



## UK Uranium Weapons Network submission to the Chilcot Inquiry on the UK's use of depleted uranium munitions in Iraq

### Background

Depleted uranium (DU) is uranium from which much of the isotope uranium 235 has been removed, for nuclear reactor fuel or to make nuclear weapons. This process ('enrichment') creates a much higher volume of depleted than enriched uranium, and DU is essentially a nuclear waste product, stockpiled by most nuclear states. When in a metallic form, depleted uranium is extremely dense, and for that reason a small proportion of worldwide DU stocks have been used in armour piercing weapons.

In this state the depleted uranium is still radioactive, emitting almost 75% the radioactivity of natural uranium.<sup>1</sup> It is also chemically toxic. To achieve the physical properties that make it effective as a weapon, the uranium metal is alloyed with a small quantity of another metal, typically titanium.<sup>2</sup> The United States was one of the first countries to begin using DU in this way, with programmes beginning in the 1960s, and coming to fruition in the mid 1970s. Following its adoption by the United States in tank ammunition, the UK followed suit, with the first UK round coming into service for the Challenger 1 tank in early 1991.

The first time these weapons were deployed was in Iraq and Kuwait during the Gulf War later that year, where US and UK forces fired around 286 tonnes between them. Reported increases in the incidence of cancer in southern Iraq meant that interest in the issue grew in the late 1990s, and resulted in a flurry of media articles,<sup>3</sup> particularly after the use of depleted uranium by NATO forces in Bosnia, Serbia and Kosovo.<sup>4</sup>

### Health and Depleted Uranium

To date, no large scale studies have been undertaken to assess the health consequences for civilians from the battlefield use of depleted uranium weapons. However, there are compelling reasons to

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<sup>1</sup> Ian Fairlie, "The health hazards of depleted uranium," *Disarmament Forum*, no. 3 (2008): 3-15.

<sup>2</sup> Richard P. Davitt, *A Comparison of the Advantages and Disadvantages of Depleted Uranium and Tungsten Alloy as Penetrator Materials* (US Army Armament Research and Development Command, 1980).

<sup>3</sup> See for example Maggie O'Kane, "Did we do this?," *The Guardian G2*, 12, 1998.

<sup>4</sup> Dan Fahey, *The Emergence and Decline of the Debate Over Depleted Uranium Munitions 1991-2004*, June 20, 2004, [www.danfahey.com](http://www.danfahey.com).

believe that it does represent a risk to civilians. DU is chemically toxic and a heavy metal, both characteristics making it a genotoxin, as well as being an endocrine disrupter.<sup>5</sup> As a significant quantity of DU combusts when a munition strikes a hard target, the area nearby is covered in a fine dust which may be inhaled or ingested. Field work by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in Bosnia & Herzegovina has shown that this contamination is still detectable several years after use and that in one site there was detectable DU contamination in a local well.<sup>6</sup>

Due to the controversy surrounding the use of this material in weapons systems, there have been a number of desk studies, which have endeavoured to assess the risk from these weapons by bringing together the existing research on the issue. The Royal Society released two reports in 2001, considering only the potential for causing lung cancer and kidney damage. The reports stated that for the majority of soldiers the risks were likely to be small, but stated that there was a “lack of good quality data” on some crucial factors, and that the onus was on governments who wished to use DU to learn more about the risks involved.<sup>7</sup>

More recently, in 2008 the US National Academy of Sciences conducted a thorough literature review of the possible health consequences of DU exposure, and concluded that there was inadequate or insufficient evidence to determine whether there was an association with a number of health conditions, including leukaemia, lymphoma, and cancers of the bone, kidneys, bladder, nervous system, brain and testicles. This was said to be “due largely to limitations of the available scientific literature”.<sup>8</sup>

Later that year, a report by a congressionally-mandated committee on Gulf War Illness contained a wealth of criticism of US government research into the effects of DU on soldiers. While concluding that other factors were more likely to blame for Gulf War Illness, its ability to form a view on the role of depleted uranium was restricted by the US Department of Defence’s unwillingness to release key data. On a research programme overseen by the US Department of Veterans Affairs – a unique set of primary research into health outcomes in people known to have been exposed to DU – it found that incidence of tumours had failed to be reported, significant findings were not followed up and that overall the work had retarded, rather than helped, understanding into the health effects of DU exposure.<sup>9</sup>

This scientific picture is routinely mischaracterised by the UK government when it seeks to defend its retention of DU weapons. Answers by ministers and civil servants to letters and parliamentary questions typically refer to the number of desk studies on the issue and claim that there is an

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<sup>5</sup> *Op. cit.* Fairlie, 2008

<sup>6</sup> Depleted Uranium in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Post-Conflict Environmental Assessment (United Nations Environment Programme, 2003).

