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ULTIMATIVES ENDLAGER FÜR KERNKRAFTWERKSABFÄLLE

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MYSTERY METAL BOMBS MAY CAUSE AFGHAN WAR SYNDROME

The rapid retreat of the Taliban may be partly due to a mystery metal used in new "hard target" weapons in the Afghan bombing campaign. It has been kept secret by the US and UK governments since 1997 but latest analysis of Afghan war reports and military information websites indicate that it is probably Depleted Uranium (DU).

If DU has been used then UK troops, aid-workers and media teams in former Taliban locations may be entering toxic disaster areas. Without immediate environmental monitoring they risk the same health hazards suffered by Gulf War veterans and Iraqi civilians – an Afghan War syndrome. So what is the mystery metal? The UK Government was asked this question three weeks ago but has not answered it.

Hard target weapons

The new generation of "hard target" smart bombs and cruise missiles can penetrate 10 feet of reinforced concrete before exploding. They were used to attack Taliban bunkers, caves, command centres, fuel and ammunition stores. They use "dense metal" warheads to double their penetrating power on hard targets.

The 2 ton GBU-37 Bunker Busters and 2000 lb GBU-24 Paveway smart bombs, plus the Boeing AGM-86D, Maverick AGM-65G and AGM-145C hard target capability cruise missiles all use "advanced unitary penetrators" (AUP-113, AUP-116, P31) or BROACH warheads with the mystery high density metal in alloy casings.

Uranium or Tungsten?

The mystery metal must be hard and at least two times as heavy as steel. Tungsten and Depleted Uranium (DU) are the main options. Both are used by US and UK forces for armour piercing shells. DU is preferred because it is burned inside the target to become an incendiary bomb and is far cheaper and easier to manufacture.

ULTIMATIVES ENDLAGER

Deutsche Kurz- und Zusammenfassung

„GEHEIM-METALL“-BOMBEN FÜHREN WOMÖGLICH ZU EINEM AFGHANISTAN-KRIEG-SYNDROM

Ist der schnelle Rückzug der Taliban ein Indiz für den Einsatz von abgereichertem Uran in der sogenannten „Munition für harte Ziele“

Beim Einsatz abgereicherten Urans: Gesundheitsrisiko für Mitarbeiter von Hilfsorganisationen, Presse- und Fernsichtteams wie weiland bei Golf-Krieg-Veteranen und irakischen Zivilisten.

Die Bunkerknacker

Die neue Geschöß-/Bombengeneration kann bis zu 3 m starken bewehrten Beton (Bunkerqualität) durchdringen, bevor die Explosion erfolgt.

Typenliste der in Afghanistan möglicherweise verwendeten Geschosse und Bomben

Uran oder Tungsten?

Von den beiden Optionen Uran und Tungsten hat Uran den Vorzug, erheblich billiger zu sein, es ist leichter zu verarbeiten und wirkt darüber hinaus innerhalb des Zieles zusätzlich als „Brandbombe“.

Uranium hazards and Dirty DU

DU (U_{238}) is reprocessed nuclear waste. It burns in military targets and plane crashes to produce Uranium oxides as a fine, toxic, alpha-radioactive dust. The "Dirty DU" found in Balkans War target sites was contaminated with variable traces of U_{235} plus U_{236} and Plutonium from reactors. It presents a perpetual health hazard similar to asbestos – especially in the lungs. The UNEP report of DU used in the Balkans War played down its risks. They did not inspect bomb or missile targets.

Uranium oxide dust is a suspected cause of Gulf War syndrome and the epidemic of cancers and birth defects in Iraq since the Gulf War where 300 tons of DU were used. UK EOD (bomb disposal) teams in the Balkans were instructed to use full radiation protection (NBC) equipment when inspecting DU targets (Hansard). 50–100 times greater hazard than in the Balkans Reports from the Center for Defence Information in Washington indicate that several hundred tons of smart bombs and cruise missiles have been used in the Afghan bombing including many of the hard-target weapons above.

The mystery metal is 50–75% of the weight of the bombs – up to 1.5 tons in the GBU-37 Bunker Buster bombs. If this is DU then target zones will be 50–100 times more contaminated than by the pencil-sized 30 mm (0.27 kg) anti-tank shells used in the Balkans War, and more like the DU ammunition fire in the Gulf War. DU oxide is known to travel up to 25 miles by wind so large areas may be affected by each bomb.

Government in denial about DU?

The UK Government is aware of the problem. They were asked to identify the mystery metal in hard target guided weapons by DU researcher Dai Williams via his MP on 17th October and direct to the Prime Minister on 1st November. No answers have been received. On 24th October Defence Minister Geoff Hoon told Parliament that "we do not rule out the use of depleted uranium ammunition in Afghanistan, should its penetrative capability be judged necessary in the future" (Hansard). He denied that DU has been used, at least by UK forces, on 1st and 5th November. Can he speak for US forces?

Hard target bombs and missiles have been used extensively in Afghanistan since 7th October. Until the mystery metal involved is identified and independently verified Mr Hoon's denials are not convincing. He is responsible for military, not humanitarian policies. After the bombing political responsibility for the truth is shared by the Cabinet.

