

NEW ZEALAND GOVERNMENT WEAPONS DEAL REJECTED AFTER ONE MP DOWN.

8th October 2012.

Extracts from the New Zealand Herald 27th June 2012.

A Bill banning dealing with depleted uranium weapons has been rejected by MP's because the Maori party was one MP down

Phil Twyford MP, the originator of the bill (The Depleted Uranium Prohibition Bill), said his bill was intended to send a strong message internationally that New Zealand did not support the use of depleted uranium.

Depleted uranium, a byproduct of uranium, is used by the military to produce hard armour piecing and bunker busting missiles.

New Zealand troops and the Government do not use depleted uranium munitions but were exposed to their use while in combat overseas.

New Zealand troops are urine tested to detect the level of radiation in their system when they return home after service.

We legislated to ban cluster bombs and land mines in exactly the same way as a growing movement of countries that say these weapons are inhumane- they should not be used and should be banned.

Mr Twyford said there was not definitive proof of harm but evidence was strong it was the cause of birth defects and cancer in Iraq and land contamination.

He said it was difficult to carry out scientific tests because military authorities would not provide coordinates of where uranium weapons were used.

The International Coalition to Ban Uranium Weapons wrote an open letter to the National Party saying three United Nations recommendations had found depleted uranium is hazardous.

This view was shared by the World Health Organisation and the International Association for Environmental Philosophy.

National MP for Wairarapa John Hayes said National would not support the bill through to select committee.

New Zealand has declared itself nuclear free. It is hard to understand that any member of Parliament would obstruct the process of such a bill. Perhaps this is a further move to break down the nuclear free resulting military barriers between the US and New Zealand.

The New Zealand Nuclear Test Veterans Association's (NZNTVA) awareness of DU was through the UK Parliament's admission of the UK's long kept secret of wrapping the nuclear bombs detonated at Operation Grapple in depleted uranium to fool the Americans into thinking that the UK had bombs of bigger yields than they actually had. The danger to the servicemen at those tests was increased because the UK could not extend the full protective measures against DU because it would make it obvious to the US that DU was being used. (NZNTVA made information on this revelation by the UK Government available to the NZ Government, Veterans Affairs, and other associations involved in our affairs. As usual they all ignored it. No official concern for those exposed, or their offspring was shown.

In a 2001 UK Sunday Herald report by journalist Rob Edwards he in part stated;

“The first confirmation that DU was present in the Pacific tests came in a letter from the MoD to a Scottish veteran in Fraserburg. ‘There were quantities of depleted uranium used in weapons at Christmas Island’ wrote the Mod official from Whitehall”. The uranium, (a long living-4.5 billion year alpha emitter) was wrapped around the core of the bomb to boost their yield”.

We could not allow that fact to be revealed in the form of extra protection for our servicemen. We therefore sailed our servicemen close to the detonation, and did not give them the protection needed. Worse than that we did not record the radiation readings in case they fell into the hands of a clever American observer who would have noticed that the radiation levels did not coincide with the explosion. All the readings were faked and fixed in the interests of national security. Once we had started our great lie, however, we had to continue with it”.

On 4th December 2002, Bernard Jenkins MP stated in a debate in the British Parliament;

“The Government concocted the biggest hoax in this country's history. They exploded an atom bomb that contained so much uranium that it caused a 750,000 tonnes explosion which made the Americans think that we had an H-Bomb.”

Because of the known dangers of DU and the exposure of the New Zealand servicemen at Operation Grapple the chair of the NZNTVA developed a close association with the late Professor Albrecht Schott founder of the World Centre for DU Research, Berlin, and information from Dr Doug Rokke, Major, USAR, former Gulf War DU team Health Physicist and DU Project Director, and with other academics involved in DU and the resulting health and genetic problems. Verified DU exposure adverse health effects include; Reactive airway disease, neurological abnormalities, kidney stones and chronic kidney pain, rashes, vision degradation, night vision losses, cataracts, gum tissue

problems, lymphoma, various forms of skin and organ dysfunction, cancer, neuro-psychological disorders, uranium in semen, sexual dysfunction, birth defects in offspring. (Rokke, Stewart, Morgan et al).

