

URGENT APPEAL

from HANWA

(Hiroshima Alliance for Nuclear Weapons Abolition)

NO WAR! NO DU! NO NUKES!

Condemning Delivery of DU rounds by England to Ukraine, and the Use of similar DU rounds in Ukraine by Russian Forces or Anyone Else

On March 20, British Minister of State for Defence Annabel Goldie admitted that the Challenger 2 battle tanks the UK plans to send to Ukraine are equipped with DU (depleted uranium) armour-piercing rounds. In response, Russian President Putin stated that Russia would “respond accordingly.” Defence Minister Shoigu referred to the possibility of “a nuclear collision,” and Russia followed up by announcing a plan to deploy “tactical nuclear weapons” in Belarus. This announcement has further raised tensions around the world.

However, *Explosive Ordnance Guide for Ukraine*, the 2022 report of GICHD (Geneva International Center for Humanitarian Demining) lists DU rounds (“3BM32 Vant”) among the weapons provided by Russia to its own armies in Ukraine¹. Thus, Russia’s reaction is the height of deception and further evidence of the egregious inhumanity of Russia’s military actions in Ukraine.

On the other hand, the statements made by the U.K. and the U.S.A. also contain grave deceptions. They argue that DU is a “standard component” of conventional ammunitions in use for a few decades now. But this does not mean that DU is not a problem; the reality is completely opposite. Such denial of the risk can be made only because they are disregarding, or ignorant of, the scientific findings to the contrary and the voices of the victims suffering DU damage, particularly Iraqis, particularly children, as well as the soldiers of various countries who served in Iraq and the former Yugoslavia².

What are DU rounds?

Although DU rounds are not “nuclear weapons, they are produced by military recycling of

¹ “ICBUW Statement on British DU Ammunition to Ukraine,” March 22, 2023. (<https://www.icbuw.eu/en/>). Cf. *Explosive Ordnance Guide for Ukraine*, 2nd edition, 2022, GICHD, p.109 (<https://bit.ly/3Zf10TS>). See also “Depleted Uranium Weapons: State of Affairs 2022 (ICBUW, July 3, 2022), which states that “Russia has a significant number of different DU-rounds in its arsenals. There are reports of mass production of the improved Svinets-1 and Svintes-2 depleted uranium ammunition.... It seems that Russia didn’t abandon its DU programme, but on the contrary – it has increased production volumes and is actively modernizing outdated tanks to make them capable of firing DU ammunition.”

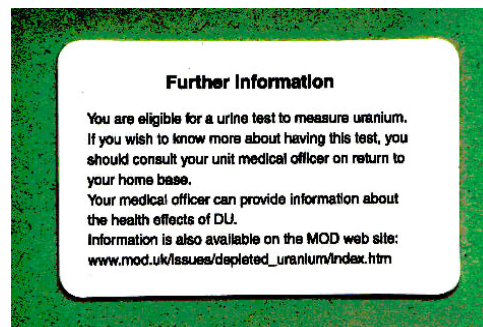
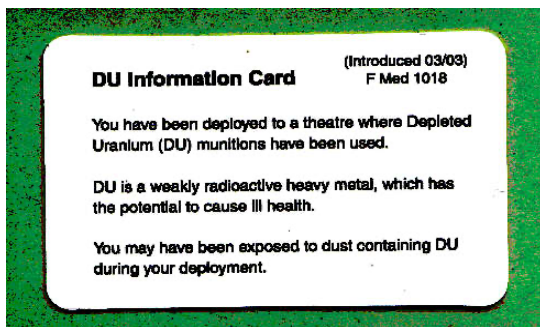
² Similar critical views are presented in recent reports in the media. See “Ukraine war: UK defends sending depleted uranium rounds after Putin warning” (*BBC*, March 22); “A look at the uranium-based ammo the UK will send to Ukraine” (*The Washington Post*, March 23); “What are the depleted uranium munitions the UK is sending to Ukraine?” (*ALJAZEERA*, March 23).

radioactive wastes (DU=depleted uranium). DU is U-238 left behind after the enrichment process that produces “fissionable uranium 235” needed for nuclear weapons and nuclear power generation. The penetrator of a 30 mm DU round is said to contain about 300 grams of DU³.

DU is not “fissionable,” but it is radioactive with strong chemical toxicity. Consequently, wherever DU rounds are used, whether on battlefields or on firing ranges, and even if they miss the target and get stuck in land, they can cause a wide variety of long-term harms to human bodies and environments⁴.

