

4. Letter to the Prime Minister regarding UK support for US war plans for Iraq

The Rt. Hon Tony Blair MP
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1A 2AA

13 October 2002

Dear Prime Minister

Use of Uranium weapons in Afghanistan and Iraq: Hazards for civilians and ground forces

I have written to you several times over the past year* regarding suspected use of **Depleted Uranium guided weapons** in the Afghan War and their potential hazards for UK troops, civilian personnel and Afghan citizens.

Several MPs, including my own, have raised these concerns in written questions to your Ministers, receiving categorical assurances that no depleted uranium weapons have been used in the Afghan conflict and denying knowledge of such weapons.

Uranium weapon systems

In recent weeks I have been alarmed by your support for US plans to launch another major military offensive on Iraq, ostensibly to destroy Iraqi **weapons of mass destruction**.

I wonder if you have been briefed about the weapons that US and UK forces will use in a new attack on Iraq? They will rely heavily on the same **hard target guided bombs and cruise missiles** used extensively in Afghanistan, plus new guided weapons and an array of ground based ballistic or guided weapons known or suspected of using Uranium warheads or components.

My analysis in January identified **21** [now **23**] **weapon systems** suspected of containing Uranium warhead components. My worst case scenario indicated that **these may have dispersed 1000+ tons of Uranium oxides into the Afghan environment**. (refer my report **Depleted Uranium weapons 2001-2002**, page 95, sent to you earlier this year).

US Patents verify Uranium warheads

Last week I was advised of **US Patent Number 6,389,977** (1997) for a "shrouded aerial bomb". This is the patent for a series of guided weapons using the upgraded BLU-109/B warhead. Claim 5 of this patent states:

"The shrouded aerial bomb as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the penetrating body is formed of depleted uranium."

This and 6 other US patents verify the development of guided weapons and submunitions with Uranium warheads or components since 1985.

These weapons are **large radiological bombs**, directly in contravention of Articles 35 and 55 of the 1st Protocol additional to the Geneva Conventions. They are, put simply, **weapons of indiscriminate effect**.

You will find a full list of known and suspected Uranium weapons in **Table 1** of my report **Hazards of suspected Uranium weapons in the proposed war on Iraq** plus the relevant **US Patents** on my website at <http://www.eoslifework.co.uk/u23.htm> .

[* e.g. see letter of 1 November 2001, page 49 of [Depleted Uranium weapons 2001-2002](#)]

An additional problem is emerging from my recent investigations. **It seems likely that US arms manufacturers may be using standard, not depleted uranium in new weapons** i.e. Uranium metal with the same isotopic mix as natural uranium (99.3% U238, 0.7% U235).

This would explain why researchers in Hungary and Greece detected increased airborne Uranium dust soon after the Balkans bombing began, but that it appeared to be natural, not depleted uranium. It would also explain why US and Canadian environmental teams in Afghanistan were able to report finding no depleted uranium contamination (except in a burned out aircraft). It does not explain Donald Rumsfeld's reference to increased radiation "from Depleted Uranium on some warheads" in January this year. If Geoff Hoon and Dr Moonie are aware of this it may have justified their denials in response to parliamentary questions referring to "depleted" uranium. Independent researchers are now alert to this possibility. I hope MoD staff are also considering it. Unfortunately standard uranium is more radioactive than depleted uranium.

Implications for the Afghan War

These disclosures greatly increase the probability that there are **serious health risks due to Uranium contamination in many parts of Afghanistan**. These risks also apply to UK troops and civilians who have been there in the past year.

If so your involvement in the war on Afghanistan has not yet finished. You strongly supported it and committed UK troops to combat and ISAF operations. I suggest you have a responsibility to establish the full facts about US and UK weapon systems used in Afghanistan and their consequences for human health and the environment.

I suggest this is **an immediate priority** because troops and civilians exposed to Uranium oxide contamination are vulnerable to ongoing and cumulative internal radiation exposure. Any further exposure must be avoided without delay. Some may already have been irretrievably damaged by toxic or radiation effects that will lead to lymphomas, leukaemia's and horrific birth defects for their children. You are likely to find similar problems emerging for troops deployed in the Balkans.

Sadly, if my analysis is correct, Uranium contamination in Afghanistan may be at least 3 times greater than in Iraq after the 1991 Gulf War (where 300 tons of DU was admitted). The health consequences in Iraq have become increasingly obvious over the past 10 years. Your Government's decision to support the US in vetoing a WHO study into health effects of Depleted Uranium on Iraqi civilians last November is tragic.

Implications for the proposed war on Iraq

The new evidence that guided weapons used extensively in Afghanistan are designed to use Uranium warheads has profound implications for US & UK war plans against Iraq.

Planned attacks on supposed chemical or biological weapons targets in Iraq will rely extensively on the hard target weapons now identified as using Uranium warheads. US forces have rebuilt their stocks to September 2001 levels, plus new weapons.

