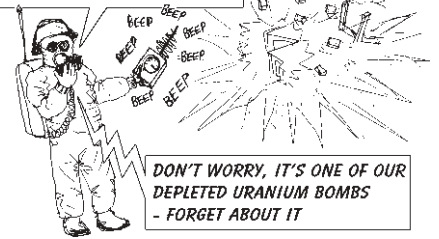


SARGE - THE GEIGER COUNTER'S GOING MAD - I THINK WE'VE GOT SADDAM'S WMD



DUSTING DOWNER

“This war was about Iraq possessing illegal weapons of mass destruction - yet we are using weapons of mass destruction ourselves. Such double-standards are repellent.” - Professor and former US colonel Doug Rokke, ex-director of the Pentagon’s depleted uranium project.

This week a former soldier won a landmark ruling, becoming the first veteran to win a war pension appeal after suffering Depleted Uranium (DU) poisoning. Kenny Duncan took the Ministry of Defence to the Pension Appeal Tribunal Service over his claim that he had suffered poisoning during active service in Iraq during the first Gulf War. Part of his job was to move Iraqi tanks destroyed by DU shells and the tribunal accepted that he was poisoned from inhaling DU dust from the burnt-out tanks. All 3 of Kenny’s children also have health problems since being born post-Gulf War.

It’s 13 years since the first Gulf War and no health tests for depleted uranium have been made available to former servicemen. A representative fighting for the veterans said, “Mr Blair talks about social justice but he still refuses to give servicemen a public inquiry and depleted uranium tests.” Rae Street from Campaign Against Depleted Uranium told SchNEWS, “This is a landmark case, it justifies our and many other groups’ and individuals’ struggle for a ban on ‘Depleted’ Uranium munitions.”

Veterans of the first Gulf War believe that DU exposure has played a role in leaving more than 5,000 of them chronically ill and almost 600 dead. But it’s not just soldiers who face a health time bomb. Professor Rokke said the Americans have unleashed a toxic disaster in the Middle East that will eclipse the Agent Orange tragedy of the Vietnam War. “Uranium dust is so fine that it acts like a gas, seeping through the tiny pores of protective masks. It contaminates air, water and soil for all eternity.”

LAB-RAT NATION

DU is a highly toxic heavy metal derived from nuclear bomb and fuel waste and is classified as a “weapon of mass and indiscriminate destruction” by the United Nations. DU emerged in the seventies as America’s Cold War weapon of choice - cheap, abundant and devastatingly effective for armor-piercing bullets, cluster bomb fragments that penetrate armor and anti-person-

nel mines, casing for bombs, shielding on tanks, counter weights and ground penetrator missiles. On contact, DU pulverizes into aerosol-like dust that can travel 26 miles and remains radioactive for 4.5 billion years.

If DU is inhaled, it can attack the body causing cancers, chronic illness, long-term disabilities and genetic birth defects - none of which will be apparent for at least five years. In last year’s conflict, between 1,100 and 2,200 tonnes of the stuff were fired at Iraq - a figure that eclipses the 375 tonnes used in the 1991 Gulf War. But unlike that largely desert-based conflict, most of the rounds fired last spring were in heavily residential areas. Readings taken from destroyed Iraqi tanks in Basra are so high in DU that a British army survey team had to wear white, full-body radiation suits, face masks, and gloves. Meanwhile, with nothing to warn them against it, Iraqi children use the tanks to play on. A study undertaken in November by the Uranium Medical Research Committee showed that readings taken from destroyed Iraqi tanks in Basra had radiation levels 2,500 times higher than normal. After the bombing of Baghdad, witnesses living next to the airport reported that 3,000 civilians were incinerated by one morning’s attack from aerial bursts of thermobaric and fuel air bombs. The area has now been landscaped by the US forces and Iraqi contractors, preventing a thorough examination.

