

FRIENDLY FIRE

The International Coalition to Ban Uranium Weapons

Issue 4 December 2006

Welcome

Welcome to the newsletter of the International Coalition to Ban Uranium Weapons (ICBUW). Friendly Fire is published three times a year and collates the work of the 15 disarmament organisations from four continents who are working together to implement a global ban on the manufacture, sale and use of uranium weapons. Any submissions or queries about content or policy should be directed to office@banuraniumweapons.org. For more information on ICBUW visit www.bandepleteduranium.org. To subscribe: info@bandepleteduranium.org.

European Parliament Makes Second Call For DU Ban

By ICBUW



On the anniversary of last year's historic vote for a moratorium leading to a ban on DU weapons, the European Parliament adopted a resolution in which they called: "upon the EU and its Member States to work hard to ensure that the scope of Protocol III to the CCW on Incendiary Weapons is expanded in order to prevent the further use of white phosphorus shells against military and civilian targets and to stop the use of (depleted) uranium warheads."

Last year's vote for a ban came after two preceding votes calling for a moratorium. MEPs have suggested that all three previous votes came as a direct result of lobbying by ICBUW.

Interestingly, last month's vote calls for Protocol III of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) to be expanded to include DU. Protocol III, signed in October 1980, places limitations on the use of incendiary weapons. These are currently defined as: any weapon or munition which is primarily designed to set fire to objects or to cause burn injury to persons through the action of flame, heat, or combination thereof, produced by a chemical reaction of a substance delivered on the target. Incendiary weapons can take the form of, for example, flame throwers, fougasses, shells, rockets, grenades, mines, bombs and other containers of incendiary

substances.

ICBUW's International Humanitarian Law (IHL) specialists were surprised by the vote. This was chiefly because kinetic energy (KE) penetrators such as DU were not included in the original treaty as it was decided that they have a secondary incendiary effect, rather than a primary one.

To this end, the treaty excludes: 'munitions which may have incidental incendiary effects and munitions designed to combine penetration, blast or fragmentation effects with an additional incendiary effect, such as armour-piercing projectiles, fragmentation shells, explosive bombs and similar combined-effects munitions in which the incendiary effect is not specifically designed to cause burn injury to persons, but to be used against military objectives, such as armoured vehicles, aircraft and installations or facilities.'

At the time of going to press, ICBUW was awaiting clarification from MEPs on what real measures the European Parliament intends to take to follow up on this vote. Challenging Protocol III is an unusual step to take but may prove to be a valuable new legal front in the fight against uranium weapons.

For more information on CCW Protocol III, please visit: <http://www.icrc.org/ihl.nsf/FULL/515?OpenDocument>

Was DU Weaponry Used in the Lebanese War of 2006?

By Gretel Munroe



The controversy over whether or not the Israelis used DU munitions during their invasion of Lebanon last summer was sparked by an article in the Lebanese **Daily Star** on August 21. Two eminent Lebanese physicists had found soil samples in a crater created by Israeli munitions in Khiam which, when tested with a Geiger counter owned by a local scrap metal dealer, appeared to contain: “a high degree of unidentified radioactive materials”.¹

Williams had collected samples from craters made by Israeli munitions in Lebanon. The samples discussed by Busby and Williams in *Evidence of Enriched Uranium in guided weapons employed by the Israeli Military in Lebanon in July 2006: Preliminary Note* (Green Audit Research Note 6/2006, Oct. 20, 2006) were just two of the samples collected. One, from near the crater in Khaim gave evidence of being enriched uranium (the ratio of U238:U235 was 108) while the other sample from a crater in at-Titi was found to be mildly enriched.



Unexploded cluster bomblet in farmland near the southern Lebanese village of Siddiqine. Source: www.cinemayat.org

In the months to come, soil samples and other materials in Lebanon were subsequently tested by Dr Chris Busby of Green Audit, UNEP and Henk van der Keur, a chemical engineer with the Laka Foundation. Dr. Busby and his colleague Dai Williams theorised that the crater had been made by a “bunker busting conventional uranium penetrator weapon employing enriched uranium”, while UNEP and van der Keur found no evidence that depleted uranium munitions or other uranium weapons had been used in the war. The issue of bunker busters containing DU or other uranium is controversial in and of itself, and will not be dealt with here.

