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U.S. Depleted Uranium as Malicious as Syrian Chemical Weapons

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By the time you have likely heard of the atrocity that recently took place in which over 1,000 Syrian civilians reportedly died at the hands of a chemical weapon attack. Seeing the video and images of dead or helpless Syrian civilians struggling for life reminds me of another terrible weapon of war -- depleted uranium.

It is no secret that the U.S., with the assistance of other governments, used depleted uranium in the Gulf and Iraq War. A simple Google search of this topic can produce dozens and dozens of credible reports or stories to confirm these war crimes. For example, an important report on Harvard University's website discusses the fallout of depleted uranium contamination in Iraq. Dr. Souad N. Al-Azzawi, who authored the report after the Gulf War, wrote that:

"Depleted Uranium (DU) weaponry has been used against Iraq for the first time in the history of recent wars. The magnitude of the complications and damage related to the use of such radioactive and toxic weapons on the environment and the human population mostly results from the intended concealment, denial and misleading information released by the Pentagon about the quantities, characteristics and the area's in Iraq, in which these weapons have been used."

Similarly, as Democracy Now! reported in an interview with Al Jazeera reporter Dahr Jamail, "the U.S. invasion of Iraq has left behind a legacy of cancer and birth defects suspected of being caused by the U.S. military's extensive use of depleted uranium and white phosphorus." Democracy Now! wrote:

"Noting the birth defects in the Iraqi city of Fallujah, Jamail says: 'They're extremely hard to bear witness to. But it's something that we all need to pay attention to ... What this has generated is, from 2004 up to this day, we are seeing a rate of congenital malformations in the city of Fallujah that has surpassed even that in the wake of the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that nuclear bombs were dropped on at the end of World War II.'"

Moreover, Robert Koehler, a HuffPost blogger, has written extensively about the U.S. government's use of depleted uranium in Iraq. The following passage from Koehler's blog "The Suffering of Fallujah" gives us an idea of the immense impact that depleted uranium has had on Iraqi civilians:

"Thus last November, a group of British and Iraqi doctors petitioned the U.N. to investigate the alarming rise in birth defects at Fallujah's hospitals. 'Young women in Fallujah,' they wrote ... are terrified of having children because of the increasing number of babies born grotesquely deformed, with no heads, two heads, a single eye in their foreheads, scaly bodies or missing limbs. In addition, young children in Fallujah are now experiencing hideous cancers and leukemias.'"

Koehler continues:

"The International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health has just published an epidemiological study, "Cancer, Infant Mortality and Birth Sex-Ratio in Fallujah, Iraq 2005-2009," which has found, among much else, that Fallujah is experiencing higher rates of cancer, leukemia and infant mortality than Hiroshima and Nagasaki did in 1945."

Although Iraqi civilians have born the brunt of this awful weapon, American soldiers that served in the Gulf and Iraq War are also suffering from the fallout of depleted uranium. This issue is discussed in-depth by the Campaign Against Depleted Uranium, which campaigns to "ban on the use of uranium in all conventional weapons and weapon systems and for monitoring, health care, compensation and environmental remediation for communities affected by their use."

Countries around the world have called for the ban of depleted uranium, but unfortunately this demand has fallen on deaf ears. When asked in 2003 about Iraq's complaints about depleted uranium shells, Colonel James Naughton of U.S. Army Material Command stated in a Pentagon briefing that "They want it to go away because we kicked the crap out of the them."

Last week, UK foreign secretary William Hague, said that the use of chemical weapons in Syria is "not something that a humane or civilized world can ignore." Ironically, Western countries such as the UK and their allies have appeared to ignore the use of weapons that are equally vicious.

When "non-Westerners" make use of weapons of mass destruction, there is outrage and calls for military intervention from "the West," but when "Westerners" themselves use them, it is totally permissible, and the world can hardly react.

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