Jo Wilding, a British human rights observer in Baghdad, has also visited the area and documented a catalogue of miscarriages, hair loss, and horrific eye, skin and respiratory problems. In the row of houses closest to the airport fence, every single household reported some kind of skin or breathing problem. Yet just as the British government refuse to believe any soldiers are suffering from Gulf War Syndrome, they, along with America, are also refusing to allow the International Atomic Energy Agency to carry out systematic monitoring tests for uranium contamination in Iraq.

Dr Jawad Al Ali, a renowned Iraqi cancer specialist says that, “The rate of cancer here has multiplied 15 times since the last Gulf war. DU is the cause of these cancers but it’s difficult to prove. There are three times more DU in the air than is present naturally. Water and food are the key contaminated sources, and also the ‘re-suspension

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For supplying drugs

That’s not a crap arrest of the week we hear you shout! But this one is the crappiest of crap arrests. 15-yr-old Brandon Kivi, a pupil at Caney Creek High School, Texas, was questioned by the cops after his school reported him for... lending his girlfriend his asthma inhaler when she was having an attack!! Although both pupils use the same type of inhaler, the school reckoned this was supplying drugs and therefore a violation of its zero-tolerance anti-drug policy. No charges were brought, but the school still expelled Kivi, who, along with his girlfriend, will be home educated from now on.

of particles’ - i.e the re-release of DU into the air through strong winds or the digging up of DU. Children in particular are susceptible. They have a much higher absorption rate as their blood is being used to build and nourish their bones and they have a lot of soft tissues. Bone cancer and leukemia used to be diseases affecting them the most, however, cancer of the lymphoma, which can develop anywhere on the body and has rarely been seen before the age of 12, is now also common.”

While Professor Doug Rokke says that use of DU is a “war crime”, another professor, Malcolm Hooper, who advises the British Government on Gulf health issues, said he is not surprised by the radiation levels. “Really these things are dirty bombs. Exactly the sort of device that President Bush and Prime Minister Blair keep talking about being in the hands of terrorists.”

The Campaign Against Depleted Uranium 0161 273 8293 www.cadu.org.uk

* This week, three Vietnamese who say they and their families became ill from the Agent Orange defoliant used by the United States in the war nearly 30 years ago filed the first lawsuit against makers of the product. Dow Chemical and Monsanto were among more than 20 firms named in the lawsuit. American Vietnam veterans have already sued the makers and in 1984, Dow and Monsanto agreed to pay \$180 million to them. Vietnam estimates that about three million of its people suffer from diseases linked to the chemical.

I'm a Zapatista....Get Me Out of Here!

Mexican armed forces attacked the Zapatista community of Nuevo San Rafael two weeks ago, burning down 23 homes and violently evicting the indigenous Chol inhabitants. The attack took place in the remote Montes Azules jungle area of Chiapas. This eviction (that the authorities describe as "voluntary") contradicts declarations of the government of Chiapas and the environmental authorities who said that there would be no evictions in Montes Azules.

The resource-rich area has long been coveted by multinationals. So the government's helping them press forward with the Plan Puebla Panama, which aims to "develop" southern Mexico and Central America, exploiting natural resources, biodiversity and hydro-electricity by driving peasants off their land and into sweatshops. The "war of low intensity" against Zapatista autonomous communities amounts to blatant repression of locals to let multinationals get their grubby hands on the regions' resources. The Secretary of the Government of Chiapas, claiming to be worried about conservation, promises more evictions, declaring that land 'invasions' (by indigenous people!) will not be tolerated.

The fate of the inhabitants of Nuevo San Rafael is unknown; the army is preventing reporters and human rights observers from entering the area. Local indigenous leader, Josué Jiménez Cruz, has been arrested, and is apparently being held in prison.

According to a local human rights centre, 40 Marine and Police officers remain in the village. The community is being held incommunicado and the right to travel freely in the Montes Azules region has been suspended. The inhabitants of this community are indigenous Choles; refugees who had to flee from Calvario in the north of Chiapas two years ago due to threats and violence by a paramilitary group known in true Orwellian style as 'Peace and Justice'.