The two samples were tested by a scintillation counter and a CR39 alpha tracking plastic technique. The outer surface of the sample from the Khiam crater was blackened. The samples were sent to Harwell Laboratory as well as another laboratory for further testing in order to estimate the presence of different uranium isotopes in the samples. The two laboratories gave similar results, according to Busby.²

Since then, Busby has found traces of enriched uranium in an air filter of an engine in a Lebanese ambulance which was hit by an Israeli weapon on the 16th day of the war. Busby says: “The filter analyses (by Harwell Scientifics) suggest strongly



that weapons deployed in the Lebanon contained enriched uranium....” Findings were similar to those of the soil samples found in craters created by Israeli munitions.³

UNEP spent three weeks in Lebanon between September 30 and October 21, initially at the request of Friends of the Earth, who wanted UNEP to investigate environmental contamination in both Lebanon and Israel. A sub-team looked into the question of use of DU munitions and other non-conventional weapons. The sub-team collected various samples: smear samples and dust and soil samples from 32 different sites in southern Lebanon near the Litani River – north and south of it. The samples were analyzed by an “internationally recognised laboratory” in Switzerland during October and November. A final report is due out in mid-December.⁴

UNEP found no evidence of DU munitions or uranium munitions in its samples, including the smear samples. Any radiation present was in the range of natural background radiation. They also found no DU shrapnel or pieces of weaponry that were not from weapons of “well-known design.”

Henk van der Keur went to Lebanon in late September with a Dutch fact-finding mission. He met with one of the Lebanese physicists, Dr. Ali Kobeissi, a nuclear physicist, who had found radioactivity in the crater in Khiam using a Geiger counter belonging to the local scrap dealer. He had found however that the dose rates of radioactivity in his samples had been decreasing daily.

Dr. Kobeissi had collected samples from shrapnel and soil from about 50 sites, including samples from the crater at at-Tiri. Dr. Kobeissi had found 50 nanosieverts (nSv) per hour on the outside rim of pits and 300 nSv per hour in the deepest parts of the majority of the pits, with one sample having the highest level of radioactivity, approximately 800 Sv/h. Most of the samples had radioactivity doses above background radiation as determined by a Laka Foundation calibrated Geiger counter. Van

der Keur told Dr. Kobeissi that the higher radiation “could be due to the concentrations of uranium in the ash (concentrated background radiation) from the burnt material.” Dr. Kobeissi agreed that this might be the explanation. Van der Keur also tested soil samples above and beyond those collected by Dr. Kobeissi with the same results.

Van der Keur in his report ⁵ on his trip to Lebanon states that there were no armoured tanks in Lebanon – DU shells are anti-tank shells. He also noted that mine-clearance teams working in southern Lebanon in the many areas hit by cluster bombs, had found no spent DU shells. Furthermore, van der Keur quoted a member of Human Watch Rights as saying that few bunker buster bombs had been used in Lebanon, even on bridges, and that the Israelis had done serial bombing most of the time. The controversy over the use of uranium weapons in the Lebanese War has not been laid to rest but none of the preliminary reports released so far suggest that depleted uranium munitions were used. However, more research on the ground is urgently needed and we await the final reports into the war with interest.

End Notes

1. Mohammed Zaatari, “Scientists suspect Israeli arms used in South contain radioactive matter”, **The Daily Star**, August 21, 2006.
2. Discussion based on “Evidence of Enriched Uranium in guided weapons employed by the Israeli Military in Lebanon in July 2006, Preliminary Note” by Chris Busby and Dai Williams, Green Audit Research Note 6/2006, Oct. 20, 2006 and “Lebanon ambulance air filter reveals use of enriched Uranium bomb” both of which can be found at www.llrc.org.
3. Ibid, “Lebanon ambulance air filter reveals use of enriched Uranium bomb”.
4. See “No Evidence of Radioactive Residue in Lebanon Post Conflict Assessment, Statement attributable to Achim Steiner, United Nations Under-Secretary General and UNEP Executive Director, Nairobi Nov. 7, 2006 at <http://tinyurl.com/yjzukuw>
5. Information on Henk van der Keur’s interview with Dr. Kobeissi can be found in Henk van der Keur’s report which can be found on the ICBUW website or through the author at zgmunroe@earthlink.net.

