

Uranium Coverup 02/21 - Introduction

The concept of toxic-radioactive warfare dates back to World War II when air attacks with uranium oxide aerosols were considered a realistic threat.

Since then, the US has developed depleted uranium (DU) ammunition (for example, the bibliography of Loewenstein [1992]). Depleted uranium (DU) became a contentious political-environmental issue after US, UK and other countries' involvement in wars in the Persian Gulf and the Balkans. Leading scientists in the area of radiation and its consequences have joined with an increasing number of victims of DU weaponry (including former combatants and civilians), and have squared off against the governments that have developed and used, or sanctioned the use of, these weapons.

The "Kosovo" DU scandal in 2000/2001 saw tools of information warfare employed to cover-up use of uranium non-atomic weapons, including intimidation of vocal victims of DU, independent researchers, and activists in the West and former Soviet block countries. A consequential information warfare and the politics regarding DU is tracked by the growing number of concerned groups, including, for example, DU-Watch (www.du-watch.org). Contributed to by many individuals, this material precipitated propaganda analyses presented to international conferences in Manchester in November 2000 [Bein] and in Prague a year later [Bein and Zoric]. A recent article describes information warfare in the context of war propaganda constructed around the "Osama-WMD" theme [Chossudovsky, 2003].

UK researcher Dai Williams, who substantially expanded the understanding of uranium weapons and their political cover-up, has posted a number of essential materials at www.eoslifework.co.uk. For example, in 1997, a US Air Force mission plan indicated a new generation of hard target guided weapons with warheads from 120 kg to 10 t that would use "dense metal" to double their penetration effect. Misinformation and cover-ups of these weapons exhibit patterns similar to those employed for DU armour-piercers. Williams writes: "The principle that uranium (depleted or not) is used in some guided weapons, as well as anti-tank penetrators, is now established by statements from Jane's, [US secretary of defense] Donald Rumsfeld and the UK Ministry of Defence. The question now is not 'Has Uranium been used in guided weapons?' but 'Which ones, how many, when and where?'"

The findings of research into the effects of DU and other weaponry containing radiation but not causing nuclear explosions (which as a whole can be referred to as radiological weaponry) are indisputable. Even a cursory review of existing norms of the laws and customs of war (humanitarian law) supports the conclusion that uranium weaponry of any type is so patently illegal that the discussion should really focus on bringing to justice those who have used it and redirecting action towards the victims of these weapons. But the international community still confronts the "denial and deflect" policies of the users.

Why this quest to cover-up uranium weapons and misrepresent their health and environmental effects? The paper seeks to answer the question step-by-step. Part 1 briefly sets out the science of radiological weapons, and summarizes their hazards. It then sets out a digest of official documents proving that the authorities responsible for uranium contamination knew about the risks involved – the principal reason they suppressed the evidence. Part 2 overviews humanitarian law relating to weaponry and the consequences of violations, including the duty to condemn such weaponry, the duty to compensate victims (redress), and the duty to clean up. Understanding of this clearly shows why those responsible

think they have to cover-up that they knowingly developed and used "illegal" weapons. Rather than face those consequences, they misstate, mislead, and misinform. Part 3 analyses the details of the cover-ups with a view on exposing the methods and tactics and providing a way to counter the damage caused by the cover-ups.

(c) Copyright Piotr Bein and Karen Parker, 2003. All rights reserved.

Permission is granted to post this text on non-commercial community internet sites, provided the source and the URL are indicated, the paper remains intact and the copyright note is displayed.

To publish this text in printed and/or other forms, including commercial internet sites and excerpts, contact Piotr Bein at piotr.bein@imag.net and Karen Parker at ied@igc.org