

# NATO's Use of Depleted Uranium Weapons in Serbia in 1999: The War that Won't End

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*More than a decade and a half after the US-led NATO's war of aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SRJ) in violation of international law using highly toxic and radioactive uranium shells, the enormity of this war crime is becoming clear.*

In Serbia, aggressive cancer among young and old has reached epidemic proportions in recent years. The suffering of the people cries out to heaven. The south of Serbia and Kosovo are particularly affected. According to the Serbian Ministry of Health, a child falls ill with cancer every day. The entire country is contaminated. Due to the damage to the genetic material (DNA), generations upon generations of deformed children will be born. Knowingly and willingly, genocide has been committed.

Until recently, the politicians, with the help of the media, withheld the truth from the unsettled citizens of Serbia under pressure from the perpetrators of the genocide. Courageous and responsible doctors, ex-military, ex-politicians and scientists have now succeeded in breaking through this wall of silence – for the benefit of the Serbian people and the many other peoples of this world who share their fate.

## Uranium weapons are weapons of mass destruction

When the USA used the defoliant "Agent Orange" and napalm in Vietnam, the world was horrified. That was no longer war, that was butchery of the civilian population and lasting destruction of nature. Fifty years later, generation after generation is born severely disabled – born to die. But the weapons industry, including the nuclear weapons industry, has rapidly developed its business since Vietnam. All wars are illegal wars of aggression according to the legal standards of the Nuremberg Tribunal, and they are becoming ever more murderous, insidious, widespread, genocidal. This was also the case with the first war of the US-led NATO on European soil against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999.

Here, with the tacit acquiescence of NATO allies – including Germany – the US army used weapons of mass destruction that it had already tested in the 2nd Gulf War in 1991 and in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1994/95: highly toxic and radioactive uranium weapons. NATO itself has admitted that it has fired 30,000 shells with depleted uranium (DU), the Serbian military speaks of 50,000 shells. This is equivalent to 10 to 15 tonnes of uranium.

Since extensive scientific literature and film material (“Deadly Dust”) on this war crime are already available in German, English and Serbian, here are just a few comments:

Because of the long degradation process of radioactivity and its toxicity, waste from the uranium and nuclear industry – mainly DU of the isotope 238 – is stored in secured dumps for a very long period of time. To reduce the high costs associated with this, DU is therefore readily given away free of charge to interested parties such as the military. DU has characteristics that are particularly attractive to the defence industry.

According to Professor Siegwart-Horst Günther, DU projectiles developed according to a German technology have a high penetrating power due to the high density of metallic uranium (1.7 times greater than that of lead) and are especially suitable for breaking steel armour and underground concrete bunkers. DU is also a combustible material that self-ignites when it penetrates armour plate, burning at 3,000 degrees Celsius to form uranium oxide dust and releasing highly toxic and radioactive material (uranium oxide).

This uranium oxide aerosol with particle sizes in the nanoscale enters the human body via the air we breathe, the water and, in the long term, also via the food chain.

In the lungs, the DU dust particles are also attached to the red and white blood cells and thus enter all organs of the body, including the brain, kidneys and testicles, causing cancer in many organs and irreversible damage to the genetic material (DNA). The strong carcinogenicity of DU is due to the fact that chemotoxicity and radiotoxicity act synergistically.

DU can also reach an unborn child via the placenta and cause severe damage. Possible long-term damage includes genetic defects in infants, childhood leukaemia, cancer and kidney damage. Since the uranium oxide particles have taken on the property of ceramics due to the heat of combustion, they are insoluble in water, are fixed in this form in the body and can develop their radioactive effect (alpha radiation) for years.

**War with uranium weapons is genocide brought about knowingly and willingly**

For biochemist Albrecht Schott, DU is an example of interventions in creation that endanger it existentially, and thus not a weapon against states, but a weapon against the planet. The well-known German journalist and filmmaker Frieder Wagner calls uranium weapons “weapons of extermination” and the victims of these murderous weapons the “dead of silent death”. Uranium weapons are the “perfect weapon” to kill masses of people, that is, to commit genocide.

Since the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of 1948, genocide has been a criminal offence under international criminal law that is not subject to a statute of limitations. It is characterised by the specific intention to destroy, directly or indirectly, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group as such, in whole or in part.