Report From Belgian Day of Action 2006

By Ria Verjauw & David Heller



On the 3rd November, members of the Belgian Coalition and activists of several member organisations gathered in Brussels. The day began with a visit to the **Ministry of Defence** where a visual action was set up with banners saying: *For a Ban on Uranium Weapons, Stop Uranium Wapens, Pour un Monde Sans Armes à l'Uranium and Voor Een Wereld Zonder Uranium Wapens*. The event attracted a lot of media attention; with Brussels and Flemish radio broadcast interviews. French and Flemish speaking TV channels were also in attendance.

Munitions and Explosives. We also presented a letter demanding that the Belgian government take a clear position on the DU issue.

The advisors and assistants were questioned about the attitude of the Minister towards a legal ban on uranium weapons. Advisor Grega answered that the Belgian Parliament should do its work, and that the Ministry will accept the decisions that are made by them. The Ministry of Defence has not been asked to give advice to Parliament on the issue.



Belgian Coalition Members Make Themselves Heard Outside the Belgian Ministry of Defense

A delegation from the Belgian Coalition then entered the Ministry of Defence with Senator Lionel Van den Berghe. Several other senators were supportive but could not be present, as were Members of the House of Representatives Aarens and Van der Maelen, who have introduced domestic law proposals to ban uranium weapons.

Reports were handed over to the assistants and advisors of the Minister of Defence who were present: *Depleted uranium: all the questions about DU and Gulf War Syndrome are not yet answered* by Dr Rosalie Bertell, *Depleted uranium update: October 2006* by Dr Keith Baverstock, *Military Reports* compiled by Willem Van den Panhuysen and NATO's own *Security Principles for Storage and Transportation of Military*

Following the Israeli attack on Lebanon, the Ministry of Defence have sent two members of their medical staff to the country to investigate the possible use of DU. The Belgian Military personnel in Lebanon each have a Geiger counter to measure radioactivity. As of the 3rd November nothing had been found that could indicate that DU was used. They do not know about the results of the research at the Khiam crater.

Questions were then asked about the exclusion of DU from their research into Balkan Syndrome. It appears that the results of investigations on DU contamination amongst soldiers are exchanged between different European countries and UNEP; it also emerged that only urine samples of Belgian Military personnel are subject to tests and that no



blood samples have been taken. When questioned about DNA damage in service personnel, the Ministry claimed that there is a conflict between scientists on whether it is an indication of DU exposure. A remark was made by one of the Coalition members that personnel working in the non-ferrous metal industry are monitored and their urine and blood are tested for heavy metal contamination; but why not in the military, as DU is a heavy metal?

According to an expert at the Ministry, tests in the nuclear industry are also done by urine tests, and not by blood tests; they said that there is more chance of finding something in the urine than in the blood when investigating 'no-weight', nearly undetectable substances. The expert claimed that you need one litre of blood to have a reasonable chance of finding DU in it.

The Ministry keeps a database of information from military personnel from before and after each mission. They were asked if they also do follow up studies on personnel that have left the army but they could not answer this. They claimed that the Belgian Ministry of Defence now takes more preventative measures following the Balkan wars and according to their information, there were no soldiers contaminated with DU. All urine samples tested for DU were negative.

Questions were asked on the possible synergetic effects of the chemical and radiological characteristics of DU. The Ministry answered in a general way that there are different interpretations of the damaging effects of DU. Some consider that damage starts at very low exposure levels. Others think that damage only starts from a certain level of exposure to a harmful substance. Still others claim that damage is linearly related to exposure.

In the afternoon a delegation from the Belgian Coalition was received at the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs**. The Minister himself was excused because of a mission abroad. Four of his assistants/advisors welcomed the delegation. The main topic for the meeting was the request to put

ICBUW's resolution on the agenda of the UN General Assembly in September next year. Belgium was a co-sponsor of the resolution on the arms trade that was on the agenda of the General Assembly of the UN last September.



Belgian Coalition Delegation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

According to the Ministry, Belgium is a small country that cannot take a position on its own, and Belgium should be careful in taking steps in disarmament issues, recalling the ban on types of cluster munitions in the recent past. They agreed to look at the possibilities, and possibly to put it on the agenda in a later phase. We pointed out that other countries might be interested in putting the issue on the UN's agenda. And we asked for a meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs himself to discuss this issue in the very near future. Following the hearing in the Belgian Parliament, the Ministry is prepared to play a diplomatic role if necessary. We reminded the assistants/advisors about the role that Belgium can play now that it is a non-permanent member of the Security Council of the UN. Belgium can influence certain issues and speak on a higher level because of this membership.

