DU Shipments Must Be Labeled "Radioactive"

Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action, Poulsbo, Washington
Website: www.gzcenter.org E-mail: info@gzcenter.org

Traprock Peace Center, Deerfield, Massachusetts
Website: www.traprockpeace.org E-mail: traprock@crocker.com

Military Toxics Project, Lewiston, Maine
Website: www.miltoxproj.org Email: mtp@miltoxproj.org

Nukewatch, Luck, Wisconsin
Website: www.nukewatch.com E-mail: nukewatch@lakeland.ws

Depleted Uranium Munitions Action Plan

~ ~ EMBARGOED UNTIL NOV. 24

The United States military does not want civilian populations to know how and when depleted uranium (DU) munitions are being shipped through their communities for fear of "unnecessary public concern about the radiation risks associated with DU munitions." Normally this type of shipment would be labeled with both Department of Transportation (DOT) "Radioactive" and "Explosive" placards. Branches of the U.S. military, however, have a special Department of Transportation exemption, DOT-E 9649, which allows them to ship DU munitions without the "Radioactive" placard.[1] The exemption must be renewed every few years by the DOT and the Military Traffic Management Command.[2]

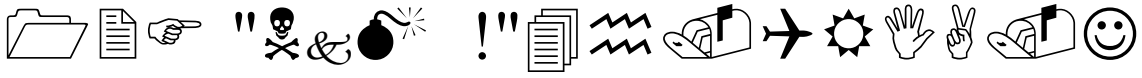
The current DU munitions shipping exemption expires on June 30, 2004. Public pressure could force the DOT to not renew the next application for exemption by the Military Traffic Management Command.

Why should we care about DU shipments while devastation continues in foreign countries from the actual use of this radioactive weapon? By understanding the danger of shipping DU through our neighborhoods, we will better understand the damage done by firing DU in neighborhoods in other countries in our name.

By identifying shipments of DU munitions en route to military bases inside the United States for deployment overseas, we open the opportunity to expose and eventually stop the shipments.

What to do…

Contact the Department of Transportation Exemptions division and ask that the **DOT immediately terminate and not renew DOT-E 9649**.[3] Depleted uranium munitions should have a "Radioactive" placard and an "Explosives" placard on shipments. Depleted uranium is an extremely toxic material and much more dangerous when shipped with an explosive propellant as in the case of DU munitions. In case of a fire, first responders (local police and fire fighters) would have no idea the shipment contained radioactive material.



☐ Send correspondence regarding DOT-E 9649 to:

Mr. Delmer Billings DHM-31
Director, Office of Hazardous Materials
Exemptions and Approvals
Department of Transportation
400 7th St. SW
Washington, D.C. 20590

Fax: (202) 366-3308
E-mail: delmer.billings@rspa.dot.gov

Please also (if you want) send a copy to info@gzcenter.org
Please share this information with others and local officials.

DU Shipping information

Depleted uranium (DU) munitions are deployed by the United States military in a number of weapons systems in various locations in the United States and other nations.[4] DU munitions, in our time of endless war, are shipped on a daily basis on our nation's highways, railways, waterways, and through foreign nations.[5]

DU munitions are a uniquely hazardous material, consisting of a radioactive penetrator which breaks down into small particles when burned, and an explosive charge or combustible propellant in the shell of the cartridge. In an accident scenario, DU munitions on our highways or railways can burn and spread radioactive material.[6] The DU shipments are, in essence, the "dirty bomb" that our government warns us about.[7]

In the case of an accident involving a fire, it is very likely the driver would be incapacitated. The driver would not be able to communicate to others that radioactive material is involved in the fire, making it impossible for first responders to correctly control the fire and protect the public from radioactive material.

Three U.S. government documents best describe the purposes and dangers behind DU shipments and DOT-E 9649.

U.S. Military Reasons for DOT-E 9649

The original application to the DOT in 1986 from the Military Traffic Management Command stated three reasons for the special exemption for DU munitions.[8] The application for exemption also showed the U.S. military knew in 1986 that DU munitions shipments were a potentially controversial issue.

