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مجلس الأمن



رسالة مؤرخة ٢٦ كانون الثاني/يناير ١٩٩٣ موجهة إلى
الأمين العام من القائم بالأعمال المؤقت للبعثة الدائمة
للعراق لدى الأمم المتحدة

بناء على توجيهات من حكومتي ، أود أن أرفق لكم طيا المقالة الموسومة (Making the Desert Glow) المنشورة في صحيفة النيويورك تايمز الصادرة بتاريخ ٢١ كانون الثاني/يناير ١٩٩٣ التي تتحدث عن استخدام القوات الأمريكية وحلفائها قذائف مصنوعة من اليورانيوم المخصب أثناء العدوان ضد العراق .

سأكون مهتما لو تفضلتم بتأمين توزيع هذه الرسالة وضميمتها مقالة صحيفة النيويورك تايمز المشار إليها أعلاه كوثيقة رسمية من وثائق مجلس الأمن .

(توقيع) عدنان مالك
القائم بالأعمال المؤقت

The New York Times

Late Edition
New York Today, sun, thin
ing clouds. High 44. Tonight,
40. Tomorrow, morning rain,
by afternoon. High 46. Yester-
day, 43, low 27. Details are on p. 3.

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By Eric Hoskins

TAMMAN, Jordan
he gulf war lives on, as
this week's air strikes
against Iraq have
proved. But the con-
flict goes beyond Iraqi
missile batteries in
forbidden places. It extends, frighten-
ingly, to radioactive artillery shells
used by coalition forces two years
ago. The spent rounds may be the
cause of fatal illnesses, including can-
cer and mysterious new stomach ail-
ments, showing up in Iraqi children.
Because of sanctions and war, the
death rate of children under 5 has
tripled. In the first eight months of
1991 alone, 50,000 children died.

Known as depleted uranium pene-
trators, the shells were developed by
the Pentagon in the late 1970's as
anti-tank, armor-piercing projectiles.
Depleted uranium, which makes up
the shell's core, is a radioactive by-
product of the enrichment process
used to make atomic bombs and nu-
clear fuel rods. The material is ex-
tremely hard and abundant, and pro-
vided free to weapons manufacturers
by the nuclear industry.

*Eric Hoskins, a doctor and public
health specialist, was medical coordi-
nator of the Harvard Study Team's
surveys of health and welfare in post-
war Iraq.*

When fired, the core bursts into a
searing flame that helps it pierce the
armor of tanks and other military
targets. Diesel vapors inside the tank
are ignited, and the crew is burned
alive.

In the six-week land war against
Iraq, U.S. and allied coalition tanks,
artillery and attack planes fired at
least 10,000 of the 6-inch, 6- to 8-pound
shells. A confidential report by the
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Au-
thority, written in April 1991 and
leaked to The Independent newspa-
per of London in November of that
year, estimates that at least 40 tons of
depleted uranium was dispersed in
Iraq and Kuwait during the war.

Among other things, the depleted
uranium rounds forced the Pentagon
to concede additional friendly-fire
casualties when traces of radioactiv-
ity were found on destroyed coalition
military vehicles. Iraqi forces did not
have uranium penetrators.

While it's too early to prove a link,
many health experts suspect that the
postwar increase in childhood cancer
and mysterious swollen abdomens is
at least in part due to the radioactive
shells. U.N. personnel and aid work-
ers have seen children playing with
empty shells, abandoned weapons
and destroyed tanks. In Basra, a for-
eign doctor saw a child using depleted
uranium shells as hand puppets.

The Pentagon insists that depleted
uranium is "very, very mildly radio-
active" and that the shells are not
radioactive enough to be classified as
a "radiological weapon." It has
claimed that allied tank crews firing
the rounds received little radiation,
the equivalent of a chest X-ray each
day.

Most doctors and scientists agree
that even mild radiation is dangerous
and increases the risk of cancer. The
health risk becomes much greater
once the projectile has been fired.

U.S. uranium shells used in the gulf war may be killing Iraqi children.

After they have been fired, the broken shells release uranium particles. The airborne particles enter the body easily. The uranium then deposits itself in bones, organs and cells. Children are especially vulnerable because their cells divide rapidly as they grow. In pregnant women, absorbed uranium can cross the placenta into the bloodstream of the fetus.

In addition to its radioactive dangers, uranium is chemically toxic, like lead, and can damage the kidneys or lungs. Perhaps the fatal epidemic of swollen abdomens among Iraqi children is caused by kidney failure resulting from uranium poisoning. Whatever the effect of the depleted uranium shells, it is made worse by malnutrition and poor health conditions.

The British report called the presence of depleted uranium in Iraq and Kuwait a "significant problem," concluding that there is enough uranium there to cause "tens of thousands of potential deaths." Fortunately, there have been no reports of uranium-related illnesses in Kuwait. That may be because fewer uranium shells were used there — most of the heavy ground fighting took place in southern Iraq — and because the country was cleaned up after the war.

The danger posed by the uranium shells is widely recognized. In July, German authorities arrested Siegwart Gunther, director of the Albert Schweitzer Institute, when he arrived in Berlin carrying a spent round retrieved from Iraq. He was charged with illegally "releasing ionizing radiation."

The shell, its radioactivity confirmed by two laboratories, was sealed in a lead-lined box. Needless to

say, there are not many lead-lined boxes in Iraq.

It's likely that the depleted uranium may have already contaminated soil and drinking water in Iraq. If this is the case, Iraqis could be exposed to the radioactive and toxic effects of uranium for generations to come.

Certainly such fears are not without foundation. In New Mexico, where uranium rounds are test-fired by the military, questions have been raised concerning ground water poisoning. In 1986, James Parker, then associate director of the Bureau of Land Management, told Congress that land used to test these weapons could be permanently contaminated.

Despite the risks associated with depleted uranium, there has been virtually no debate about its effects in postwar Iraq and Kuwait. The U.N. Environment Program, which has investigated ecological damage of the gulf war, has been remarkably silent. To date, no effort has been made to assess the extent of radioactive contamination due to depleted uranium rounds in Iraq or to locate and remove the shells. Similarly, although Congress has ordered the military to monitor the health of soldiers exposed to smoke from Kuwaiti oil fires, there has been no such directive concerning exposure to depleted uranium.

What should be done? Once current tensions in the gulf have subsided, qualified research groups, like the 1991 Harvard Study Team, should go to Iraq to analyze the soil and water for evidence of uranium contamination. Epidemiologists should explore the connection between the uranium shells and cancer. The U.N. must take a more active role in investigating the danger posed by the shells, and begin clean-up efforts of all radioactive shells remaining in Iraq and Kuwait.

It should also consider recommending that depleted uranium penetrators be banned in accordance with international treaties on chemical and radioactive weapons. □