DU risk: denied and confirmed

DU is considered a possible cause of the increased childhood cancer, leukemia, and congenital deformities in Iraq where large amounts of DU were dispersed during the Gulf War and the Iraq War⁵. Many of the soldiers (from U.S., U.K. and elsewhere) who fought in these wars suffered the so-called “Gulf War Syndrome,” which caused heated international controversy. DU is also a suspected cause of the “Balkan Syndrome” suffered by European soldiers who were sent to the former Yugoslavia for the PKO mission in 1999 after the conflict there. In providing DU rounds to Ukraine, the U.K. is downplaying the toxicity of DU, but the U.K. is clearly aware of that danger. We learned in 2004 that the U.K. Army was issuing to its own soldiers deployed in Iraq the “DU Information Card” shown below to alert them to the risk of exposure to DU in Iraq⁶.



³ Such military reuse of DU was devised to dispose of the enormous and increasing amount of “depleted uranium” accumulated through nuclear exploitation. DU rounds are considered “ideal” both economically and militarily; DU is provided almost for free to military industries, and DU rounds are so powerful that they render conventional tanks almost useless. (Because DU alloys can be much harder than steel and denser than lead, they are used in anti-tank penetrators and tank-armour as well.) However, DU burns on impact, turning into minute particles, which are scattered through the area. The term “depleted” is intended to cover up the danger DU poses, giving a misleading impression as if the substance were “depleted” of radioactivity and chemical toxicity. We use the term here because it is commonly understood, but we hope the problem hidden by that name will be kept in mind.

⁴ According to an official statement, more than one million DU rounds were used in the Gulf War and about 320 tons of DU was contained in these penetrators. It is estimated that about half that amount was expended in the Iraq War. In a word, enormous amounts of radioactive waste have been dispersed into the environment. The use of DU reveals a blatant double-standard on the part of the users because such use would constitute an illegal and criminal act if carried out on the army’s homeland.

⁵ In May 2009 the First International Cancer Conference was held to address the question of increased cancers in the southern city of Basra, sight of one of the most violent and extended battlefields in the two wars.

⁶ Ray Bristow, “The Deception by the U.K. Government Continues: The Gulf War, the Balkans, and the Iraq War,” included in *Seeking a World without Uranium Weapons* 2009, in Japanese).

Most significantly, as has been widely reported, UNEP (the United Nations Environment Plan) points out in its 2022 report, *The Environmental Impact of the Conflict in Ukraine: A Preliminary Review*: “Depleted uranium and toxic substances in common explosives can cause skin irritation, kidney failure and increase the risks of cancer⁷.” In addition, the international community should consider seriously the conclusion that “the placenta is not a barrier to DU migration,” which was drawn from an animal experiment conducted by AFRRRI (U.S. Armed Forces Radiological Research Institute) around the time of the Iraq War⁸.

International actions promoting the prohibition of DU weapons

ICBUW (International Coalition to Ban Uranium Weapons) was launched in October 2003 to establish an international ban on DU weapons⁹. On March 22, 2007, a bill to prohibit DU rounds was adopted unanimously in the Belgian Parliament¹⁰. In May 2009, the European Parliament adopted by an overwhelming majority a resolution calling for concrete actions toward the prohibition of DU weapons. In addition, the UN has been adopting a resolution that alerts the international community to the DU problem almost every other year since 2007.¹¹

On the military side, it is now known that the U.S. army plans to phase out DU rounds by November 2026¹². This move is evidence that the U.S. military has come to understand that they can no longer ignore international public opinion and the campaign to ban DU rounds.

Urgent requests to the Ukraine government, the Japanese government and the international community

For the reasons outlined above, we strongly oppose the delivery of DU rounds by the U.K. to Ukraine and express our deep concern regarding any DU rounds that may have already been used by Russian forces there.

We sincerely hope that the Ukrainian government and the people of Ukraine will refuse any DU rounds delivered by the U.K. The use of DU will contaminate Ukraine’s own environment, making postwar recovery even more difficult. Soldiers, noncombatant citizens, and any personnel later involved in de-mining or clean-up would be at grave risk of DU exposure and serious damage to their health. DU can even cause long-term, intractable environmental damage, such ground water contamination.

⁷ “Ukraine war: UK defends sending depleted uranium rounds after Putin warning,” BBC, March 22, 2023 (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-65032671>).

Cf. *The Environmental Impact of the Conflict in Ukraine: A Preliminary Review*, UNEP, October 14, 2022 (<https://www.unep.org/resources/report/environmental-impact-conflict-ukraine-preliminary-review>).

⁸ Cf. “Depleted Uranium: Scientific Basis for Assessing Risk,” Nuclear Policy Research Institute, July, 2003, p.15 (<https://www.helencaldicott.com/depleted.pdf>).

⁹ For ICBUW campaign details, please visit its homepage at <https://www.icbuw.eu/en/>.

¹⁰ This bill prohibits the production, storage, provision, delivery and use of DU rounds as well as tank-armor containing DU inside Belgium. It was the world’s first domestic law banning DU weapons based on the “precautionary principle.” Costa Rica followed by adopting a similar bill on April 27, 2011.