<sup>7</sup> The Royal Society, *The health hazards of depleted uranium munitions Part I*, 2001

<sup>8</sup> Committee on Gulf War and Health: Updated Literature Review of Depleted Uranium, Institute of Medicine, *Gulf War and Health: Updated Literature Review of Depleted Uranium* (National Academy of Sciences, 2008), <http://www.nap.edu/catalog/12183.html>.

<sup>9</sup> Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans’ Illnesses, *Gulf War Illness and the Health of Gulf War Veterans: Scientific Findings and Recommendations* (Washington, D.C: U.S. Government Printing Office, November 2008).

“international scientific consensus that neither the level of DU in the environment nor the risk to the health of civilians in Iraq is significant”.<sup>10</sup>

In the absence of persuasive primary research into the effects of DU use on civilians, the only available data comes from laboratory experiments, some of which show extremely troubling results. Amongst other things, laboratory studies show that estimations of health risks from DU inhalation may be underestimates;<sup>11</sup> that DU in drinking water can disrupt hormones and cause fertility problems;<sup>12</sup> that it can still be present in urine 20 years after exposure through inhalation;<sup>13</sup> and that it is a potential carcinogen<sup>14, 15</sup> and can cause leukaemia in mice.<sup>16</sup>

In October 2009 the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) reaffirmed that all materials emitting alpha radiation within the body are carcinogens.<sup>17</sup> Taken together with the fact that DU is also a genotoxic heavy metal, there can be little doubt that any amount of DU within the body carries with it an increased risk of cancer. Even Dr. Michael Kilpatrick, US Deputy Director of Force Health Protection and Readiness who was tasked by the Pentagon with briefing journalists on DU before the Iraq War,<sup>18</sup> has conceded that “scientifically...this is not a closed issue”.<sup>19</sup>

Sadly, rather than acknowledge the actual scientific picture, the MoD prefers to repeat that “none of these [desk studies] identifies a causal connection between DU exposure and adverse health effects”,<sup>20</sup> whilst the UK government has opposed international calls for further research in countries where DU has been used.<sup>21</sup> This irresponsible stance was the cause of widespread criticism at the time of the war, with the Chair of the Royal Society’s working group on DU saying that it was

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<sup>10</sup> Baroness Taylor of Bolton, *Iraq: Radioactive Soil* (Hansard, HL Deb, 19 February 2008, c42W).

<sup>11</sup> Marjorie Monleau et al. “Genotoxic and Inflammatory Effects of Depleted Uranium Particles Inhaled by Rats.” *Toxicological Sciences*. 2006;89(1):287-295.

<sup>12</sup> Stefanie Raymond-Whish et al. “Drinking Water with Uranium Below the US EPA Water Standard Causes Estrogen Receptor-Dependent Responses in Female Mice.” *Environmental Health Perspectives*. 2007;115(12):1711-1716

<sup>13</sup> Randall R. Parrish et al. “Depleted uranium contamination by inhalation exposure and its detection after ~ 20 years: Implications for human health assessment.” *Journal of Science of the Total Environment*. 2008;390(1):58-68.

<sup>14</sup> Alexandra C. Miller et al. “Transformation of Human Osteoblast Cells to the Tumorigenic Phenotype by Depleted Uranium-Uranyl Chloride.” *Environmental Health Perspectives*. 1998;106(8):465-471.

<sup>15</sup> Diane M. Stearns et al. Uranyl acetate induces hprt mutations and uranium-DNA adducts in Chinese hamster ovary EM9 cells. *Mutagenesis*. 2005;20(6):417-423.

<sup>16</sup> Alexandra C. Miller et al. “Leukemic transformation of hematopoietic cells in mice internally exposed to depleted uranium.” *Molecular and Cellular Biochemistry*. 2005;279:97-104.

<sup>17</sup> F. El Ghissassi et al., “A review of human carcinogens—part D: radiation,” *The Lancet Oncology* 10, no. 8 (2009): 751–752.

