



## Technological Death

My first thought this month was to take a busman's holiday from history, agriculture, soil systems and sundry topics, and yet I find it impossible. Underpaid agriculture is why we seem destined to have serial wars. Let me tell you a story only the victims understand. You will be able to make the appropriate connection.

Why do I call this column "Newsletter?"

A reader, and a friend, posed that question recently with an add-on comment: "Some of what you write is history, and even current events have been passed over."

"Exactly," was my response. "That has become the American way, just pass it over." One pass-over item that has me waking up with a start came housed in an interview I taped with Major Doug Rokke, an ordnance specialist who was in charge of the army team that evaluated the consequences of using depleted uranium in shells and bombs.

Uranium munitions have barely reached the newsletter circuit, much less the metro prints and magazines. The subject is apparently so uncomfortable, it has achieved the cockroach's rejection of light.

This story first walked into the light when the military ordered up a study. Its purpose was to make certain that everyone had the education and training necessary to cope with this weapon of mass destruction. A secondary objective was to write specs for cleanup when the battle was over. The matter of medical care was also to be more than a footnote.

An explanation for the layman is now in order. Depleted uranium rounds are byproducts of the uranium enrichment process the U.S. Department of Energy uses to extract fissionable isotopes from uranium 234 and 235 to make nuclear bombs and weapons. Over 99 percent by mass of everything that goes into this pro-

cess comes out as uranium hexafluoride (UF6), common term, *depleted uranium!*

### THRIFT IN GOVERNMENT

There are hundreds of thousands of tons of this stuff laying around all over government facilities. Then the U.S. Department of Defense discovered, based on work by German and U.S. researchers, that depleted uranium munitions could be fabricated for combat use.

## A boron shield is not adequate for coping with spent uranium.

The new weapon was extremely effective. It could literally vaporize a tank, turn a home into an inferno, pulverize a concrete or brick building, and cloud the landscape with almost instant death to people and farm animals. The new weapon was to be the fabled silver bullet. It destroyed everything and answered the military objective to kill people and destroy property.

Rokke explained, "They take uranium hexafluoride — a gas — and process it to achieve the isotope uranium 238. It is radioactive, and it is also heavy metal toxic, not unlike lead in paint dust." The uranium rounds are thus created. When the Abrams tank fires a depleted uranium round, "It's a gigantic dart of uranium, solid uranium. Each and every round is over ten pounds of solid uranium. When that round is flying through the air, it's already on fire — it's already burning when it leaves the muzzle of a gun. On impact you have catastrophic secondary explosions and release of contaminated dust."

One can visualize the instant devastation when a truck or building is hit.

My next question was, "What does this weapon of mass destruction do to the soldier firing the gun, or to the person standing in the periphery of the explosion, or to a farm caught in the fallout?"

"The individual who is firing the gun is an early recipient of contamination out of the breach. He breathes it in. Then uranium is shed all along the flight path," Major Doug Rokke said. "On impact you have uranium spread far and wide. This is your uranium dust."

As the final report revealed, there is no known respiratory protection. The dust is absorbed through the skin, then distributed through the body systemically.

### THE PLOT THICKENS

The fallout is not restricted to the local contact area. It is sucked up high to be picked up by the winds and rained hundreds, even thousands of miles down range. It can be picked up by so-called trade winds and circle the globe. It creates a toxic wasteland. It has been kept in check only because minimal use has been made of this weapon . . . *so far*.

"Their lungs are insulted?" I asked Major Rokke.

"That's an understatement. When my team started a cleanup after Gulf War I, here was the situation. Most of the casualties of Desert Storm were a consequence of friendly fire, usually when that fire involved uranium munitions. The dust was the assassin. That's what happened to our team. We wore respiratory protection, gas masks, government issue."

The result, the documents show, was reactive airway disease. The chemical toxicity was seated in particulate irritation, a kind of bronchitis.