¹¹ There are only four countries that have been opposing the resolution; they are U.S., U.K., France, and Israel. Russian has been abstaining. For more detail, see <https://www.icbuw.eu/en/>

¹² See “ICBUW Statement on British DU Ammunition for Ukraine” (March 23, 2023) and “Depleted Uranium Weapons: State of Affairs” (July 3, 2022). However, we also have to note the recent report that “[t]he U.S. military is still developing depleted uranium munitions, notably the M829A4 armor-piercing round for the M1A2 Abrams main battle tank, [RAND senior defense analyst Scott] Boston said.” (*Washington Post*, March 23).

The international community must move effectively to bring a swift end to the war in Ukraine. It must do everything in its power to ensure that DU rounds are never used there or anywhere else. The same can be said, of course, regarding any kind of nuclear weapon.

The Japanese government should be leading international efforts toward peacemaking in Ukraine. We demand that our government stress the inhumanity of nuclear weapons and, simultaneously, call attention to the problems that will arise from the delivery and use of DU rounds. We request that the Japanese government effectively raise global public consciousness regarding the need to abolish all nuclear and radioactive weapons.

Appealing again from Hiroshima

In March 2003, the human message, “NO WAR NO DU!” was formed by about six thousand people standing in Hiroshima’s Central Park. That event was an expression of vehement protest against the imminent attack on Iraq and the likely use there of DU rounds. On March 24 a half-page ad featuring an aerial photo of the “NO WAR NO DU!” appeal (shown below) was carried in *The New York Times*¹³.

We deeply regret that Hiroshima has to send that same message again, twenty years later. Although the target of international blame has shifted from the U.S.A. and its invasion of Iraq to Russia and its invasion to Ukraine, the danger of DU weapons remains obscured by the deceptive rhetoric of politicians and militaries. The international community must recognize DU rounds as “inhumane weapons” that cause human suffering extending far beyond the battlefields in time and space. All nations should cooperate with and accelerate the effort to eliminate DU together with nuclear weapons.

Let's call out NOW

NO WAR NO DU!

On March 2 in Hiroshima, 6000 people gathered to form this "human message": NO WAR NO DU (depleted uranium). The US has admitted having used more than 300 tons of DU during the Gulf War; it is likely to use more DU and new nuclear weapons as well in the war against Iraq.

Hiroshima says NO to more Hibakusha (radiation victims) The White House's denial of the radioactive and toxic effects of DU weapons is FALSE

International Appeals against DU:
 "The United States has conducted two nuclear wars. The first against Japan in 1945, the second in Kuwait and Iraq in 1991." (Dr. Helen Caldicott)

"Depleted uranium weapons are an unacceptable threat to life, a violation of international law and an assault on human dignity." (Ramsey Clark, former Attorney General of the U.S.)

"[The Vietnam Administration conducted a state-wide survey of 251 Gulf War veteran families in Mississippi. Of those children conceived and born since the war, 67% have illnesses most severe or have missing eyes, missing ears, blood infections, respiratory problems and lead fingers." (Medical Debtor: Depleted Uranium, p. 140)

"The Defense Ministry is misleading the public by leaving inaccurate information about the harmfulness of DU. That information can do nothing but lead the whole world in a terribly wrong direction." (a British veteran suffering from the Gulf War syndrome, Discarded Casualties, p. 97)

Origin, Uses, Effects of Depleted Uranium:
 Depleted uranium (DU) is a byproduct of the process during which fissionable uranium (uranium 235) used to manufacture nuclear bombs and nuclear fuel is separated from natural uranium.
 DU (uranium 238) is about 60 percent less radioactive than natural uranium, but it remains radioactive for 4.5 billion years. Because it is such a highly dense metal - heavier than lead or steel - it is prized for its abilities in both penetrative military armor and portable shielding against attack.
 Upon impact, DU produces extremely fine uranium oxide dust that is both chemically toxic and radioactive. Easily spread by wind, it is inhaled and absorbed into the human body and absorbed by plants and animals, becoming part of the food chain. There, they likely cause a uranium weapon. U.S. Daily to use arms again in war" by Robert Galois, San Francisco Chronicle, January 13, 2003.

Please visit the following sites for more information about DU and DU: www.du.org www.iranjournal.com/du/ www.answertotheiran.org www.khat.com

HANWA - Hiroshima NO WAR Homepage: <http://www.e-hanwa.org>
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 URL: <http://www.hanwa.org>

HANWA Homepage: <http://www.e-hanwa.org>
 Contact email: hibakushaforum [at] gmail.com

¹³ For Hiroshima-based actions after the Iraq War, please visit: *Toward a Nuclear-Free Future! Global Hibakusha Report from Hiroshima to the World* (2021) at (<https://bit.ly/3Zl6r2r>).