<sup>18</sup> Col. James Naughton and Dr. Michael Kilpatrick, “Briefing on Depleted Uranium” (U.S. Department of Defense, March 14, 2003), <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=2058>.

<sup>19</sup> Janice Harper, “Toxic Wars and Bodies Exposed A Political Ecology of Health Analysis of Gulf War Syndrome,” in *University of California-Berkeley Environmental Politics Colloquium*, 2008.

<sup>20</sup> Bill Rammel MP, Minister of State for the Armed Forces, “Letter to Robin J Balmain, H.M. Coroner, Black County Coroner’s District,” September 11, 2009.

<sup>21</sup> The UK was one of only four states to vote against UN General Assembly Resolution A/C.1/63/L.26 on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2008. The resolution “requests relevant international organizations, to update and complete, as appropriate, their studies and research on the effects of the use of armaments and ammunitions containing depleted uranium on human health and the environment”. For more information see: <http://www.bandedpleteduranium.org/en/a/224.html>.

“highly unsatisfactory to deploy a large amount of a material that is weakly radioactive and chemically toxic without knowing how much soldiers and civilians have been exposed to it.”<sup>22</sup>

In response to criticism, MoD press officers briefed journalists that while they legally had “no obligations to clean up the remains of the DU we used....morally we do recognise an obligation”,<sup>23</sup> and troops were provided with strict guidelines to minimise their risk from DU contamination.<sup>24</sup> The extent of precautions taken was demonstrated when troops retrieving the body of a soldier from a tank shot with US DU rounds in a friendly fire incident wore chemical warfare suits.<sup>25</sup> Sadly, no such protection was provided to Iraqi civilians.

## DU Use in 2003 Iraq Invasion

During the 2003 attack on Iraq, the UK fielded 116 Challenger II tanks, equipped with Charm 3 ammunition, updated versions of both the tanks and ammunition used in 1991. According to the Ministry of Defence, 1.9 tonnes of depleted uranium were fired by UK forces during the invasion,<sup>26</sup> but none has been expended since.<sup>27</sup> This figure equates to around 420 individual rounds,<sup>28</sup> compared to 540 high explosive rounds fired over the same time period.<sup>29</sup> No information about the precise locations of depleted uranium firing has been released to the public, but the Challenger II tanks are known to have been active in built-up areas, such as Basra and Az Zubayr.<sup>30</sup>

It is also highly probable that US forces also deployed depleted uranium munitions in densely populated areas. According to UNEP, expert opinion believed that television footage shown on April 8<sup>th</sup> showed A-10 aeroplanes attacking the Planning and Information Ministries with DU ammunition. There are also numerous anecdotal accounts of tanks and buildings being attacked in residential areas.<sup>31</sup>

Depleted uranium was also incorporated into the armour of the M1A1HA US Abrams tank, beginning in 1998.<sup>32</sup> It is not clear whether this innovation was adopted for all subsequent units produced, or whether it was restricted to only a few. Either way, it seems likely that at least some Abrams tanks

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<sup>22</sup> Alex Kirby, “BBC NEWS | Coalition 'must reveal DU targets',” April 24, 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/2972613.stm>.

<sup>23</sup> Alex Kirby, “BBC NEWS | UK to aid Iraq DU removal,” April 23, 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/2970503.stm>.

<sup>24</sup> *Operations in Iraq: First Reflections* (MOD Director General Corporate Communication, July 2003).

<sup>25</sup> Audrey Gillan, “I never want to hear that sound again’ | The Guardian,” March 31, 2003, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2003/mar/31/iraq.military1>.

<sup>26</sup> *Op. cit. Operations in Iraq: First Reflections*, 2003.

<sup>27</sup> Des Browne (Secretary of State, Ministry of Defence), *Iraq: Peacekeeping Operations* (Hansard, HC Deb, 28 June 2007, c831W).

<sup>28</sup> Using the figure of a 4.5kg penetrator weight, from Stephanie Handley-Sidhu et al., “Corrosion and Fate of Depleted Uranium Penetrators under Progressively Anaerobic Conditions in Estuarine Sediment,” *Environmental Science & Technology* 43, no. 2 (1, 2009): 350-355.

