

## Uranium Coverup 16/21 - Deny, delay, deceive

Covering up the effects of controversial weapons by the governments has a history. For example, US Newswire reported on October 30, 2002, that former defense secretary Robert S. McNamara and 10 others were defendants named in two first-of-their-kind class action lawsuits for allegedly covering up medical records without which several hundred thousands of veterans of atomic, biological and chemical warfare testing, and families of deceased, cannot receive benefit for the long-term health effects.

Selected organizations play a key role in covering up the radiological risk. ICRP is responsible for prevalence of invalid models of risk to human health from internal, low-level radiation sources like uranium fine particles. Since 1959, IAEA, the only UN agency serving a private sector (nuclear industry) has a monopoly on dealing with radiation aspects of uranium health effects, leaving to WHO the toxic aspect. This is a deliberate institutional tool of control and cover-up of irradiation issues around the world.

DU propaganda tactics follow 3 d's: deny, delay, deceive. Neither a NATO country nor the World Health Organization (WHO) have carried out any epidemiological studies of either soldiers or civilians exposed in uranium wars. This guarantees no confirmation or discovery of the health effects of uranium weapons. Several governments in the UN must have joined to prevent a post-Gulf War DU study in Iraq. The Iraqi government formally invited WHO to investigate uranium contamination and health effects, but the US put serious pressure on the WHO to cancel a full-fledged study. When a draft resolution passed through a committee at the General Assembly that would have mandated a specific investigation, the US secured enough (but barely enough) "no" votes to cancel the initiative. A planned visit by Justice Sik Yuen in 2002 was delayed by a heavy increase in bombings in the southern "no fly" zone.

Attempts by the UN Balkans Task Force to include DU in its post-conflict assessments were also subverted by delay and deception before the UNEP study could start, and reports were manipulated by the director, Klaus Töpfer, on instructions from his Pentagon handlers [Parsons, 2001]. A WHO health study in Bosnia began concurrently with a UNEP DU-site study in 2002, i.e. 8 years after DU weapons were first used there. As in previous uranium wars, the risk of DU in "Kosovo" was absolutely denied at first, although in July 1999 a NATO document warned KFOR countries about the toxicity of DU weapons. Even that warning was late, as KFOR and UN personnel entered Kosovo 2nd week of June 1999. Efforts by the UN deputy high commissioner for refugees, Frederick Barton, to make the civilian population aware of the risks of contamination met with resistance from Kosovo Albanian politicians, NATO and the UN Mission in Kosovo.

NATO released Operation Allied Force DU-site data well over a year late, understating the tonnage of DU. NATO delayed for 16 months the necessary target information and access for monitors of the "Kosovo" sites (which included Montenegro and southern Serbia). Still, there were typing mistakes and ambiguities for several locations in the NATO data [Bein and Zoric, 2001]. For Bosnia, NATO DU-site data, also incomplete, appeared 5 to 6 years after the fact. UNEP measured radioactivity at 14 sites in Bosnia, but only at 2 of the 8 sites around Sarajevo marked "unknown" on NATO list. Sarajevo medical professional Dr. Trifko Guzina revealed the domicile of hundreds of Bosnian patients – those already dead and those fighting cancer seven years after the bombing [Patriot, July 22, 2002]. Was there a correlation with the "unknown" locations. Dr. Guzina said that Sarajevo suburbs were bombed in NATO exercises.

UNEP could determine the locations, if they wanted to.

NATO did not let UNEP visit some sites in Kosovo and Bosnia. UNEP teams only went to NATO-approved sites and were banned from some important sites.. The sites may be in drop areas of cluster bombs and other weapons that contained uranium. Pentagon admitted that their specialists visited the approved sites a number of times before UNEP was let in. It is plausible that UNEP discovered only low contamination levels because Pentagon carried out some cleanups in advance. Observers believe that uranium hard-target weapons were dropped against deeply buried Yugoslav defenses in Kosovo [Parsons, 2001]. Despite a warning from Williams, UNEP did not test bomb or missile targets in their second study in Serbia and Montenegro in the fall of 2001. At one "DU" site in Montenegro NATO indicated shelling an old bunker with 30 mm rounds twice. The bunker was demolished in one of the attacks. UNEP discovered widespread, high-level radioactive contamination, unlike at any other DU site. DU shells alone would not be able to ruin a concrete bunker. A trial of a uranium bunker-buster is suspected. Yugoslav authorities excavated the soil and shipped it to nuclear waste storage at Vinca.

After NATO finally admitted the use of DU munitions in Kosovo, a barrage of lies, half-truths and nonsense attempted to defend the toxic-radioactive substance. Similar phases could be traced on the issue of U236, plutonium, and other extremely hazardous, illegal contents in DU. However, very few independent observers and NGO's knew about different uranium weapons under continuous development and use since the Gulf War, if not earlier.

We observe the "deny" phase regarding radiological uranium weapons other than DU armour-piercers. Access for investigators in Afghanistan has been delayed for 10 months, and then it was limited, as on DU battlefields. The UNEP started planning environmental surveys in Afghanistan in December 2001. Despite earlier reports from Williams, on August 28, 2002, survey co-ordinator Peter Zahler (who joined UNEP in May from the USA) said UNEP had no specific plans to investigate uranium contamination. Bomb and missile targets are conspicuously absent from both UNEP Balkans DU studies. Formal queries in the UK parliament returned a denial. No monitoring of US and UK weapons dropped on Iraq's no-fly zone was done, while at the same time, under US pressure, the "international community" demanded access for weapons inspectors to Iraq. The integrity of UNEP environmental monitoring for uranium contamination appears to be compromised by external pressures.

The US military, on the other hand, hinted discovery of "some uranium warheads" in al-Qaeda caves, but without indicating the source of the weapons. It seems that a campaign of denials regarding uranium non-nuclear weapons is underway within a broader campaign for acceptability of weapons that contaminate with low-level radiation. Statements by US government about plans to develop nuclear penetrating bombs, threats of terrorist radiological bombs, and recent warning of potential first strike nuclear attacks by the US and UK play down potential hazards of "conventional" uranium weapons. The rhetoric may be aimed at altering the threshold of acceptability for radiological weapons systems, since nuclear "bunker busters" (the B61-11's) were tested in 1997. A nuclear strike makes little sense when existing systems can destroy deeply buried WMD, unless the goal is to shake underground installations with a nuclear blast.

(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](mailto:piotr.bein@imag.net) and Karen Parker at [ied@igc.org](mailto:ied@igc.org)