

Depleted Uranium Scare

During the Gulf War, coalition forces used armor-piercing ammunition made from depleted uranium, which is ideal for the purpose because of its great density. In recent years, the Iraqi regime has made substantial efforts to promote the false claim that the depleted uranium rounds fired by coalition forces have caused cancers and birth defects in Iraq. Iraq has distributed horrifying pictures of children with birth defects and linked them to depleted uranium. The campaign has two major propaganda assets:

- Uranium is a name that has frightening associations in the mind of the average person, which makes the lie relatively easy to sell; and
- Iraq could take advantage of an established international network of antinuclear activists who had already launched their own campaign against depleted uranium.

But scientists working for the World Health Organization, the UN Environmental Program, and the European Union could find no health effects linked to exposure to depleted uranium.

The truth has not deterred the Iraqi disinformation campaign. On November 15, 2000, the London-based Arabic-language newspaper *Al-Quds al-Arabi* reported that Iraq had set up an organization called the “Central Committee for the Follow-up of the Consequences of Pollution” under the direct supervision of Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz, to pursue this issue. It also reported that Iraqi Major General Abd-al-Wahhab Muhammad al-Juburi headed a working team of military personnel, scientists, and others to generate data and organize tours for the international media. Iraq has hosted international conferences on the alleged ill effects of depleted uranium and sent “experts” abroad to speak on the subject, including Iraqi professor Mona Kammās, a member of Iraq’s “Committee of Pollution Impact by Aggressive Bombing.”

Medical Facts on Iraqi Chemical Weapons Exposure

The Iraqi News Agency website directs viewers to a gruesome picture of a boy from the city of Mosul, with the caption, “We say to human rights advocate: Look what their bombs have done to the children of Iraq. Look how they use internationally banned weapons, including Depleted Uranium ammunition, in their aggression against Iraq.” In November 2000, the Iraqi magazine *Alif Ba’* claimed that an Iraqi child had been born with “two heads and three arms” because the mother had been exposed to depleted uranium.

If there has been an upsurge in birth defects and cancers in parts of Iraq, it is most likely to have been caused by the regime’s use of chemical weapons from 1983 to 1988, including mustard gas and nerve agents. Saddam Hussein used chemical weapons in southern and northern Iraq against the Iranians, with whom they were at war from 1980-88, and against the Iraqi Kurds, as in the well-known chemical attacks in the northern town of Halabja. Mustard gas has long been known to cause cancers and is strongly suspected of causing birth defects.

Dr. Christine Gosden, professor of medical genetics at the University of Liverpool researched congenital malformations, fertility and cancers in Halabja in 1998. Says Dr. Gosden: “What I found was far worse than anything I had suspected Conditions such as infertility, congenital malformations and cancers (including skin, head, neck, respiratory system, gastrointestinal tract,