Many people consider DU to be a new nuclear product, and because of the use of the word “depleted” one with little or no toxicity. That is far from the case. According to a letter sent by the US Subcommittee of the S-1 Executive Committee to General Groves (October 30 1943) on the use of Radioactive Materials (now including DU) as a Military Weapon”, the Subcommittee stated that ;

“Beta emitting products could get into the gastrointestinal tract from polluted water, or food , or air. From the air they would get into the mucus of the nose, throat, bronchi etc, and be swallowed. The stomach, caecum and the rectum, where contents remain for longer periods than elsewhere would be most likely affected”. It is conceivable that ulcers and perforations of the gut followed by death could be produced, even without any general effects from radiation”.

The New Zealand Herald item on the failed “Depleted Uranium Prohibition Bill” also stated; *“New Zealand troops and the Government do not use depleted uranium munitions but were exposed to their use while in combat overseas. (writers emphasis.*

New Zealand troops are urine tested to detect the level of radiation in their system when they return to home after service”.

Urine tested when the troops return home! That of course is far too late to effectively assist any serviceperson and his/her offspring from nuclear related ill-health or death. Indeed given the political, military and scientific deceit on nuclear issues exercised by the UK, US, and Australian Governments in particular, and a lack of a full duty of care by the New Zealand Government and Veterans Affairs, it is highly likely that DU exposed NZ veterans’ will, in the future, be subjected to the same lack of care by the NZ Government and its agencies. Given the past experiences of the New Zealand Operation Grapple and the Mururoa veterans,’ anyone contemplating the Military as a career, needs to give serious thought to their health beyond military service. Certainly any veteran who suffers ill health through exposure to DU but whose health symptoms to not fit any “official” VANZ restricted list of accepted disabilities and probably sourced from the pro-nuclear US, Australia, or the UK, they may well find, that they end up living a life of chronic ill health, an inability to work, and living on the bread line, with genetically affected children, and with little or no assistance from Veterans Affairs NZ at all. In addition to that, the veteran and his families’ problems are compounded if the veteran and/or his offspring are suffering multi unrecognized health problems but that could be caused by DU/radiation create and medical bills which seriously erode the veteran’s income further.

Professor Schott gave evidence to “*The Gulf War Illnesses Independent Public Inquiry, London 2004*”, of about 50 different illnesses related to Gulf war Syndrome which is caused among other things by DU Contamination. He also listed a number of miscarriages and seriously genetically affected children from veterans who had been urine tested positive for DU. He relates scientific investigation results of the chromosomes of these people, and they, like the New Zealand Operation Grapple veterans studied in the Massey University Cytogenetic Research project, showed extreme chromosome damage. The frustrating part is that like the NZ nuclear test veterans and the Vietnam War Veterans’, these illnesses and deaths were not caused by enemy action. That is a risk that serving military personnel accept as a natural hazard related to their service. However when service people are willfully exposed to ionizing radiation through experimentation of nuclear weapons, or to battle field nuclear weapons without proper protection, then not only is the government initiating such actions responsible for the service personnel’s duty of care, but also the New Zealand Government that provided our troops for such duty..

The targets of DU. The surrounding ground area and the air are highly contaminated by DU which on impact forms into a very fine airborne mist. This mist is easily inhaled and settles over a wide area. DU is not only dangerous to the enemy but also the local populations and the advancing friendly troops. Major Rokke in his role of DU expert to the US Military had recommended in his manual on DU, the use of respirators and protective clothing for advancing troops, the burying of target wreckage, and the burying of surface ground around the target. His instructions have been largely ignored. In fact during a tour with his team of eastern war zones to evaluate the dangers of DU use, he was instructed that he was not to report any data that may deny the United States the use of nuclear weapons.

The news of the failed bill in a nuclear free New Zealand has shocked not only the members of the NZNTVA and their families, but members of the public and both veterans and their families and the supporting public that I have had contact with nationally and internationally. The general opinion is that we are insidiously creeping towards politically ignoring our nuclear free status.

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