Two years ago, 'Peace and Justice' destroyed a cooperative shop and a Zapatista health centre in Calvario and then turfed the Choles off their land, relieving the local government of its "responsibilities". Not surprising since one of the group's leaders, Carlos Torres Lopez, is also the municipal president of Tila, Chiapas. He has used his position to funnel government resources to the paramilitary organization. During the August state elections, the group patrolled polling stations in the northern part of Chiapas, using violence and intimidation to influence the elections.

Meanwhile, it seems that a new wave of repression and evictions is starting against Zapatista communities throughout the region. In the north of Chiapas, the Zapatista committee of good government has denounced a state of siege from the military. The situation remains tense at the threatened Zapatista community of Morelia, and further north in the state of Morelos repression continues against the autonomous community of Tlanepantla. One thing is certain, the Zapatistas will not give up their autonomy, won with their own blood, easily. "A SHADOW of death is being raised in the heart of our land, of our mother, of our forest. A cloud of soldiers, paramilitaries, plans and projects is coming once again to threaten us, to rob us of our dream and to evict our indigenous communities.... But we are not going to permit eviction, nor the relocation of our communities, we are going to defend them with everything we have in our hands." International solidarity activity is vital: ring the Mexican Embassy in London on 0207 499 8586 (open 9am-6pm) and organise your solidarity actions!! Chiapas Indymedia: <http://chiapas.mediosindependientes.org/>

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Inside SchNEWS

Will Saunders, a former astronomer at the Edinburgh Royal Observatory, now best known for his re-decorating of the Sydney Opera House, has been sentenced to nine months of weekend detention by a New South Wales District Court judge. Saunders and accomplice Dave Burgess were convicted of malicious damage after painting "No War" on the Opera House's highest sail in protest against the invasion of Iraq. The pair were ordered to cough up for the turps needed to scrub the statement off the sail as well as to pay £48,685 into opera house coffers. An Aussie resident of 4 years, Saunders risked deportation back to England for his handywork, but is not bitter. "I did what I believed I had to do at the time." \$40,000 has already been raised to pay off the fines. To donate: www.stopwarcoalition.org

Inside 2: School's Out

Twenty-seven people who stood trial last week for 'crossing the line' and trespassing into the infamous US-military-run terrorist training camp at Fort Benning, Georgia, have received sentences ranging from 12 months probation up to six months in prison, with fines up to \$1,500. They were part of a 10,000 strong group who'd gathered at Fort Benning last November to protest against the training camp behind the gates of the WHISC (Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation or Wolf Hiding In Sheep's Clothing).

Readers may recognise the WHISC from its previous name, the School Of The Americas – an establishment which teaches terrorist tactics to paramilitaries and features among its satisfied customers the likes of Generals Galtieri, Noriega and Pinochet's secret police. One of those sentenced, Kathy Kelly, a 3-time Nobel Peace Prize nominee and co-founder of Voices in the Wilderness said, "Prison will not deter us, we intend to close this school and to change the foreign policy that this school represents." (To support the prisoners www.soaw.org)

Fort Benning is not the only place where the US government trains paramilitary forces to put down indigenous resistance in countries who'd rather not be 'developed'. These 'Schools of the Americas' go by the name ILEA (International Law Enforcement Academy) and branches have been established in Budapest, Bangkok, Botswana, and now in San Jose, Costa Rica.

Now for regular SchNEWS readers, it won't be a surprise that when it comes to the US messing with Latin America, training up paramilitaries is barely the tip of the iceberg. They have funded and armed a long litany of proxy wars and puppet regimes over decades, all in the name of controlling regimes, stopping the evil spread of communism, and securing resources. But back to the school news...

The ILEA in Costa Rica is ironically located on the campus of the University Of Peace (UPAZ). Sounds nice, doesn't it? 'Cept it's not all peace and happiness there. A recent email told us that while this uni does have legitimate courses about, er, peace, a witness has also observed a "constant military training presence on the campus".

