ radiation in the form of fast-moving particles, and several sources misreported related facts. The Minn. Dept. of Health said July 21, that beta particles “are too weak to penetrate the

skin,” and the AP reported last March 17 that tritium’s beta radiation “cannot penetrate human skin.”

The Environmental Protection Agency and many other authorities say beta particles are “more penetrating than alpha particles,” and “are capable of penetrating the skin and causing radiation damage.” Dr. Rosalie Bertell in her book *No Immediate Danger* says beta particles can cause serious burns and other skin anomalies, including skin cancer. If beta particles are inhaled or ingested, they can cause biological damage more severe than external exposure inflicts because they can penetrate cell membranes.

In an apparent admission that Xcel has lost control of the underground radioactive plume moving toward the Mississippi, the firm announced August 17 that it would build an “underground metal barrier” between the leaking pipe(s) and the river. Xcel said the steel wall — 40-feet deep and 600 feet long — will take four to eight weeks to install “along the edge of the plant’s boundary with the river,” and is intended to keep Monticello’s contaminated groundwater from reaching the Mississippi River. Authorities have not reported whether the groundwater plume is deeper than 40 feet.

One grim irony of Xcel’s underground wall is that at Japan’s Fukushima-Daiichi — where three identical GE reactors, were destroyed by earthquake damage and meltdowns — the owners tried to retard the flow of groundwater by constructing an underground wall. The Japanese effort failed even after a \$250 million investment. In addition, like at Fukushima where huge steel tanks currently store 1.37 million tons of contaminated wastewater, Xcel said last March that it was “considering building above-ground storage tanks” for its radioactively

## How Weapons Makers Influence the Ukraine War Debate

By Ben Freeman

‘Experts’ from [weapons] industry-funded think tanks are flooding the media, pushing for more arms without disclosing their benefactors.

“To be brutal about it, we need to see masses of Russians fleeing, deserting, shooting their officers, taken captive, or dead. The Russian defeat must be an unmistakably big, bloody shambles. ...to the end, with the utmost urgency, the West should give everything that Ukraine could possibly use,” argues Prof. Eliot Cohen in *The Atlantic*.

What neither Cohen, who also famously pushed for the U.S. invasion of Iraq, nor *The Atlantic*, acknowledge in the article is that most of the weapons Cohen mentions in the article — including long-range missiles, F-16s, and even F-35s — are made by funders of Cohen’s employer, the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

While this might seem like a glaring conflict of interest that, at the very least should be disclosed in the article, a new Quincy Institute brief that I authored, “Defense Contractor-Funded Think Tanks Dominate Ukraine Debate,” shows that this article isn’t an exception; it’s the norm. [The United States’] top foreign policy think tanks are awash in funding from the [weapons] industry. They’ve dominated the media market related to the Ukraine

war, and they seldom if ever disclose that many of the weapons they’re recommending the U.S. give to Ukraine are made by their funders.

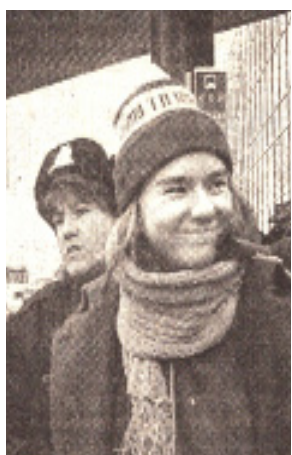
In short, when you hear a think tank scholar comment on the Ukraine war, chances are you’re hearing from someone whose employer is funded by those who profit from war, but you’ll probably never know it. That’s because 78 percent of the top-ranked foreign policy think tanks receive funding from the defense [weapons] sector.

These and other think tanks that receive considerable defense [military] sector funding have publicly advocated for more militarized U.S. responses to the Ukraine war and, compared to their counterparts at think tanks that accept little or no defense [weapons] sector funding, have dominated the media landscape related to the Ukraine war.

Media outlets were, similarly, not transparent about the conflicts of interest of the experts they were citing. In fact, none of the media mentions analyzed in the brief were accompanied by disclosures of defense [weapons] industry funding of think tanks that were, at times, recommending policies that could financially benefit their funders.

— *Ben Freeman, a Research Fellow at the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, wrote this piece for Space Alert!*

## To our readers and supporters,



Fundraising off of police mug shots has been successful for some high-powered celebrities lately, so Nukewatch has joined the bandwagon to appeal to your pocketbooks. Co-directors Kelly Lundeen, left, and John LaForge, right, have faced booking cameras a time or two, not for stealing state secrets, tax evasion, paying hush money, or trying to rig elections — just for nonviolent resistance to nuclear madness.

Two long-term supporters recently sent us a total of \$2,500 to kick start our fundraising effort to recoup a \$25,000 deficit that accrued last year due to a down-turn in donations likely brought on by the unemployment & early retirement forced by the pandemic, and by the galloping inflation in the cost of food, fuel, utilities, and everything else.

Please send a donation today to help keep Nukewatch on the job.

Thanks very much.