Risiko Uran-„Verunreinigung“

Abgereichertes Uran (depleted Uranium) ist wiederaufbereiteter Atommüll, das zu radioaktivem giftigem Feinstaub verbrannt wird. Was in „militärischen Zielen“ auf dem Balkan gefunden wurde, war versetzt mit Spuren von U_{235} , U_{236} und Plutonium. Die Wirkung dieser „Reste“ ist ähnlich dauerhaft wie die von Asbest. Uranoxydstaub gilt als Ursache für epidemisch auftretenden Krebs und Mißgeburten. Britische Truppen auf dem Balkan waren angewiesen, mit vollständiger Strahlenschutzrüstung (ABC) zu operieren. Das entsprechende Risiko in Afghanistan (radioaktiver Giftstaub) wird vergleichsweise als 50–100 mal höher eingeschätzt (analog der eingesetzten Munitionsmenge).

Die „Bunkerknacker“ bestehen zu 50–75 Gewichtsprozent aus dem „geheimnisvollen“ Schwermetall bei einem Stückgewicht von bis zu 1,5 t (GBU-37) = 750 kg–1125 kg. Oxyd von abgereichertem Uran verbreitet sich durch Luftbewegung ca. 45 km weit im Umkreis des Einsatzpunktes.

Die Regierung Großbritanniens (Blair et cons.) kennt das Problem, nimmt jedoch keine Stellung dazu. „Verteidigungs“minister Hoon: „Wir schließen den Einsatz von uranhaltiger (abg.) Munition in Afghanistan nicht aus, sollte ihre Durchschlagskraft in Zukunft es als angemessene Waffe rechtfertigen.“ Briten hätten Uranhartmantelgeschosse bisher nicht eingesetzt.

Seit dem 7. Oktober 2001 sind Uranhartmantelgeschosse großflächig im Einsatz. Hoon, verantwortlich für die Militärpolitik, ist nicht glaubwürdig.

Political responsibility: minimising a potential health disaster.

This question is an immediate occupational and public health issue for the 4 000 UK troops plus aid and media teams about to enter Afghanistan, for those already there and for the civilian population. The first warning was a dying child who led a Taliban doctor to suspect that US forces were using radioactive or chemical weapons (Reuters, 28th October). Many Taliban troops near bombing targets will already be affected if DU has been used. This may be one reason for their rapid retreat.

The US and UK Governments have an immediate political responsibility to disclose the mystery metal used in the Afghan bombing. If DU has been used this will become obvious soon from medical reports. Precautionary action is essential now to minimise a potential health disaster. There is no cure for inhaling DU dust.

In 1999 the UK media questioned the use of DU in the Balkans so troops and aid teams were alert to its potential hazards. They have had copies of this analysis for two weeks but have stayed silent about the mystery metal question in Afghanistan. In the USA a Bill submitted to the US Congress on 18th October has called for a total ban on DU and facts about its use in Afghanistan. Veteran and environmental groups are waiting for the US Department of Defence's reply.

NGO alert

The Red Cross and Oxfam have been alerted to these potential risks. International aid organisations and allied forces would be wise to assume that the mystery metal is depleted Uranium until there is firm evidence otherwise. DU precautions apply as after the Balkans war (e. g. bottled water) plus avoiding bombed Taliban locations.

Ein sofortiges Vorsorge- und Hilfsprogramm für die 4 000 demnächst eingesetzten Briten, diejenigen, die bereits dort kämpfen und die „Zivil“-Bevölkerung ist angesagt.

Gegen die Folgen des Einatmens von Uranstaub (abg.) gibt es keine „Kur“ (es gibt keine Heilung), weshalb Vorsorgemaßnahmen das einzige Mittel sind, um eine mögliche Gesundheitskatastrophe zu verhindern. (Oder ggf. auch etwas einfacher: nicht bomben, wenigstens kein radioaktives, plutoniumhaltiges Kriegsmaterial verwenden? – Tip der Übers.-Gruppe).

Britische und US-Regierung bleiben weiterhin stumm/agieren schweigsam.

Nicht gewöhnlich Unverdächtige (NGU) warnen

Vorsichtsmaßnahmen empfohlen: Nicht in zuvor bombardierte Gebiete gehen (Taliban)! Beispielhaft: Trinkwasser nur abgefüllt in handlichen Flaschen verteilen! (wie auf dem Balkan).

Full analysis and sources available from

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on [01483-222017](tel:01483-222017) or [07808-502785](tel:07808-502785) (inside UK)
or by Email to
eosuk@btinternet.com

Internet links include:

Jane's report on Air and Missile strikes in the Afghan war:

http://www.janes.com/security/international_security/news/jdw/jdw011007_1_n.shtml

FAS

(Federation of American Scientists)
smart bomb and cruise missile specifications:
<http://www.fas.org/man/index.html>

CDI

(Center for Defense Information, Washington)
Terrorism Project Action Update:
<http://www.cdi.org/terrorism/actionupdate.cfm>

Hansard questions and Defence committee reports

(search on depleted uranium, missiles etc):
<http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/cgi-bin/empower> (?DB3Dukparl)

Vollständige Analyse von:

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