

SILENT GENOCIDE

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"After the Americans destroyed our village and killed many of us, we also lost our houses and have nothing to eat. However, we would have endured these miseries and even accepted them, if the Americans had not sentenced us all to death."

This will not be easy to read, especially if you've projected evil out of your own heart, into some cave in Afghanistan or a spider hole in Iraq, and reduced the age-old question it inspires to this one: How can we bomb it off the face of the earth?

Before the damage we inflict grows greater, before history's judgment gets worse, before we contaminate the whole world -- even before we vote in the next election -- we must stop what we're doing. We must stop now.

It's time to listen for a moment not to defense analysts briefing officers, pols or pundits, but to people like Jooma Khan, a grandfather who lives in a village in Laghman Province, in northeastern Afghanistan, who is quoted above. Surely he deserves 30 seconds of our undivided attention.

"When I saw my deformed grandson," he told an interviewer in March of 2003, "I realized that my hopes of the future have vanished for good. (This is) different from the hopelessness of the Russian barbarism, even though at that time I lost my older son Shafiqullah. This time, however, I know we are part of the invisible genocide brought on us by America, a silent death from which I know we will not escape."

We're waging war-plus in Afghanistan and Iraq -- in effect, nuclear war, with our widespread use of depleted-uranium-tipped shells and missiles. This is no secret. DU, with its extraordinary penetrating power and explode-on-impact capability, helps assure our military dominance everywhere we go. But people like Jooma Khan and his grandson reap its toxic legacy. So, of course, do our own troops.

Kahn's words are only a sliver of the damning testimony contained in the documents of the International Criminal Tribunal for Afghanistan, a Japanese citizens' initiative that recently concluded its two-year inquiry into the first phase of the Bush Administration's war on terror. But they say everything that we cannot hear.

If we *could* hear Jooma Khan, and others who are sounding the alarm about DU, such as former Livermore Labs geologist Leuren Moret, who testified at the tribunal, there would not be mere thousands of people in the streets of American cities demanding that we stop the war, but hundreds of thousands, or millions -- the sort of numbers that turn out in other parts

of the world.

The use of DU weaponry is not the extent of our criminal irresponsibility in Afghanistan and Iraq, which led to the tribunal's guilty verdict against George Bush on charges of war crimes, but it's the most chilling. (You can check out the full report at, among other places, www.mindfully.org/Reform/2004/Afghanistan-Criminal-Tribunal10mar04.htm)

As Moret testified, depleted uranium turns into a infinitesimally fine dust after it explodes; individual particles are smaller than a virus or bacteria. And, "It is estimated that one millionth of a gram accumulating in a person's body would be fatal. There are no known methods of treatment."

And DU dust is everywhere. A minimum of 500 or 600 tons now litter Afghanistan, and several times that amount are spread across Iraq. In terms of global atmospheric pollution, we've already released the equivalent of 400,000 Nagasaki bombs, Moret said.

The numbers are overwhelming, but the potential horrors only get worse. DU dust does more than wreak havoc on the immune systems of those who breathe or touch it; the substance also alters one's genetic code.

Thus, birth defects are way up in Afghanistan since the invasion: children "born with no eyes, no limbs, tumors protruding from their mouths . . . deformed genitalia," according to the tribunal report. This ghastly toll on the unborn -- on the future -- has led investigators to coin the term "silent genocide" to describe the effects of this horrific weapon.

The Pentagon's response to such charges is denial, denial, denial. And the American media is its moral co-conspirator.

But blame is beside the point. Surely even those who still await "conclusive proof" that DU is the cause, or a factor, in the mystery illnesses and birth defects emanating from the war zones, can see the logic in halting its use now.

Global terrorism? Listen to Jooma Khan. Then look in the mirror.

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The World Depleted Uranium/Uranium Weapons Conference, held in Hamburg, Oct 16-19, is now available for audio download and replay/airplay at http://www.traprockpeace.org/depleted_uranium_hamburg03.html

You may also pre-order the Conference Reader through this link.

More than 200 participants represented 21 nations, including Iraq, Afghanistan, Australia, Japan, Canada, Sweden, Ireland, France, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, Netherlands, Austria, Denmark, Italy, Spain, Algeria, Cuba, and Malta, UK and the US.

Over 35 speakers including scientists, medical professionals, Iraqi medical and environmental professionals, independent researchers, international legal experts, military professionals, a nuclear weapons lab whistleblower, a prosecutor for the International War Crimes Tribunal for Afghanistan, veterans and their families, civilians, NGO, and peace and anti-globalization activists presented their most recent findings and issues about the effects of these illegal weapons. Iraqi scientist, Dr. Souad Al-Azzawi, received the internationally recognized Nuclear Free Future Award and prize of 10,000 Euros on October 12, just prior to the Conference. She presented her findings on environmental studies of DU contamination of air, soil and water in southern Iraq from the 1991 Gulf War. For information on the speakers, see <http://www.uraniumweaponsconference.de/speakers.htm>.

The evidence coming from the scientists, health professionals and legal experts at this Conference is clear: "DU is causing significant health effects worldwide, and it is illegal under existing international law and convention," concluded conference planner Marion KYpker, co-coordinator of the German anti-weapons group Gewaltfreie Aktion Atomwaffen Abschaffen (GAAA). "Now it's up to the activist community to force rogue governments like the US and Britain to observe international law the same way they preach it to other nations."

The Index at http://www.traprockpeace.org/depleted_uranium_hamburg03.html is primarily audio, with links to 34 mp3 format files of presentations and interviews that are downloadable. They may be copied for non-profit use, replayed on computers, or burned to CD audio format for replay on CD players or by radio stations. We encourage distribution to radio programs which are free to use the material. In the few cases where audio was not available, we have provided the text of presentations or other pertinent resources. In addition, you will find select conference reports and a conference photo-album.

The audio index, with related resources, was a collaborative effort of the Conference and Traprock Peace Center.

For information on the conference, with conference reports and resolutions, see www.uraniumweaponsconference.de.