



**European Organisation
of Military Associations**

33, av. Général de Gaulle
B-1050 Bruxelles
Tel.: 0032.2.626.06.83
Fax: 0032.2.626.06.99
Email: euromil@euromil.org

EUROMIL's position on Depleted Uranium (DU)

Background

It is known that DU weapons were used in the Gulf War, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq. The debate on the impact of the use of these weapons on the health of those using the weapons, local populations, troops in mission in these areas and the environment has intensified over the years since their first use.

DU shells burn on impact, releasing microscopic, radioactive and toxic dust particles of uranium oxide that can travel hundreds of miles with the wind. DU can contaminate by seeping into the land and water, but the greatest danger that almost everyone agrees exists, comes when the particles are inhaled. From the lungs these particles travel through the blood stream, often landing in vital organs. Once inside the human body, DU can harm these internal organs both by its chemical toxicity as a heavy metal and its release of low-level doses of radiation over a long period of time. The toxic and radiological effects of uranium contamination may weaken the immune system. They may also cause acute respiratory conditions like pneumonia, flu-like symptoms, and severe coughs, renal or gastrointestinal illnesses as well as kidney diseases and several cancers.

It will be probably take many years before the full impact of the use of DU weapons is known.

Position EUROMIL

EUROMIL recognises that there may be long-term implications for the health of soldiers performing duties in areas that DU weapons were used. To counteract any such effects governments should ensure that measures are put in place that guarantees the safety and protection of troops during their missions in areas contaminated as a result of the use of DU.

These protections should include the following:

- Full medical screening of troops
 - prior to departure
 - at regular interval during mission
 - on immediate return from the mission area
 - at regular intervals for the ten years post-mission

- Areas in which DU weapons were used to be clearly identified
- Pre-Posting briefings to troops on the known dangers resulting from DU weapons use
- Regular environmental impact assessment of contaminated areas, e.g. ground water testing and soil analysis.

EUROMIL also recognises that there may be long-term implications for the health of the population in the area where DU weapons were used. Besides, the impact on the environment can have a negative influence on the living and working conditions in the contaminated area, as well during the military operation as many decades after the attack with DU ammunition.

Therefore EUROMIL strongly urges governments to ban the use of DU weapons and to use their influence to appeal to their worldwide partners to abandon the use of these weapons. EUROMIL recalls resolution 1996/16 of the UN Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities (29 August 1996) in which this Sub-Commission urges all States to be guided in their national policies by the need to curb the production and the spread of among other things weaponry containing depleted uranium.