Scholars of peace studies will be interested to observe how UPAZ recently dealt with the eviction of radio station RFPI, which had been broadcasting on the campus for sixteen years: it sent in machete-wielding guards to sever the wires! When UPAZ told the radio station to stop in July 2003, station staff barricaded themselves into the studio and continued broadcasting their short-wave service reaching a wide area of Latin America. Security took five months to shut them down. What, you ask, was the station broadcasting? "Peace, justice and the environment were our concerns," says station manager James Latham. Apparently the radio station regularly criticised US militarism and neo-liberal globalisation, so UPAZ gave them a lesson in conflict management. We don't suppose the irony of an armed battle on a 'peace' campus was lost on anyone at the radio station. www.rfpi.org

SchNEWS in brief

What a load of Hutton—Read all about the man behind the report www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2004/01/284545.html ** Last week we told you of plans by PR company Strategic Management Partners to re-brand Brighton. A source close to SchNEWS wrote to the PR company and asked them to spell out in plain English exactly what this means. Their reply: "'Multi-channel forums' means linking into existing partnerships which operate face to face and online. My reference to 'conventional branding' is the use of 'destination branding' and 'PR gurus' who are brought in to apply traditional 'spin' techniques at high cost and low return." Got that? ** On Monday morning, protestors blockaded entrances to Lockheed Martin headquarters in London to draw attention to the role of this multinational corporation in the development of the UK's new generation of nuclear weapons. ** The Met Police spent nearly four and half million quid policing last year's DSEI Arms Fair (SchNEWS 421), with over 1,600 coppers protecting the death dealers every day. Another 'fair' is planned for 2005 and the Met are now asking the organizers themselves to foot the policing bill. With a £4.5 million price tag, the arms dealers will have to fork out even more than the £4.1m that was spent on the policing of Bush's visit to England last November if they want to carry on with business as usual. www.dsei.org ** The Rabble Rouser is a newsletter from Leeds produced by Action for Radical Change. For copies email leedsarc@riseup.net or visit www.leedsarc.org.uk ** The Centre for Alternative Technology wants your used stamps, which help raise money for their various environmental projects. 01654 704953 Jo.Withers@cat.org.uk

Camp Updates

The fight against a proposed 2-mile stretch of bypass in Blackwood, near Newport, South Wales, is still going on. It is now estimated that over 1,000 trees are set to be destroyed in St David's Wood, Blackwood, a number that far exceeds original reports that only 250 trees were in danger. The companies Costain (who many will remember from Newbury) and Tarmac seem determined to plow ahead with the road, and protestors desperately need help if they are to continue defending the woodland. 100 trees were destroyed on January 29th, but the destruction stopped when two protesters (the ONLY two protestors at the time) locked on and stopped the bulldozers. A base camp has now been set up amongst the trees, with about 15 people and Section 6 notices squatting notices in place. **More people are needed!** The site, St David's Wood, is 5 minutes from Blackwood town centre. If going by train/bus, from Cardiff Station bus number 26 from bay C1. Once there call 07811 948764 or 07708 420446.

* The Nine Ladies anti-quarry camp are still expecting to be evicted any day now. More people and climbing equipment needed. Contact 07005942212 for details.

...and finally...

Join M'AM and see the world

After a demonstration against the royal jubilee in 2002, members of M'AM (Movement Against the Monarchy) retired to a local hostelry for a well-earned drink. While on their second pint, riot cops surrounded the pub, preventing anybody leaving. When more reinforcements arrived, the coppers nicked all 23 protestors inside for breach of the peace and then commandeered a No 11 bus to take the anti-monarchists on a 2 1/2 hour tour of different police stations across London. They were all released without charge 7 hours later, and so, decided to sue the cops. This week, the M'AM demonstrators may just decide to buy their own bus after winning £3500 each in compensation for their right royal time.

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers we're done and dusted... Honest!