A letter from the U.S. Army Military Traffic Management Command dated August 11, 1986 stated, *"There are three reasons for transporting DOD DU munitions without drawing public attention by placarding trucks or marking munitions containers as radioactive. First, marking the outside of the DU munitions containers as radioactive may create friction with foreign governments when foreign nations handle DU munitions during shipping, loading or unloading. Secondly, we do not want to generate unnecessary public concern about the radiation risks associated with DU munitions. Thirdly, we do not want to raise public concerns by placarding trucks with the words "Radioactive" and "Explosive" since the combination of these two hazard class placards may be construed to mean that nuclear weapons are being shipped when this simply is not the case."*

The Danger

A May 14, 1984 Material Safety Data Sheet on depleted uranium stated the hazards of a fire involving DU.[9]

8. *Should DU be handled in powdered form or should a DU penetrator oxidize resulting from a penetrator's involvement in an accident such as a fire, then the intake of DU aerosol or ash via inhalation, ingestion or absorption presents an internal hazard.*
9. *Depending upon the solubility of the particular DU compound in body fluids, it may also be toxic, particularly to the kidney.*
10. *Should an accident occur or DU corrosion be discovered, clean up and decontamination should be performed only by authorized personnel.*
11. *Anyone who may have inadvertently come in contact with material that is potentially contaminated with DU should be surveyed for contamination by authorized personnel as soon as possible, remove any clothing which may be contaminated, wash hands, arms, face and any other exposed parts of the body with soap and water. Do not eat, drink, smoke or apply cosmetics before being satisfactorily decontaminated.*

The August 2002 Navy Radioactive Materials Permit contains a supplement showing the hazardous potential of a fire involving the shipment of DU.[10] The Navy permit application dated August 21, 2002 contained a lengthy but informative section, applicable to any situation involving the combustion of DU.

Transportation Accident/Incident w/Fire

When involved in a fire, depleted uranium (DU) may oxidize, generating a downwind hazard in the form of a DU oxide dust plume. The significant health hazards associated with the dust plume are; 1) heavy metal poisoning from inhalation of the dust, and 2) the radiological hazards associated with inhalation of the dust. First responder personnel should adhere to the following information when approaching the scene of a DU fire.

a. *First responders should approach the scene from upwind and assure all non-emergency personnel are evacuated from all downwind areas. First responder personnel should wear self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) respirators to protect against inhalation of any DU oxide dust or remain upwind of the fire. Evacuate the immediate vicinity of the accident and notify the emergency number identified on the DD form 836. In the event that the DD form 836 is not available the on-scene commander should notify the traffic manager at the nearest military base.*
b. *Because, the complete round of DU ammunition contains explosive propellant an explosive hazard exists when fire is present. In this case, remain upwind and assure that essential and non-essential personnel are moved to a safe distance as listed on the DD form 836, Fire Fighting Instructions. Use any available method to stay upwind of the smoke plume.*
c. *Each hazardous material shipment made by the Department of Defense requires the vehicle driver to have in their possession a DD form 836, Fire Fighting Instructions. The DD form 836 contains the necessary withdrawal distance for on-scene emergency personnel and public. The on-scene commander will assure these distances are strictly adhered to. The on-scene commander should establish a cordon of the accident area and assure all personnel are evacuated from the downwind side. The cordon can be increased to limit the effects of wind changes or adverse weather conditions. Establish an entry control point and monitor all personnel entering and exiting the hazard zone. Evaluate the fire scene and determine what actions or non-actions to initiate. In most cases, fire and ammunition don't mix and fire fighting personnel are relegated to observer status to assure the fire doesn't spread or become more serious.*
d. *Contact the nearest Explosives Ordnance Disposal (EOD) unit to inspect the load and determine the extent of damage. Navy EOD personnel are trained in make-safe operations involving depleted uranium ammunition. Navy EOD personnel will also make all contacts to coordinate clean-up and disposal actions required by U.S. Army Technical Assistance Team.*
e. *The establishment of a radiation contamination control line (RCCL) should be established near the cordon entry control point and outside of the contaminated area. The number of emergency personnel who are to pass over the RCCL should be kept to a minimum. All personnel evacuated from the established cordon should report to the RCCL radiation contamination for screening. The names, addresses, telephone number and monitoring results of all personnel passing through the RCCL shall be recorded, whether contaminated or not.*
f. *Personnel injured in the accident will be evacuated through medical channels. Injured personnel evacuated from the accident scene should be wrapped in a white sheet and tagged to identify possible exposure to DU contamination. Medial treatment for serious injuries takes priority over contamination surveys and decontamination efforts.*
g. *All materials including soil, clothing, packaging, pallets, vehicles and dismembered parts, etc. shall be surveyed and declared radioactive free. Contaminated materials should be disposed of per OPNAVNOTE 5100, Low*

