



Depleted Uranium 5/8/2003

Depleted Uranium (DU) is a waste product of the process that produces enriched uranium for use in atomic weapons and nuclear power plants. Much like natural uranium, it is both a toxic metal and a radioactive substance. Over a billion pounds of DU exists in the United States and must be safely stored or disposed of by the Department of Energy. With its half-life of 4.5 billion years, DU's radioactivity effectively lasts forever.

DU is so abundant the government gives it away to arms manufacturers. Because it is extremely dense--1.7 times as dense as lead--when turned into a metal DU can be used to make a shell that easily penetrates steel. In addition it is pyrophoric--that is, when it strikes steel, heat from the friction causes it to burn.

When DU burns, it spews tiny particles of poisonous and radioactive uranium oxide in aerosol form, which can then travel for miles in the wind. Humans can ingest or inhale the small particles. Even one particle, when lodged in a vital organ--which is most likely to happen from inhalation-- can cause illnesses from headaches to cancer.

The Pentagon tested DU shells at various sites around the U.S. and used it in combat for the first time against Iraq during the 1991 Gulf War. It was very effective in destroying Iraqi tanks, as well as their occupants and anyone in the area. At least 600,000 pounds of DU and uranium dust was left around Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia by U.S. and British forces during that war.

Although the U.S. government and military continue to minimize the environmental and health dangers from depleted- uranium weapons, even they have to admit these dangers exist.

DU is also considered at least a contributing cause to the 130,000 reported cases of "Gulf War Syndrome." The chronic symptoms of this ailment range from sharp increases in cancers to memory loss, chronic pain, fatigue and birth defects in veterans' children.

From the book [Depleted Uranium: Metal of Dishonor](#), by the International Action Center

Cluster Bombs

Cluster bombs are one of the most savage weapons in the arsenal of the United States military.

Each cluster bomb is composed of 200 to 700 bomblets. When each bomblet explodes it fragments into about 300 pieces of jagged steel — sending out virtual blizzards of deadly shrapnel.

People are decapitated, arms, legs, hands and feet are severed from their bodies — anyone and anything alive in the immediate vicinity is shredded into a bloody mess.

Cluster bombs were used by American/NATO forces on civilian and military people in Yugoslavia in 1999 and Afghanistan in 2001, and from the Gulf War in 1991 to the Iraq War recently.

Once released from a U.S. Air Force or Navy jet, cluster bombs fall for a pre-set amount of time or distance before their dispensers open, spreading the bomblets widely so they can effectively kill people over a wide area.

American pilots routinely fly at high altitudes to avoid anti-aircraft fire as they drop their cluster bombs. This makes the bombing fairly indiscriminate, which means that there is much damage to civilians in any attempt to hit specific military targets

About 10% to 16% percent of the bomblets do not immediately explode, leaving quite a disaster waiting for post-war civilians. Thus, cluster bombs have much the same effect as landmines, which are banned from military use for many of the same reasons.