<sup>29</sup> *Operations in Iraq: Lessons for the Future* (MOD Directorate General Corporate Communication, December 2003): 22

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> For example, Raed Jarrar, “Raed in the Middle: 19.11.05,” *Raed in the Middle*, November 19, 2005, [http://raedinthemiddle.blogspot.com/2005\\_11\\_19\\_archive.html](http://raedinthemiddle.blogspot.com/2005_11_19_archive.html).

<sup>32</sup> *Jane's Armour & Artillery 2009-2010*. (Janes Information Group, 2009).

with depleted uranium armour saw active service in the conflict. The use of depleted uranium for this purpose has not been subject to detailed research, and little is known about the health and environmental implications. Nevertheless, the potential for a dangerous release of uranium into the environment is obvious, considering the temperature and forces involved when ammunition strikes a tank. As US forces routinely destroyed incapacitated tanks in order to prevent opposing forces taking possession of them,<sup>33</sup> the likelihood of such a release during the conflict was significantly increased.

The US has not released any hard information about the quantity and location of depleted uranium use by their forces in 2003. This evasive attitude mirrors US policy since the 1991 Gulf War, where figures for depleted uranium ammunition fired by US forces are available, but maps of the precise locations have not been shared, even to a congressionally appointed committee.<sup>34</sup> Had this information been made public, affected areas could have been fenced off and local populations warned of the dangers, greatly reducing the risk to them.

While the UK has not released location figures to the public or to civil society, they did share this information with UNEP as early as June 2003, as well as quantitative data for DU fired by UK forces in the 1991 Gulf War.<sup>35</sup>

Many Iraqi vehicles destroyed by DU fire during the invasion subsequently found their way into the scrap metal trade, putting numerous people at risk from contamination. UNEP estimates that over 8,000 Iraqi tanks, armoured personnel carriers and artillery pieces have been scrapped since 2003. Even with accurate and timely provision of target data from the US and UK, separating and safely disposing of DU contaminated vehicles would have been a difficult task, but without that information it was never going to be possible. A 2005 UNEP investigation of an Iraqi scrap yard showed no separation of military and civilian scrap, and that crushing and cutting of both had occurred with minimal precaution on a site that bordered residential areas, and even had some dwellings within its perimeter.<sup>36</sup>

## **Poor Governance in the Aftermath of the Conflict**

The irresponsible deployment of depleted uranium during the conflict by the Coalition was compounded by subsequent actions which impeded work by the Iraqi authorities to clean up depleted uranium contamination, and prevented meaningful research into the health consequences of the use of DU munitions from taking place in a timely fashion.

Much has already been written about the shortcomings of the Coalition Provisional Authority, established by the US Department of Defence in the immediate aftermath of the invasion, and it is a matter of public record that many members of staff lacked experience in the roles they found themselves in. It is popularly supposed that most were selected on the basis of their ideological

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<sup>33</sup> Team Abrams, "Abrams Tank Systems: Lessons Learned Operation Iraqi Freedom," 2003, <http://www.fprado.com/armorsite/US-Field-Manuals/abrams-oif.pdf>.

<sup>34</sup> *Op. cit.* Committee on Gulf War and Health, 2008: 87

<sup>35</sup> United Nations Environment Programme, *Technical Report on Capacity-building for the Assessment of Depleted Uranium in Iraq* (Geneva, August 2007).

<sup>36</sup> United Nations Environment Programme, *UNEP in Iraq: Post-Conflict Assessment, Clean-up and Reconstruction* (UNEP, December 2007).

alignment with the Bush administration,<sup>37</sup> and in many cases appointees' chronic lack of qualifications make any other conclusion hard to justify.

The first CPA head of health, Dr Frederick Burkle, had a wealth of experience in post-conflict public health, but was replaced after only two weeks by a successor with links to Laura Bush and a background combining international development aid with promoting Christianity and anti-abortion advocacy.<sup>38</sup> Dr Burkle's original priorities of establishing base-line epidemiological data, which would have enabled the evidence-based setting of public health priorities, as well as allowing the assessment of the health effect of factors such as depleted uranium contamination, were scrapped in favour of an anti-smoking publicity drive and moves to privatise the Iraqi health care system.<sup>39</sup>

Environmental governance, which before the war was considered to be much better than other countries in the region, faced an "administrative vacuum", and was placed under the auspices of the Ministry of Health for several months. When it was again made independent in August 2003, its ability to work was severely constrained by a lack of office space. Meanwhile, looting in the immediate aftermath of the invasion had destroyed most laboratory space in Baghdad, so seriously impeding environmental sampling work.<sup>40</sup>