Level Radioactive Waste (LLWR) Disposal Program. All materials found to be radioactive free may be disposed of through normal methods.

h. *Once the fire has been extinguished, a smaller controlled area around the accident site must be maintained, until it has been surveyed by EOD and radiological personnel and declared contamination free or the area decontaminated per local, state and federal laws and regulations.*

i. *All emergency response personnel may be contaminated with DU. Some of the personnel may sustain injuries while working at the scene, they should be decontaminated prior to receiving medical treatment, provided medical personnel concur. All equipment used at the fire scene shall be surveyed for radioactive contamination and decontaminated at the RCCL.*
j. *After EOD has declared the area safe from an explosive standpoint, radiation surveys will be performed to determine the extent of radioactive contamination. Areas noted to be contaminated shall be marked and decontaminated as soon as possible.*
k. *The chain-of-command/local military community will assure that waste receptacles are available, and located at the RCCL for disposal of contaminated clothing and equipment. Metal containers with lids should be available with 4 mil plastic linings for solid waste. Radioactive waste should be held at the nearest Department of Defense installation, and disposition instructions requested per OPNAV NOTICE 5100.*
l. *Damaged ammunition that is contamination free shall be repackaged and reported to the applicable Program Manager, listed in appendix 1 to Supplement 7, for disposition.*
m. *Specific guidance on packaging damaged DU ammunition may be obtained by contacting the points of contact identified in Supplement 7, paragraph D.3 and D.4.*

Not mentioned in the documents is how first responders would have any idea that a burning truck with an "Explosives" placard might contain depleted uranium. This is because the U.S. government does not want anyone to know.[11]

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[1] The Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines are licensed by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to deploy DU munitions. The Coast Guard has not handled DU since 1992.

[2] The last DOT-E 9649 was renewed on January 31, 2003.

[3] In a separate DOT licensing agreement with the U.S. Army Military Traffic Management Command dated October 2, 2002, the DOT outlines conditions of approval for the shipment of DU munitions under DOT-E 9649. The "approved materials" listed for shipment are "cartridges for weapons, inert projectile". It should be pointed out that DU is not an "inert" material. The agreement goes on to state, "This approval may be modified, suspended or terminated in its entirety if that action is justified in light of changes in circumstances or additional information not available when this approval was issued." It is likely the military did not inform the DOT of the "significant health hazard" when DU is burned.

[4] DU munitions for the military include the following: **20 mm MK 149** for the Navy's Close-In Weapons System; **25 mm PGU-20**; **25 mm M919**; **25 mm M791** Armor Piercing, Fin Stabilized, Discarding Sabot, with Tracer (APFSDS-T); also a 25 mm for the Mark 38 machine gun; **30 mm PGU-14/B API** Armor Piercing Incendiary for aircraft; **120 mm M829** Armor Piercing, Fin Stabilized, Discarding Sabot-Tracer (APFSDS-T) for Army and Marine Corps tank ammunition.

