NUKEWATCH QUARTERLY

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News & Information on Nuclear Weapons, Reactors, Radioactive Waste & Nonviolent Resistance

Uranium Found in Bones of Fallujah Survivors

U.S. Depleted Uranium Munitions Blamed

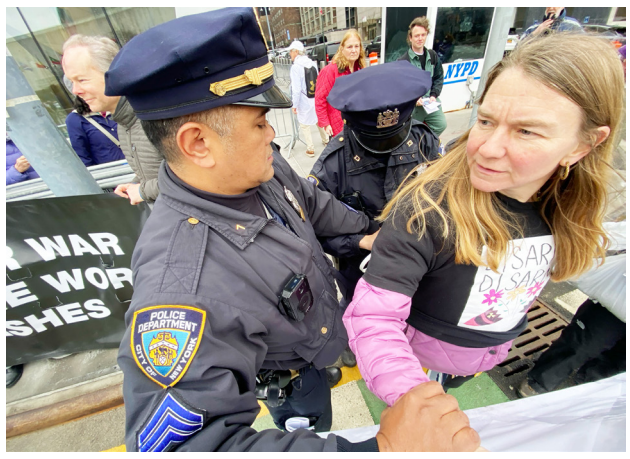
A new study reports that among people who returned to bombarded homes and neighborhoods in Fallujah, Iraq, following the 2003 U.S. bombardment and invasion, bone sampling detected uranium in the bones of 29% of study participants. Researchers from Brown University's Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs report that investigators "have never before detected uranium in bones in vivo: in vivo bone XRF [X-ray fluorescence] sampling is groundbreaking in identifying uranium exposure among living populations."

The May 25, 2025 study, "Lessons from Fallujah," also notes that, "Our findings support prior research which has demonstrated that those who are first at the scenes of war-damaged areas may be at a higher risk of reproductive health harms, and that Fallujah's population faced a 17-fold increase in birth anomalies and myriad other health problems linked with the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq."

The United States used tons of so-called "depleted uranium" munitions in its March 2003 bombardment and invasion of Iraq and also during the 1991 Gulf War in Iraq and Kuwait. The shells are made of uranium-238, a toxic and radioactive heavy metal waste left from the production of nuclear weapons and uranium fuel for reactors.

The report found in part: "The presence of uranium in residents' bone sampling may be consistent with the well-documented widespread use of depleted uranium weapons in the 1990s during the U.S.-led Gulf War on Iraq, and in the 2000s: investigations have found that 116,000 kilograms [116 tonnes] of depleted uranium were used by U.S. and allied forces during the initial invasion of Iraq in 2003."

"Fallujah," original artwork by invadergirl.



Nukewatch's Kelly Lundeen was arrested with 16 other abolitionists including Frida Berrigan whose article follows at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations in New York, demanding that the U.S. join the nuclear weapons ban treaty. See report, p. 3. Photo: Ellen Grady.

Xcel's String of Radioactive Releases

Utility's Dirty Record at Monticello

Xcel Energy, Inc., the giant utility and natural gas delivery firm based in Minneapolis, Minn., has more than 5.8 million customers across eight states. The company's PR says it will be carbon neutral by 2050, and that its nuclear power operations are "safe" and "clean" — even after its 829,000-gallon leak of highly radioactive cooling water in late 2022. As if such an industrial giant cares about nature, its website says, "We're building a future powered by clean, reliable, affordable energy."

In fact, Xcel's reactors are expensive, unreliable — being regularly shut down by mishaps or refueling — and produce dirty, deadly, long-lived radioactive wastes every day. Xcel's three old reactors in Minnesota, like all reactors everywhere, routinely release radioactive gases and liquids to the air and to water bodies.[1]

And Xcel's reactor operations have a long history of both accidental and deliberate radioactive releases. Many of Xcel's radiation accidents and intentional dispersals have been reported in news and regulatory reports, cited here. They are worth noting in view of the company's pro-nuclear, greenwashing PR.

• On March 19, 2025, when the reactor was roaring at 97 percent power, its pressure vessel water level dropped and caused an unplanned emergency reactor shutdown.[2] The cause of the cooling water loss is "under investigation." The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) reported that before the shutdown, "a single feedwater pump tripped which would lower [the] reactor water level." Reactor expert David Lochbaum of the Union of Concerned Scientists wrote about this incident: "The Three Mile Island-2 accident was initiated when a condensate cleanup system miscue tripped a feedwater pump." *(NRC Event Report No. 57618, Monticello; David Lochbaum, email to Nukewatch, March 20, 2025)*

• On December 14, 2023, Xcel was fined $14,000 by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

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Uranium Mining, Milling, and Ablation, Oh My!

By Leona Morgan

In November 2023, from the other side of the planet, then President Biden announced that the United States would commit to tripling nuclear power by 2050, claiming it's a solution to climate change, thereby igniting a new wave of uranium interests and continued resource colonialism worldwide. Since then, more than 30 countries have followed suit, prompting a new uranium boom, or more likely a new uranium bubble.

Uranium is a necessary component for both nuclear energy and weapons. From cradle to grave, fossil fuels are used for production and transport of nuclear materials. Because the carbon output of front-end and back-end processes are not counted in the carbon footprint of nuclear development, states have been passing new laws proclaiming that nuclear is a "carbon-free" or "clean energy" resource — fueling this nuclear propaganda fire.

Trump has issued several executive orders pushing for bad energy projects including more nuclear, as well as shrinking National Monuments and fast-tracking mines. This puts all communities near uranium deposits and abandoned uranium mines (AUMs) at risk of new and continued radioactive contamination and exposures.

See Mining, milling, ablation, p. 7

Who Has Time to Think About Nuclear Weapons?

By Frida Berrigan

Nuclear weapons might be low on the list of most people's concerns right now, but resisting them has never been more important.

"Pretty far from the pulse." That was the comment someone on social media wrote below a photo of me getting arrested at an anti-nuclear protest near the United Nations in early March. Despite being strangely immune to my winning smile and pooh-poohing someone else's work and passion to perhaps feel a bit superior, that person wasn't wrong. After all, who has time to think about nuclear weapons when there's so much else to worry about: Trump-Musk's kleptocracy and government-busting, the daily fresh hell of Trump-Vance's war on woke or the rise of white nationalists. Nuclear weapons — the most powerful and destructive weapon in the world — are not even on most people's list of top 10 fears or top 10 causes they care about.

Unfortunately, this lack of interest doesn't mean that nuclear weapons have somehow auto-disarmed. Thankfully, there is a serious, militant, and ever burgeoning international movement — mostly from the Global South — that is working toward nuclear abolition and that has led to the creation of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The treaty came out of grassroots organizing initiated by the nations most affected by nuclear weapons every day. It is no small feat that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons has now been signed and ratified by half the world's governments. Sadly (but not surprisingly), the United States — the world's largest nuclear power and only country to use nuclear weapons in war — has yet to sign on.

And that's the reason I was in New York City on March 5, standing on First Avenue and 45th Street,

See Think about nuclear weapons, p. 3