



## **MEDIA RELEASE 30 July 2006**

### **Depleted uranium weapons pose threat to Lebanese civilians**

Depleted uranium bombs and weapons, now being deployed by Israel, pose a new threat to the civilian population of Lebanon, according to the Victorian Peace Network (VPN).

"There is now clear evidence that depleted uranium (DU) weapons are being used in Lebanon, despite them being classified by the United Nations as illegal weapons of mass destruction," said VPN spokesperson David Spratt.

"The future long-term health problems associated with poisoning by depleted uranium residues -- including cancer, kidney failure and neurological problems -- is now a real threat for Lebanese civilians, even though the damage being done now may not become transparent for years to come."

"If the Australian government is concerned about the fate of Lebanese civilians and Lebanese-Australians still in the war zone, this is one more reason to put their efforts into joining the call for an immediate ceasefire."

"The literature of the adverse effects of DU is credible and widespread, including the Royal Society of England and recently-published expert research."

Mr Spratt said early editions of the UK Guardian on 15 July published a picture by David Silverman taken near the Lebanese border showing Israeli soldiers loading DU shells into tanks, but it was subsequently replaced in later editions. (Getty Images #71440735)

On 24 July, Dr. Doug Rokke, the former Director of the U.S. Army Depleted Uranium project said that the delivery of at least 100 GBU 28 bunker busters bombs containing depleted uranium warheads by the United States to Israel for use against targets in Lebanon will result in additional radioactive and chemical toxic contamination with consequent adverse health and environmental effects. In a letter to President Bush, Prime Minister Blair, and Prime Minister Olmert, Dr Rokke said the use of DU weapons was "a crime against humanity". Dr Rokke is himself very sick from DU poisoning he received in Iraq in 1991.

DU is a byproduct of the United States' nuclear fuel cycle, which sources much of its uranium from Australia.

Mr Spratt said that Australia, wishing to avoid a new Agent Orange catastrophe, has quietly taken a number of decisions not to use DU weapons or armour because of fears of future health problems, including removing DU armour from the Abrams M1A1 tank.

"If Australia has these concerns about DU, how can it support its use in Lebanon? This is another reason to stop this war now."

**More information David Spratt 0417070099**



*This photo by David Silverman was taken on 14 July 2006 near the Lebanese border. It is one of a series showing Israeli soldiers loading DU shells into tanks. Image #71440735 **Title:** Israeli Military Operates Against Hezbollah Militants*

## **DEPLETED URANIUM AND HEALTH: FACT SHEET**

\* DU munitions are classified by the UN as illegal weapons of mass destruction.

\* The Australian Defence Forces delayed receiving its purchase of second-hand US Abrams tanks until their DU-hardened armory was replaced. On 10 March 2004 then-defence Minister Robert Hill, in announcing the decision to purchase the Abrams M1A1 tank, said that the government had decided "not to get the depleted uranium armour" and "we don't have a plan to use projectiles that are made with depleted uranium".

\* In March 2005 the Australian army sent a hazardous materials survey team to southern Iraq to assess the risk from DU residue to Australian soldiers who were to be deployed. Lieutenant-Colonel Roger Noble, commander of the force being sent, said at the time that: "We have a set of rules in place to keep the soldiers from places where there appears to be a (DU) threat."

\* In 2004, a special report published by eminent scientist Leuren Moret named depleted uranium as the definitive cause of the 'Gulf War Syndrome'. ("Dirty bombs, dirty missiles, dirty bullets: A death sentence here and abroad" by Leuren Moret, [www.sfbayview.com/081804/Depleteduranium081804.shtml](http://www.sfbayview.com/081804/Depleteduranium081804.shtml)). Out of the 580,400 soldiers who served in the 1991 Gulf War, by the year 2000 there were 325,000 on Permanent Medical Disability. Within a decade of their service, 56% of those soldiers who served have some form of permanent medical problems.

\* The UK Herald Defence Correspondent Ian Bruce reported on 2 October 2003 that the British "MoD is now spending £170m to buy tungsten-cored shells to replace its stocks of controversial DU." ([www.theherald.co.uk/news/1773-print.shtml](http://www.theherald.co.uk/news/1773-print.shtml))

\* The U.S. Armed Forces Radiobiology Research Institute has found that DU produces literally one million times as much chromosome damage as would be predicted from its radioactivity alone (J Inorg Biochem. 2002 Jul 25; 91(1): 246-52), and that it causes a form of "delayed reproductive death," which doesn't cease like exposure to simple radioactivity does (J Environ Radioact. 2003; 64(2-3): 247-59.)

\* The U.S. military has admitted that DU is "both neoplastically transforming and genotoxic" (Radiat Prot Dosimetry. 2002; 99(1-4): 275-8.) Dr. Albrecht Schott of Germany found that damage to chromosomes in the white blood cells of Gulf War veterans was about five times greater than the rest of the population (Radiat. Prot. Dosimetry, 2003;103(3):211-9.)

\* "Depleted uranium internal contamination presents a potential neurotoxic, endocrine, reproductive, nephrotoxic, and mutagenic hazard." (Military Medicine Vol.167, Aug. 2002. For more: [www.mapw.org.au/mapw-policy/03-11uranium.html](http://www.mapw.org.au/mapw-policy/03-11uranium.html))

\* 1993 Pentagon document says "When soldiers inhale or ingest DU dust they incur a potential increase in cancer risk." ("Depleted Uranium Symptoms Match US Report As Fears Spread," Peter Beaumont, The Observer, 14 January 2001)

\* A U.S. Army training manual requires anyone who comes within 25 meters of DU-contaminated equipment to wear respiratory and skin protection. ("Iraqi Cancer, Birth Defects Blamed on US Depleted Uranium," Seattle Post-Intelligencer, 12 November 2002)

\* The U.S. Army Environmental Policy Institute admitted: "If DU enters the body, it has the potential to generate significant medical consequences." ("US To Use Depleted Uranium," BBC News, 18 March 2003)

\* The Institute also stated that, if the troops were to realize what they had been exposed to, "the financial implications of long-term disability payments and healthcare costs would be excessive." (US Army Environmental Policy Institute: Health and Environmental Consequences of Depleted Uranium in the U.S. Army, Technical Report, June 1995)

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