

Depleted Uranium — the stuff of nightmares

American and British forces have used depleted uranium (DU) shells in Iraq in 1991 and in the current invasion. They have deliberately flouted a United Nations resolution which classifies the munitions as illegal weapons of mass destruction.

DU contaminates land and air, causes severe health effects, including death among the soldiers using the weapons, the armies they target and civilians.

"DU is the stuff of nightmares," Doug Rokke says. "It is toxic, radioactive and pollutes for 4500 million years. It causes lymphoma, neuro-psychotic disorders and short-term memory damage. In semen, it causes birth defects and trashes the immune system."

Professor Rokke says: "There is a moral point to be made here. This war was about Iraq possessing illegal weapons of mass destruction -- yet we are using weapons of mass destruction ourselves. Such double-standards are repellent."

DU has been blamed for the effects of Gulf War syndrome -- typified by chronic muscle and joint pain, fatigue and memory loss -- among 200,000 US soldiers after the 1991 conflict.

It is also cited as the most likely cause of the 'increased number of birth deformities and cancer in Iraq' following the first Gulf War. 'Cancer appears to have increased between seven and 10 times and deformities between four and six times,' according to a UN subcommission.

The Pentagon has admitted that 320 metric tons of DU were left on the battlefield after the first Gulf War, although Russian military experts say 1,000 metric tons is a more accurate figure.

A UK Atomic Energy Authority report said that some 500,000 people would die before the end of this century, due to radioactive debris left in the desert.

The use of DU has also led to birth defects in the children of Allied veterans and is believed to be the cause of the 'worrying number of anophthalmos cases -- babies born without eyes' in Iraq. Only one in 50 million births should be anophthalmic, yet one Baghdad hospital had eight cases in just two years. Seven of the fathers had been exposed to American DU anti-tank rounds in 1991.

A study of Gulf War veterans showed that 67% had children with severe illnesses, missing eyes, blood infections, respiratory problems and fused fingers.



Professor Doug Rokke

Professor Rokke calls on the US and UK to “recognise the immoral consequences of their actions” and recommends:

- 1. All individuals who may have inhaled, ingested, or had wound contamination must receive medical assessment and treatment for adverse health effects.**
- 2. All depleted uranium penetrator fragments, contaminated equipment, and oxide contamination must be removed and disposed of to prevent further adverse health and environmental effects.**
- 3. The use of depleted uranium munitions must be banned.**