



Veterans For Peace

Uranium Weapons, Cluster Munitions, and Land Mines Working Group

Depleted Uranium Basics DU: Your Body—Your Offspring

Why Care About Depleted Uranium (DU)? Depleted uranium is a radioactive hazard and a toxic heavy metal, both poisonous to all living things through ingestion or inhalation of contaminated air, water, or food. It can cause birth defects and genetic changes. Wherever it is made, transported, or used, depleted uranium will remain, permanently. It is a growth industry worldwide, in both military and civilian applications.

What Is Depleted Uranium? DU is a by-product of enriching natural uranium for nuclear reactors and nuclear weapons. The name is deceptive: it is uranium, but neither depleted nor harmless. The US government continues to deny the long-lasting hazards of these weapons in order to avoid legal liability. By the government's own definition, a DU weapon is a "radioactive material deployed by a conventional explosive." DU is still in military use, regardless of international prohibitions.

How Is Depleted Uranium (DU) a Health Hazard? Uranium is radioactive for billions of years. DU may also contain other lethal elements, and its deadly emissions increase over time. DU munitions are primarily U-238, which emits alpha particles, but after a month this becomes alpha, beta, and gamma radiation. Harmful effects of DU exposure can involve kidneys, brain, heart, and many other vital organs, as well as birth anomalies and infertility. In addition, it is a toxic heavy metal, a cumulative poison, like lead, but worse. The US government obscures the extreme danger while emphasizing the misleading term "depleted," which only means DU is about 40% less radioactive than uranium found in nature.

Where Has Depleted Uranium Been Used? DU "penetrator" rounds were used in the 1991 Persian Gulf War, Bosnia, Kosovo, Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Ukraine, and Palestine, by the US, NATO, and Israel. Nations that use DU munitions still downplay the hazards, and increasing manufacture, use and export by the US continues, even while scientists have demonstrated serious health and environmental damage. The US and UK still deny there are any adverse long-term effects on people or the environment. The UN has declared the use of DU munitions inhumane. Our VFP working group, with the International Coalition to Ban Uranium Weapons, is working to stop production, sales, trafficking, storage, testing, and use of DU.

For more info refer to: <https://www.veteransforpeace.org/our-work/working-groups/du-cluster-bombs-and-land-mine-working-group>, or contact duworkinggroup@proton.me