This is why genocide is also called a “unique crime”, a “crime of crimes” or the “worst crime in international criminal law”.

The Australian doctor, nuclear weapons specialist and peace activist Helen Caldicott writes in her book “Nuclear Danger USA”:

“It is clear that the Pentagon knew about the health risks posed by uranium-containing munitions long before Operation Desert Storm [2nd Gulf War 1991; the author]. Numerous military reports acknowledge that uranium-238 can cause kidney damage, lung and bone cancer, (non-malignant) lung disease, skin disease, neurocognitive disorders, chromosomal damage and birth defects.”

For this reason, wars involving the use of highly toxic and radioactive uranium weapons are both war crimes and knowingly and willingly committed genocide – including the war against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999. Under the UN Convention against Genocide, the Parties to the Convention undertake to punish genocide or persons committing genocide, whether they are governments, public officials or private individuals.

### Aggressive cancers in Serbia reach epidemic proportions

The bombing of Serbia lasted 78 days. In the process, 1,031 soldiers were killed, 5,173 soldiers and police officers were wounded, 2,500 civilians died – including 78 children – and over 6,000 civilians were wounded. In addition to the projectiles with DU, which also contained traces of highly toxic plutonium, other explosive combinations and rocket fuels with certain chemical compounds were used, which have a very toxic effect when exploded and cause cancer. The number of these cancers grew year by year. Also, the number of newborns with deformities and those with aggressive childhood leukaemia increased.

More than a year ago, estimates by the Serbian Association for Cancer Control became known: Studies had shown that the use of uranium weapons had led to 15,000 cases of cancer and 10,000 deaths between 2001 and 2010, according to the head of the association and oncologist Prof. Slobodan Cikaric, MD. In total, there were 330,000 cancer cases in Serbia during this period. The death rate has increased by 2.5 per cent annually since 1999.

Back in 2013, Professor Cikaric said in the Serbian newspaper Blic that 14 years after the DU bombing, Serbia was expecting an explosion of cancers of all kinds. He was to be proved right. What is reported are breakdowns of the immune system with increasing cases of infectious diseases, severe functional disorders of the kidneys and liver, aggressive leukaemias and other cancers (including multiple cancers), disorders of the bone marrow, genetic defects and malformations, as well as miscarriages and premature births in pregnant women as after the Chernobyl disaster.

If you read a Serbian newspaper today or walk through a Serbian cemetery, you will notice the short lifespan of many of the deceased in the page-long obituaries or epitaphs. In each case it should read: “Died as a result of DU poisoning and radiation”.

Many citizens of Serbia are psychologically burdened because of their years of pity for sick relatives and because of the anxious waiting if and when they too might be caught up by one of the terrible and mostly fatal diseases. Even if most of them suspect the cause of the serious illnesses, there is still a great deal of uncertainty that triggers persistent feelings of stress.

Politicians in Serbia as well as in the other DU-contaminated countries in the Near and Middle East and in the NATO countries themselves have deliberately not informed the population. Among other things, they wanted to avoid recourse claims and continue their murderous trade undisturbed. Stress, anxiety and depression additionally weaken the already burdened immune system and lead to a higher susceptibility to infections. This is shown by research results from the interdisciplinary field of psycho-neuro-immunology (PNI).

## The people have the right to the truth

In order to be able to organise one's own life and that of one's family satisfactorily, to make provisions for the future or, as a married couple, to decide whether or not to have children, every citizen must be able to realistically assess the economic, social and political conditions in his or her country. But they cannot do this if they are deprived of the truth about incidents that can severely affect their lives. Therefore, it is a moral obligation of all those who have dealt with the problem of contamination in the country – doctors, scientists, journalists, military personnel and civilians affected by contamination – to educate and assist their fellow citizens.

In addition, the identity of a nation is based on the citizens' right to truth and knowledge of their history. Historians and representatives of other sciences have an important contribution to make. However, the debate must not be left to them alone. The search for truth and the enlightenment of the people is also a political task that must be solved by political leaders and must not be prevented by them under any circumstances. Government and parliament have to take a stand. How can citizens trust a government or people's representation that withholds the truth from them about a problem that affects them existentially?

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