During this time, it appears that no investigative work into depleted uranium contamination went ahead, but it is some measure of the priorities of Iraqis, that in August 2004, one month after the Interim Iraqi government took over from the Coalition Provisional Authority, the Ministry of Environment sent a formal request for UNEP to carry out a comprehensive assessment of DU contamination.<sup>41</sup>

## UK Funding of investigative work

UNEP was unable to secure funds for such a programme, and in any case the collapse in security under the US/UK occupation during 2005, rendered Iraq unsafe for such work by foreign nationals. Despite earlier promises by the MoD,<sup>42</sup> no money was forthcoming to fund decontamination of depleted uranium in Iraq, although UNEP did secure funding from DfID for the training of Iraqi nationals in order to assess the extent of contamination.<sup>43</sup>

The MoD did fund a programme of depleted uranium research and workshops, in the period 2003-2007, but critically this did not extend to any research on the health effects of DU in the field.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, little of this work has been made available in peer reviewed journals, and actual work

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<sup>37</sup> Rajiv Chandrasekaran, "Ties to GOP Trumped Know-How Among Staff Sent to Rebuild Iraq - washingtonpost.com," September 17, 2006, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/09/16/AR2006091600193.html>.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid; Op. cit.* Harper, 2008

<sup>40</sup> *Op. cit* United Nations Environment Programme, December 2007: 18

<sup>41</sup> *Op. cit* United Nations Environment Programme, August 2007: 4

<sup>42</sup> *Op. cit* Kirby, April 23, 2003,

<sup>43</sup> *Op. cit* United Nations Environment Programme, August 2007

<sup>44</sup> B Smith, *The MOD Depleted Uranium Programme Independent Review Board: Closure Report* (British Geological Survey Commissioned Report, 2007).

on the ground in Iraq was severely limited. For example a project originally envisaged as a 'detailed scientific research programme on destroyed tanks'<sup>45</sup> was reduced to investigating only two strike locations because of security concerns and the prior removal of destroyed vehicles by British troops.<sup>46</sup>

This limited funding of investigatory work by the UK government is in stark contrast to the active role taken by both the UK and US in Explosive Ordnance Disposal, where teams in both sectors of occupied Iraq quickly began to safely dispose of both Iraqi and Coalition ordnance.<sup>47</sup>

## Investigative work

The project eventually undertaken by UNEP with DfID funding was seriously hindered by the refusal of the US to provide DU targeting data on for either 1991 or 2003. In the absence of such information, UNEP compiled a database of known DU strike sites using information from the Iraqi Radiological Protection Centre, and information in the public domain such as media reports and satellite imagery to put together a list of four locations for initial investigation.<sup>48</sup>

The funding received from DfID appears to have been insufficient for even such a limited investigatory programme, as teams on the ground were not supplied with radiation meters able to detect alpha radiation, and a lack of basic equipment such as disposable gloves increased the chances of cross-contamination of samples. Despite these drawbacks, and the three year gap between the invasion and site visits, the team were able to confirm DU contamination at Az Zubayr where UK Challenger II tanks had been active. Amongst UNEPs recommendations for future work was a call for the international community to fund future projects by the Iraqi Environment Ministry, a call which appears to have been ignored in London and Washington<sup>49</sup>

## Responsibility and legality

Depleted uranium is not specifically banned under existing arms control law, in part because its toxic characteristics are secondary, rather than primary effects, putting it outside the remit of laws designed to restrict chemical weapons. However, its use runs counter to a number of principles of International Humanitarian Law, both codified and customary.

Despite having an obligation under the Geneva Conventions to refrain from using weapons which cause superfluous injury or unnecessary suffering, or that have indiscriminate effects, the UK chose to deploy DU during the 2003 war, ignoring warnings from experts about the dangers. The International Committee of the Red Cross has also identified a norm of customary international humanitarian law that "all feasible precautions must be taken to avoid, and in any event to

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<sup>45</sup> *Op. cit Operations in Iraq: First Reflections*, 2003.

<sup>46</sup> David Smith and Ronald Brown, *Radiological Assessment of Depleted Uranium Impact Locations in Iraq* (Defence Science & Technology Laboratory Environmental Sciences Department, 2006).

