The Nuclear-Free Future Award

Asaf Durakovic



Asaf Durakovic. Image courtesy www.umcr.net

A waste product of the uranium enrichment process that produces greater concentrations of U-235 to fuel nuclear reactors and arm nuclear warheads, depleted uranium (DU) typically contains about "99.8 percent U-238, 0.2 percent U-235, and 0.0006 percent U-234 by mass." (WHO) As an unwanted waste product of the uranium enrichment process - there are more than 2 million tons of DU in the world - it is made available to arms manufacturers cheap or even free of charge. The public first became aware of DU during the 1991 Gulf War when the US military used munitions cased by some 300 tons of DUalloy to destroy 4,000 Iraqi armored vehicles. The tank-killer par excellence was the infamous A-10 or "Warthog" aircraft with its guns that can spew up to 4,000 DUrounds a minute. (Philip Berrigan: "In a battlefield context, Warthogs are arguably the most devastating weapons system yet fashioned. Even in the company of other terrible engines of war, they are a monstrosity. Imagine one of them strafing a village: It makes a pass and leaves a trench - people dead, buildings blasted, trees and vegetation splintered, the air, soil, and water infected with radioactivity. The Warthog is an engine of hell. It has no right to exist.").

Dr. Durakovic served as Chief of Professional Clinical Services of the 531 Medical Detachment during the Desert Shield phase of the Gulf War. When he returned to the Veteran's Administration (VA) Nuclear Medicine facility in Wilmington, What will happen in future generations? I have seen the effects of radiation worldwide. The consequences of DU are immeasurable.

Durakovic's team performed a whole-body count of uranium 238 on the troops and found that 14 of the 24 had been contaminated. According to Durakovic's June 26, 1997, testimony before the Subcommittee on Human Resources of the House Committee on Government Reform and Oversight, the government 'lost' all records of these examinations. And shortly thereafter, Durakovic 'lost' his job.

Durakovic may have been forced to step down from his VA position at Wilmington, but the army could not strip him of his ethics as a medical doctor. In the interests of his patients he founded the Uranium Medical Research Center, an independent non-profit institute which studies the effects of uranium contamination and challenges Pentagon claims that "exposures to depleted uranium have not to date produced any observable adverse health effects attributable to DU's chemical toxicity or low-level radiation." Dr. Durakovic explains that when depleted uranium is blown up at high temperatures, it changes to tiny particles. If inhaled, the uranium particles can get into the bloodstream and can be lodged in the bone, lymph nodes, lungs or kidneys causing damage by emitting low-level radiation in the body over a long period of time. The price can be cancer, necrosis and genetic deformity. Inexplicable, then, the Pentagon's refusal to comply with a 1993 congressional mandate to study the health effects of inhaled and ingested depleted uranium dust.

Or does the answer lie close at hand? According to Dr. Durakovic there are two main reasons for the Pentagon's DUparanoia – and they both involve money: compensation for those suffering from DUcontamination, and the exorbitant costs of battle theatre clean up. But money seems a petty concern when we are talking about changes to the human gene pool.



Nuclear-Free Future Award Ceremony, Jaipur 200

The Nuclear-Free Future Award

is presented by the Franz Moll Foundation for the Coming Generations to

Asaf Durakovic

for his humanitarian medical engagement helping to debunk military disinformation legitimizing the baneful use of depleted uranium munitions

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Further Resources

From Asaf Durakovic: Undiagnosed Illnesses and Health Consequences of Weapons of Indiscriminate Action and Radioactive Battlefield

Democracy Now! Interview with Dr. Asaf Durakovic

http://www.nuclear-free.com/eng/durakovic.htm

Delaware, which he headed, he was asked to assess 24 soldiers of the 144th Transportation and Supply Company of New Jersey for evidence of DU in their bodies. He recalls: "They had been based in Saudi Arabia from January to August 1991, working with damaged tanks hit by DU armour-piercing shells from 'friendly fire.'" "Deformities among children born to Gulf War vets are well-documented as is the rising incidence of birth malformations in Iraq," Dr Durakovic points out. "What will happen in future generations? I have seen the effects of radiation worldwide. The consequences of DU are immeasurable."

Dr Durakovic believes DU weapons will one day be strictly outlawed.



"There is no alternative," he tells us. "The threat to the human race is too great. If we continue with the irresponsible contamination of the biosphere, and denial of the fact that human life is endangered by the deadly isotope uranium, then we are doing disservice to ourselves, disservice to the truth, disservice to God and to all the generations who follow."