The cleanup team didn't escape the syndrome, nor did the natives and farm producers down track from combat. Rokke himself is now a victim of the

airway disease, a syndrome estimated to shorten the lives of those who inhaled air in affected areas during Gulf War I. That's official, in terms of Veteran Affairs' paperwork.

A boron shield is not adequate for coping with spent uranium. Boron is good for neutrons, but not for all radioactive particles. You can't protect a dairy cow or beef animal entirely with boron in the ration.

The United States Army, NATO, Canada, England, Australia, Germany and Israel, all "adopted the requirements I put forth for the U.S. Army," Rokke said, "And that requires everyone within half the length of a football field to wear full respiratory protection to mitigate exposure."

Rokke and his team wrote the guidelines for U.S. Army Regulation 700-48. The Commanding General and the Secretary of the Army at the time both signed to make it mandatory. It requires immediate environmental remediation and immediate medical care.

### OBSOLETE WAR

It must be understood that so far depleted uranium has been restricted to isolated incidents. Gulf War I was apparently a low casualty war, this based on the roll call as men and women came home. I have previously reported on the anti-germ warfare pyridostigmine bromide pill given to those soldiers. It turned healthy service people into casualties shortly after that post-battle roll call.

Now comes word that an official report advised the Department of Defense that it was no longer possible to use spent uranium munitions. Their use made pale into insignificance poison gas, even chemical warfare.

"We can't effectively clean up the battlefield, let alone widespread contamination," Major Rokke said. "We cannot provide prompt and proper medical care to our service people, we can't even provide long-term medical care."

The DoD didn't care for this prognosis. Never mind army regulations that require the collection of all spent uranium rounds. All unexploded ordnance must

be picked up. The entire vehicle or structure is to be removed. All these materials, regulations say, must be disposed. They can't be buried, of course. The 24 contaminated vehicles from Gulf War I were sent home and disposed of at an approved site. Once the trash and artifacts of battle have been removed, next the topsoil down to 8 inches has to be removed. One can imagine clearing a battleground farm of its topsoil, then telling the contaminated grower to continue farming.

Are we still using these weapons?

"We are using them as we speak in Afghanistan and in Iraq. The United States deliberately and willfully provided them to Israel for use in Lebanon. Israel used uranium bunker busters. Uranium land mines also became a favored weapon in Lebanon — area denial anti-personnel mines (ADAM) and pursuit deterrent munition (PDM) land mines.

Many military men have expressed concern that the United States no longer complies with the Geneva Conventions and seems indifferent to the contamination of Lebanon.

The mines in Lebanon are still there, and their locations are unknown.

As it stands, the United States is the primary manufacturer and distributor of weapons of mass destruction — chemical, biological, nuclear. It is also the largest user of these weapons worldwide. Of even greater importance is that the war on terror has installed more terror than anything outlaw dissidents could ever hope to account for. We (all of us) have destroyed the infrastructure in Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, the Balkans. We (all of us) have released all the toxic chemical compounds — organic and inorganic — on farm land, water supplies, cities and into the ambient air. We (all of us) have enabled our leaders to bully nations under our thumb with bad science, GMOs, strangler seeds, land-consuming fertilizers and predatory corporations. As a consequence, the casualty rates are astronomical.

### OUTSIDE THE LAW

The Geneva Conventions, according to the United Nations Subcommittee on Human Rights, say that spent uranium munitions are illegal, and users are absolutely violating the treaty. Yet these violations proceed without hesitation and with full knowledge of that fact.

How can you clean up a country, a city, a farm? I asked that question wondering who would try the guilty, and Rokke supplied this answer:

"You can't! The only thing is to evacuate the people and walk away."

"But they're not being evacuated?" I knew the answer, but I wanted the major on record.

"They're not being evacuated. They're being *brought back in*. There is no medical care. They'll die young." — as will Major Doug Rokke's team members. None of the medical problems resulting from DU exposure answer to known therapies. If stabilization is achieved, it is only temporary. All countries, defendants and aggressors alike, are affected. The user is a victim along with the enemy.

