

Congressman Dennis Kucinich and Dr. Doug Rokke hold press conference about Depleted Uranium

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

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"A nation's military personnel cannot willfully contaminate any other nation, cause harm to persons and the environment and then ignore the consequences of their actions. To do so is a crime against humanity."

--Professor Doug Rokke, ex-director of the Pentagon's depleted uranium project.

Congressman Kucinich held a press conference March 15, 2004 at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to detail little-known information about the nuclear content and life-threatening effects of U.S. munitions that are being used in Iraq and Afghanistan and which have been used in other military conflicts beginning with the 1991 Gulf War. Dennis was joined by Dr. Doug Rokke, PhD, retired Army combat officer, and one of the world's leading experts on the use of munitions containing radioactive depleted uranium.

Dennis Kucinich with Dr. Doug Rokke at the March 15 press conference:



Dennis Kucinich:

One of the most serious abuses of human rights has come through the Pentagon's development of, production of, and use of, depleted uranium munitions. These munitions have created an unending toll of casualties wherever they've been used, and they have created for the United States a great moral dilemma about when we are ready to recognize that the mere use of such munitions constitutes an offense against humanity. And when are we going to recognize our responsibility to not just stop making these munitions but to help create the cleanup wherever they've been used, to help provide medical care for any person who's been adversely affected by it, and to do the long range studies that must be done in order to calculate the human health effects and to ameliorate those effects in the long term.

We're talking about something that will never go away, but if our commitment is to change the direction of America's use of these munitions, and to stop it, then we can begin to repair the great damage that has been done, at least to try to mitigate it, we're not even close to doing that right now.

Very few people in this country have made as solid a contribution to inspecting the seriousness of this and to addressing it in a forthright way, as has the person I'm about to introduce. So I'd like to at this moment, if Dr. Doug would come up here. Please join me in welcoming Dr. Doug Rokke.

Dr. Doug Rokke:

Key things that need to happen when General Schwartzkopf assigned to clean up the depleted uranium mess following Gulf War one in the service of the depleted uranium project director from the Army. We rapidly realized that with the use of uranium munitions

we did not have the ability to clean up the contamination. We did not have the ability to provide medical care for any of the casualties, whether they be U.S. forces, friendly fire, or any of the coalition forces or any of what we call the enemy forces. They're all God's children. And when you can't provide medical, and you're tearing up the environment, and you deliberately contaminate air, water, and soil, you have a problem and it must be resolved.



The essential things that must be done today, the United States Department of Defense and Department of Veteran Affairs has medical directives requiring medical care for all DU casualties within 72 hours. They are not complying with that. Residents and communities that were involved in Gulf War one have died from exposures. The Department of Defense has specific guidelines, Army regulations, Department of Defense Regulations, requiring complete isolation, cleanup and disposal of radioactive contamination. It is not happening as we speak.

Video evidence, photographic evidence, on-sight investigations, verify not only here in the United States, but right across the line over in Jefferson proving ground has not been cleaned up, in Baghdad, Iraq, all over, in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Vieques, Puerto Rico, it's not cleaned up.

Training and education: you need to provide total solid education and training for all individuals who come in contact with low-level radioactive materials and the effects of it, it's not being done. Proper radiation equipment, radiation detection equipment, is not distributed. The Japanese just deployed, into Iraq in a contaminated area, with no equipment, either to detect the contamination or to protect their troops from exposure. Medical personnel are not being trained properly to provide medical care, even though it's absolutely required.

This is a single depleted uranium round, ladies and gentleman. This is an aluminum model of a one-tank round that's fired by an Abrams tank. This is aluminum, if this was actual this thing would be over ten pounds of solid uranium, we know it would be contaminated with plutonium, neptunium, americium. You fire one of these rounds and 40% breaks up into dust and oxides that can be inhaled, ingested, absorbed, and contaminate air, water, and soil.

The United States Army Environmental Policy Institute which is co-located here confirmed that in their 1995 report. They stated, "There is no way to reduce the toxicity of depleted uranium munitions." And they ignore it and continue it today. The question is, when do we say "enough" and stop contaminating air, water, and soil, not only with uranium, but all the contaminants of war?

Dennis Kucinich:

Thank you very much, Doug, for your courage and your commitment, and your relentlessness in alerting America and the world to the dangers of the use of depleted uranium, and in laying out the approach that we have to take in order to achieve a new direction.