They were asked whether Belgium would agree to back epidemiological studies into the effects of DU in southern Iraq, since DU has been used there repeatedly during the last 15 years. They replied that they have no budget for this, and that it is a task for others. They have the task to realise conflict-prevention so why don't we ask the IAEA?

Continued over....

Belgian Report contin



Turning to the proposed Belgian legal ban on DU weapons, we emphasised the importance of Belgium taking the lead in banning DU. According to the advisors from the Ministry, the Minister can not intervene in parliamentary work, since parliament is autonomous. If someone from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is asked, they will give advice. But they can only advise on what effects a ban would have on Belgium.

The Ministry was then questioned on the Lebanese issue. Would Belgium take the initiative and research the possible use of DU? They told us that they will wait for the results of the UNEP report that will be published in December. They could not answer when we asked whether the Minister had questioned Israel over the use of DU weapons, however the Ministry did question Israel on the use of landmines during the occupation. If Israel has been questioned over its use of DU, then it is likely that it will be kept secret from the public.

The Ministry still thinks that more scientific research into DU is needed; and until then Belgium will not throw its weight behind a ban. Challenging them, we reminded them about the many studies, including military studies, over the last few years that have suggested a link between DU exposure and ill health. They were presented with the NATO-expert manual (August 1992) on the health risks relating to the management of accidents with DU munitions, their storage and transportation. Copies of the studies by Drs Bertell and Baverstock were also presented along with Military Reports.

The Belgian Coalition members expressed their wish that the Minister look more carefully at the studies and files and become aware of the importance of this issue. A new meeting (hopefully with the Minister) will be made in the near future. In the late afternoon all participants of the action day gathered at the Beurs Building in the centre of Brussels. Some positioned themselves on the stairs with banners while others collected signatures and handed out leaflets to passers by.

DU in the UK

By Doug Weir



We are approaching an interesting stage in the UK's use of DU weapons. Currently the only DU weapon in use by UK forces is the 120mm L28 CHARM3 (**CH**allenger **ARM**ament) ammunition fired from the UK's Challenger tank fleet. Aside from the 6000 plus shells fired during its testing and development at Dundrennan and Eskmaels, CHARM3 is only used during combat operations and not in peace time. The ammunition was manufactured by Royal Ordnance, now a subsidiary of BAE Systems.

Earlier this year, BAE released a new corporate social responsibility policy - a surprising move for one of the world's biggest arms manufacturers - where, in an effort to develop 'green' munitions, they stated that they would no longer manufacture DU weapons, including, presumably, CHARM3 penetrators. While BAE claim that they have gone 'green', CADU suspects that it may have more to do with there being an extremely limited market for the L28. The L28 was designed to be fired from a rifled gun and the UK are the only NATO member to use rifled guns on their tanks. Furthermore, of the few countries with Challenger tanks (Oman, Iran and Iraq), most are barred from buying the weapon on strategic grounds, Egypt refused the L28 on environmental grounds.

The UK MoD, citing national security reasons, refuses to say how big its remaining stocks of CHARM ammunition are, but research by CADU has shown that tests are underway for a completely new armament system for the UK's Challenger tanks. This would involve a new main gun and new ammunition. The forerunner is a smoothbore gun manufactured by German firm Rheinmetall. In tests both its gun and tungsten-nickel-cobalt composite penetrator have outperformed CHARM3.

More evidence of a move towards tungsten comes from the MoD's latest Defence Technology Strategy paper. In addition to highlighting the public relations problems associated with DU, it also opens the door for the procurement of key ammunition stocks from outside the UK.

Japanese Week of Action

By Katsumi Furitsu



In solidarity with our friends across the world, ICBUW members organised events for the International Day of Action to Ban Uranium Weapons in cities all over Japan.

Fukuoka, November 5th : A jazz charity concert for Iraqi children affected by DU weapons was held, together with a video show on DU and a talk by a Japanese Atomic-bomb survivor from Nagasaki. The event was organised by Campaign Fukuoka Against Nuclear & Uranium

by DU weapons that I witnessed in Iraq” was well received. The talk was followed by a signature collection. Between November 3-5th, a photo-exhibition on the dangers of DU weapons was held at the students’ union at Kanazawa University.