There is only one answer to the syllogistic premises stated above: *War is obsolete*. It is as obsolete as CAFO livestock management, simplistic salt fertilizers, and toxic rescue chemistry. In war and peace the planet cannot deal with all the toxic releases our standing economic plan — perpetual war for perpetual debt — accounts for.

The lesser toxins in terms of LD<sub>50</sub> ("lethal dose 50 percent," or median lethal dose, in test animals) permit survival with debilitation, but spent nuclear weapons escalate the damage. They tear up the RNA and DNA, and pass genetic distortion on to perhaps 20 subsequent generations.

The now-retired major concludes, "It is against international law, it is against common sense, against our own U.S. Army orders and regulations, against the laws of land warfare, against the moral code and the will of God, Allah, Buddha and anyone with two grains of brain."

Israel is the first nation to use uranium munitions in broad-spectrum com-

bat. It used these weapons in the Sinai against the Egyptians in 1973-1974. The area is still messed up. Then there was that encore performance in Lebanon.

### CASUALTIES

The metro press coverage likes to tell us about the 3,000-plus casualties in Iraq, but little mention is made of the 50,000-plus badly wounded soldiers, and none at all is made of the victims of spent uranium. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, between April 1990 and May 2006, 1.2 million of our sons and daughters were deployed to the Persian Gulf. As of May 30, 2006, only 943,470 of these sons and daughters are still alive of those deployed. Over 180,000 have died. The most recent data available to me reveals that 383,913 have submitted applications for permanent disability and permanent compensation with the Department of Veterans Affairs, all as a consequence of service in the ongoing nightmare called Iraq.

Why don't the figures line up?

The person in charge of admitted casualties simply lies. Even so, the Department of Veterans Affairs has a confirmed death count of over 16,000. In military parlance, KIA means "killed in action," and WIA means "wounded in action." DNBI means "disease and non-battle injuries." Deaths as a consequence of military service, 180,000.

### THE PLAN

Gulf War II — our ongoing Iraq War — was planned as early as 1990. It had nothing to do with defending the United States. Iraq posed no offensive military threat against the United States, according to Doug Rokke, the officer who sought to pick up the pieces. There were

no weapons of mass destruction, and this was known.

Why Iraq?

"Oil," was Rokke's response. "Total control of oil resources throughout the Middle East."

Those 26 bases in Iraq offer no posh duty. The service personnel are getting sick and dying, and once those service people become ill, they're more or less abandoned.

Says Doug Rokke "They're billing me for my medical care."

"We account for atrocities, rapes, murders and burglaries continuously. But the military *investigates itself*." It's like Willie Sutton investigating himself. The worst offenders get a slap on the wrist, no more.

### THE NEW AGENT ORANGE

At the end of Gulf War I, generals Schwarzkopf and Powell knew uranium munitions were a new Agent Orange. The war was stopped because they recognized that removing Saddam Hussein was to ignite a civil war and enter a tar pit, as is now the case.

In order to send out the above message, Major Rokke does lectures, college courses, radio, TV, interviews. He calls on congressional staffers. Some few staffers take note, but there are many congressional employees, and there are even more press agents in the military who toe the party line. "We'll look at it." "We'll study it."

Technology has gone crazy. Once the Rachel Carson *Silent Spring* warning threshold was crossed, the door flew open. Now generations unborn are to pay the price for madness and a lie.

CBS News, 60 Minutes, 20-20 and Nightline have all carried parts of this

story, but the public does not want to know what happened. They do not want to deal with the consequences. Too many people prefer to be mushrooms and live in the dark. They have their football, their baseball and their beer. They see no need to defend their freedoms. Indeed, as the Grand Inquisitor remarked in Dostoevsky's yarn, "They will lay their freedoms at our feet," the tag line being, "Feed us."

For more information on depleted uranium, consult [www.traprockpeace.org](http://www.traprockpeace.org).

— Charles Walters



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