<sup>47</sup> *Op. cit* MOD Directorate General Corporate Communication, December 2003:68

<sup>48</sup> *Op. cit* United Nations Environment Programme, August 2007

<sup>49</sup> *ibid*

minimise, incidental damage to the environment” during warfare, and that a lack of scientific certainty as to the environmental effects of a weapon does not absolve a party from this responsibility.<sup>50</sup>

Furthermore, as a party to Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions, the UK is prohibited from using weapons with indiscriminate effects,<sup>51</sup> and must “take all feasible precautions in the choice of means and methods of attack with a view to avoiding, and in any extent minimising, incidental loss of civilian life [or] injury to civilians”.<sup>52</sup> Taking these provisions together, it can clearly be seen that there was a binding legal obligation upon the UK to exercise precaution when considering the use of DU in Iraq, and that the use of DU in urban areas such as Az Zubayr is fundamentally inconsistent with that obligation. As such, the use of DU in the war by the UK may well constitute a breach of international humanitarian law.

As a member of the coalition, the UK must also bear responsibility for the actions of its ally: the United States, whose use of DU was almost certainly more widespread than that of the UK, and which showed an extreme aversion to transparency and accountability. The reluctance of the US to provide information about its targeting to international agencies undoubtedly exposed the Iraqi population to unnecessary risk, responsibility for which must also rest with the UK government.

As an occupying power, the UK also had specific responsibilities towards the population of Iraq. The chronic mismanagement of Iraqi institutions retarded efforts to assess the extent of contamination, and prevented moves to build a picture of the health effects of DU use in the conflict. The occupying powers must also bear responsibility for the appalling lack of security in the years following the invasion, which also prevented this work going ahead, as well as costing the lives of so many Iraqi civilians.

Despite recognising a ‘moral obligation’ to clean up DU contamination in Iraq,<sup>53</sup> the UK only provided funding for a very limited programme of investigative work. As such, the UK and its partner, the US demonstrably failed to deal with environmental contamination with potential to seriously harm the health of Iraqi civilians, despite the fact that it was entirely caused by their actions.

## Conclusion

UK forces deployed depleted uranium weapons in Iraq, despite their presenting a clear risk to the health of civilians, in defiance of scientific warnings, and quite possibly in breach of international humanitarian law.

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<sup>50</sup> “International Humanitarian Law - Customary Law,” International Committee of the Red Cross, <http://www.icrc.org/ihl.nsf/WebART/612-044?OpenDocument>

<sup>51</sup> Additional Protocol I 1977 .Art 51. (4). c.

<http://www.icrc.org/ihl.nsf/7c4d08d9b287a42141256739003e636b/f6c8b9fee14a77fdc125641e0052b079>

<sup>52</sup> Additional Protocol I 1977. 57. (2) b. ii.

<http://www.icrc.org/ihl.nsf/7c4d08d9b287a42141256739003e636b/f6c8b9fee14a77fdc125641e0052b079Art>

<sup>53</sup> *Op. cit* Kirby, April 23, 2003.

The subsequent mishandling of the occupation, a lack of transparency about areas targeted, and the failure to properly decontaminate areas affected by DU significantly increased the risk to civilians and also prevented remediation by third parties.

Although the war itself was of dubious legality, this should not be an excuse for not scrutinising the means employed; indeed it is arguable that when a war is of questionable legality, the methods of warfare must be held to an even greater level of scrutiny. It is clear that the use of depleted uranium weapons in the 2003 invasion of Iraq failed to live up to the UK's international legal obligations, and that the UK compounded that failure by neglecting to clean up DU contamination or to take steps to minimise the risks to Iraqi civilians.

All of these actions were the result of political choices by individuals who should be held to account. It is hoped that the inquiry will find space in their conclusions to begin that process.

*The **UK Uranium Weapons Network** campaigns for a precautionary ban on the use of uranium in conventional weapon systems and includes: The Campaign Against the Arms Trade, Campaign Against Depleted Uranium, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, the Environmental Justice Foundation, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, MEDACT, the Muslim Council of Britain, the Northern Friends Peace Board, Pax Christi, People & Planet, Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW) and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.*

*The Network is a member of the International Coalition to Ban Uranium Weapons (ICBUW), for more information on the ICBUW or the Network, please visit: [www.bandepleteduranium.org](http://www.bandepleteduranium.org)*