I guess that the UK **Storm Shadow** cruise missile, also suspected of using Uranium components, has been tested in Afghanistan and will be operational in a new attack on Iraq. Other known or suspected Uranium weapons not needed in Afghanistan (e.g. anti-tank systems) will also be used in large quantities in Iraq.

The implication is that at least 1500 tons of Uranium weapons will be used to prosecute US war plans in Iraq, greatly increasing existing Uranium contamination from 1991 and jeopardising allied troops and Iraqi civilians alike.

Can you justify using known weapons of indiscriminate effect to defeat supposed weapons of mass destruction? The US has scant regard for international law in its military operations. What is your Government's view on knowingly using weapons of indiscriminate effect in Iraq? This letter puts you on notice of that issue. UK forces are accountable to you. The use of such weapons contravening international law must be a political, not military decision, preferably decided by Parliament.

Compromised health research and policy advice

Please also note the warning in my new report that **all existing medical research and policy advice assuring minimal hazards from Depleted Uranium weapons now require fundamental re-assessment.** Official studies (e.g. RAND, WHO, Royal Society, UNEP) were all based on DU weapons used in 1991 - maximum size 5 kg. **They took no account of large Uranium warheads.** The average size of hard target warheads is 2000 lbs e.g. in the GBU-15, 24, 27 and 31 guided bombs. **The latest US Bunker Buster, Big BLU, weighs 10 tons.** US Patent data indicates that at least 50% of these warheads is Uranium or Tungsten. In Agent Defeat warheads (for chemical or biological targets) it is probably Uranium due to its powerful incendiary effects.

Regardless of your obligations under international law (which President Bush has skilfully exempted US citizens from) I suggest you have moral obligations in this matter.

How will you justify risking the slow death of tens of thousands of people whose lives will be irreversibly affected by Uranium contamination? The word genocide comes to mind. This may not concern President Bush. I hope it will concern you, your Cabinet and all MPs asked to support your plans now you are alerted to the latest evidence about Uranium weapons.

These facts and their sources (DOD, MOD, Jane's, FAS, CDI) are available in the report I sent you in January and the two new reports mentioned above (see last page for links):

These reports are the direct equivalent of your recent **Dossier on Iraqi weapons of mass destruction.** You, your Cabinet colleagues and other parties and MPs may wish to be at least as familiar with facts about US and allied weapons as about Iraqi weapons **before you make any further commitment to support US war plans against Iraq.**

Dangers of Group think

If this letter reaches you I suspect you may be deeply shocked by its message. I doubt that you have knowingly supported the use of Uranium weapons in the Balkans or Afghanistan. I doubt if your staff showed you my earlier report or messages. If you were aware that these weapons were Uranium based perhaps you have been convinced, like Dr Moonie, that they present minimal health hazards?

In 1977 Yale psychologist Irving Janis identified a syndrome called **Group Think** in the US Government explaining the Bay of Pigs fiasco. This concerns self-justifying illusions that develop within highly stressed groups - illusions of invulnerability and of morality that lead to extreme risk taking, that stifle internal dissent and demonise outsiders.

The US Government displays all the symptoms of Group Think in its approach to the war on terrorism and plans for Iraq. The US and UK military and arms industry demonstrate collective group think in justifying and keeping secret the development and international proliferation of Uranium weapons over the past 10 years. You and your colleagues may wish to be alert to dangers of group think too.

Ask your commanders and troops

If my analysis is even partly correct then your military commanders are likely to be well aware of these Uranium weapons and becoming aware of their consequences for UK troops. The SAS and Marines recently assigned to heavily bombed locations in Afghanistan are at highest risk unless they had full NBC protection all the time. However officers, troops and families may be trapped by official secrecy, public assurances by Mr Hoon and Dr Moonie, and collective group think in the MoD "that DU is safe". It may not be DU.

Breaking out of Group think means thinking outside the box of normal political communications and briefings and giving key staff permission to express their concerns.

I suggest you ask your military commanders personally about these weapons, not just relying on briefings from your ministers and the MoD, or from the Pentagon. I suggest you ask field Medical Officers, not just MoD scientific advisers. I suggest that you personally meet troops who have been sick or injured, or whose families have suffered miscarriages or severe birth defects since service in the Balkans or Afghanistan.

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With respect Prime Minister I suggest you need a lot more facts before you commit more UK troops to a new war in Iraq. At this time you face being drawn by the Pentagon and US Government into the greatest military scandal since Agent Orange in Vietnam.

Yours sincerely

Dai Williams
(independent weapons researcher)

Internet references

1. **Depleted Uranium weapons 2001-2002** (January 2001) is available at <http://www.eoslifework.co.uk/du2012.htm> and in Politicos bookshop.
2. **Hazards of suspected Uranium weapons in the proposed war on Afghanistan** (summary with link to full report) and **US Patent Office references to conventional guided weapons with suspected Uranium components** are available at <http://www.eoslifework.co.uk/u23.htm>
3. Janis, I. L. & Mann, L. (1977). **Decision making: A psychological analysis of conflict, choice, and commitment**. NY: Free Press.
Summary at <http://www.cedu.niu.edu/~fulmer/groupthink.htm>