Tokyo, November 12th: A public meeting was held, with eleven speakers from various backgrounds including: journalists, NGO members supporting Iraqi children, a lawyer, anti-



Street action and signature collecting outside Osaka Station on November 5th

Weapons.

Osaka, November 5th: A street action and signature collection for the petition to Ban Uranium Weapons took place in front of the main train station in Osaka. A meeting was held after the action inviting Mr Ishikawa, a secretary of the Councillor Ms. Fukushima, the president of the SDP. Strategies to approach the Japanese government were discussed. It was organised by several ICBUW member groups based around Osaka, including the Campaign Against Radiation Exposure.

Kanazawa, November 5th: Ms. Moritaki of the NO DU Hiroshima Project, was invited to speak to students at Kanazawa University. Her speech: “An appeal from Hiroshima; the damage

nuclear activists and ICBUW board members. The DU issue was approached from a wide perspective. Other issues covered included war victims, A-bomb victims, the nuclear fuel cycle and nuclear armament. It was organised by Citizens’ Network for Ban on Depleted Uranium Weapons.

Acting as ICBUW-Japan, we have drafted a letter of requests to the Japanese government on DU issues. At some events during the International Day of Action, we introduced the draft and discussed our options for lobbying the government. Our requests include asking the government to back the draft treaty for a ban on DU and to support victims in contaminated areas in Iraq, as well as the issue of DU munitions at the Kadena US base in Okinawa. Our lobbying activities will begin next spring.

DU News from the United States

By Gretel Munroe



There have been different developments on the national, state and local levels in the United States in the past few months.

On the National Level: By law, the U.S. Government is now required to do a comprehensive study on health effects of exposure to depleted uranium. In October President Bush signed into law the Department of Defense Authorization Bill which contains an amendment requiring such a study to be done and to be completed within one year.

The amendment was introduced by Congressman Jim McDermott (D-Washington State) in the U.S. House of Representatives and by Senator Maria Cantwell in the U.S. Senate. It passed unanimously by a voice vote in the House. It succeeded in remaining in the Bill throughout the resolution of differences between the House and Senate bills by the House/Senate Conference Committee.

Congressman McDermott said, "If DU poses no danger, we need to prove it. If DU harms our soldiers, we need to know it. We owe our soldiers a full measure of the truth, wherever that leads us."¹

On the State Level: In New York State, a bill requiring the testing of National Guardsmen and Women for exposure to DU passed both Houses. However, it seems that the Republican-dominated Senate stalled on the bill and as of late October, it had not been sent to the Governor to be signed.

Similar legislation in Massachusetts did not make it to the state House this year but will be re-introduced early next year. At the time of writing, Louisiana and Connecticut are the only states that have passed this legislation.

On the Local Level: Grassroots Actions for Peace based in Concord, Mass. collected 216 signatures for the ICBUW petition banning uranium weapons in honour of the International Day of Action in early November. Five members of Grassroots canvassed in five different cities and

towns. The author found that people, especially in Somerville and Cambridge were far more aware of DU weapons and possible harm to human health and the environment than in 2005.

During the spring and summer of 2006, the Christian Peacemaker Teams of Northern Indiana (CPTNI) met with activists in Cumberland, Maryland near an Alliant Tech facility – an industrial assembly site where DU weapons are put together that have been manufactured at Aerojet Ordnance in Jonesboro, Tennessee. (Propellant is added at a facility in Radford, Virginia). Members of CPTNI met with activists at both sites.

In November, members of CPTNI went to Tennessee where they held public vigils with local supporters and did a major action in front of Aerojet at both opening and closing times. They also met with local activists opposed to the manufacture of DU shells. They learned that Aerojet employees cannot talk to anyone about their jobs on pain of losing their jobs or facing a law suit.

On November 13, CPTNI took part in a forum at Frostburg College in Rocket Center, Virginia which is close to a facility of Alliant Tech. They also held a vigil near the Alliant Tech plant. CPTNI is a new member of ICBUW and we welcome them.

Developments on the DU issue have been mostly on the positive side in the last few months although much more work needs to be done.

End Notes

1. "President Signs Legislation Containing Rep. McDermott's DU Study: Possible Adverse Health Effects on Soldiers from Depleted Uranium To Be Studied", October 20, 2006, can be found at www.house.gov/mcdermott/pr061020.shtml.