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WORLD URANIUM WEAPONS CONFERENCE

DU/Uranium Weapons: The Trojan Horses of Nuclear War

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Hamburg, Germany

Conference to “rogue governments”: stop using illegal DU/Uranium Weapons!

Hamburg--The World Depleted Uranium(DU)/Uranium Weapons Conference was held October 16-19, 2003, at the University of Hamburg, Germany. More than 200 participants represented 21 nations from five continents, which included Iraq, Afghanistan, Australia, Japan, US, Canada, UK, Sweden, Ireland, France, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, Netherlands, Austria, Denmark, Italy, Spain, Algeria, Cuba, and Malta.

“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 illegal under existing international law and convention,” concluded conference planner Marion K pker, 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.”

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.

Two days of presentations during the Plenary Session were followed by two days of workshops, which focused on key issues: science, international law/organizers, and affected veterans and civilians. The workshops were planned to identify consensus on the issues, and to discuss strategies to develop further united international action plans. The Plenary Session was in English with professional simultaneous interpretation into German and Japanese.

“These experts make it clear: it’s time for an international DU/uranium weapons abolition,” summarized Dave Kraft, director of the Evanston, IL-based Nuclear Energy Information Service in the USA. “The evidence from this Conference, if not the ‘precautionary principle’, argues against any further manufacture, testing, or use of these weapons. Simple justice argues for health care testing and follow-up, and immediate remediation of ‘hot-spots’ around the globe,” he said.

Six independent filmmakers covered the Conference and six photo exhibitions from four continents were presented, including the latest photographs from Iraq presented by the renowned international Japanese photographer Takashi Morizumi. Videos and films on related topics were open to the public during the workshop sessions.

The Conference was streamed live to the Internet but unexplained server problems at IndyMedia made access to the live-feed unavailable during the conference. The Conference will be streamed over the Internet at a later date when the server problems are resolved, and the schedule will be posted on the Conference website:
<http://www.uraniumweaponsconference.de>

A press conference held on Friday, October 17, was greatly under-attended by the mainstream media, which still seems to fail to grasp the significance of the issue. Stories on the Conference appeared in only a few media, mostly alternative or progressive. Conference coordinator Marion K pker stated “We believe this is part of the continuing cover-up on the issue of devastating health problems resulting from DU weaponry used by the U.S., U.K. and NATO forces in Iraq, Bosnia, Montenegro, Serbia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan. Today nearly 7,000 German soldiers are serving in contaminated regions in Kosovo and Afghanistan. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers currently or previously serving in Iraq, and millions of civilians at numerous sites worldwide have been exposed as well.”

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Conference participants overwhelmingly agreed that:

- the use of DU/Uranium weapons is, and has always been, illegal under existing laws (both international and U.S. military) and conventions
- future campaigns and treaties should replace “ban” with the term “abolition” of DU/Uranium weapons
- to support the independent International War Crimes Tribunal for Iraq in 2004 on the issues of so-called depleted uranium, uranium weapons or radioactive weapons used in countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan
- environmental DU contamination and epidemiological evidence in southern Iraq presented by the Iraqi professionals established a direct link between DU and observed increases in radiation related diseases
- the Conference rejects the ICRP model for internal exposure to small radioactive particles, like DU, and recommends that the European Committee on Radiation Risk (ECRR) extend the 2003 model on low-level radiation to the analysis of the health risk from DU
- there is an urgent need to establish an independent research and teaching institution, a “Free University,” to provide credible research results independent of the manipulations and funding pressures exerted by governments and institutions backing the nuclear lobby
- UNEP and WHO should be pressured to become independent from the IAEA, recognized as part of the nuclear lobby, in order to conduct comprehensive screening in contaminated areas including monitoring and decontamination of battlefields, testing grounds, manufacturing sites and military installations worldwide
- medical care should be provided immediately for effected military and civilians

Complete Conference resolutions and findings, and instructions on how to “stream” the taped Conference sessions over the Internet are available at:

<http://www.uraniumweaponsconference.de>