[5] Destination and storage locations for just the **Navy's 20 mm DU rounds for the Close-In Weapons System**, released through the Freedom of Information Act from the Office of the General Counsel of the Navy on September 25, 2003 to Glen Milner, include the following locations. The Navy's DU storage locations in the United States (not including ports or onboard ships or overseas) are: Naval Air Station-North Island, **San Diego, CA**; Navy Weapons Station-Seal Beach, **Seal Beach, CA**; WPNSTA Seal Beach Det, **Fallbrook, CA**; Army Ammunition Activity, **Crane, IN**; NAVSURFWARCEN, **Indian Head, MD**; LANTORDCOMDET-Earle, **Colts Neck, NJ**; Army Ammunition Plant, **Hawthorne, NV**; Army

Ammunition Activity, **McAlaster, OK**; LANTORDCOMDET, **Charlestown, SC**; Toole Army Depot, **Toole, UT**; NAVSURFWARCEN, **Dahlgreen, VA**; Naval Air Station, **Norfolk, VA**; Sewells Point, **Sewells Pt, VA**; LANTORDCOM, **Yorktown, VA**; NAVMAG Indian Island, **Pt. Hadlock, WA**

[6] The following shipping companies are authorized by the Military Traffic Management Command to ship DU munitions, released through the Freedom of Information Act to Glen Milner on July 15, 2003: **AATCO**, Duenweg, MO; **Baggett Transportation**, Birmingham, AL; **Boyle Transport**, Billerica, MA; **Burlington-Santa Fe**, Springfield, VA; **Canadian Pacific RR**; **Carroll Trucking, Inc**.; **Chalich Trucking, Inc.**, Anoka, MN; **Crowley Liner Services, Inc**.; **Federal Freight Sys**, Texarkana, TX; **Fedex Custom Critical**, Clinton, MD; **Green Valley Transportation**, Vernalis, CA; **Iowa Interstate RR**; **Kansas City Southern RR**, Kansas City, MO; **Landstar Govt Transp Svc**, Springfield, VA; **Lanstar Inway, Inc.**, Springfield, VA; **Landstar Ligon, Inc.**, Springfield, VA; **Lanstar Ranger, Inc.**, Springfield, VA; **Mercer Transport**, Louisville, KY; **Nevill Enterprises, Inc.,** New Boston, TX; **Paducah & Louisville RR**, Paducah, KY; **Prestera Trucking, Inc.**, South Point, OH; **R & R Trucking Co.**, Duenweg, MO; **Tri-State Motor Transit**, Joplin, MO; **Union Pacific**, Chesterfield, VA.
Note that Tri-State Motor Transit is one of the largest companies transporting DU and nuclear warheads in the United States. TSMT ships DU in the Pacific Northwest. Contact info@gzcenter.org for addresses, telephone numbers, and e-mail addresses for the above listed shipping agencies.

[7] The U.S. military will now argue DOT-E 9649 is necessary to prevent a terrorist attack on DU shipments. A recent GAO report, however, states there are 123 chemical facilities in the U.S. that are unprotected from a terrorist attack where more than a million people in the surrounding areas would be exposed to toxic material. DU shipments would be very hard to target compared to the many stationary unprotected targets in the United States.

[8] All renewals of DOT-E 9649 have been based upon this initial application, dated August 11, 1986, released to Glen Milner on May 29, 2003 from the Department of Transportation.

[9] Hazardous Component Safety Data Statement dated May 14, 1984 for Uranium Depleted, Alloy, Bars, Billets and Tubular Shapes released to Glen Milner from Naval Surface Warfare Center through the Freedom of Information Act on May 22, 2003.

[10] Naval Radioactive Material Permit Number 13-00164-LINP for Navy and Marine Corps Ordnance Depleted Uranium Penetrators dated August 21, 2002. Appendix 3, Enclosure (1) to Supplement 7, Nuclear Regulatory Form 313

[11] Our experience at the Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action near Seattle, Washington has been that the greater the danger to the public, the less likely our government and the U.S. military will inform the public of the danger. In 1986, anti-nuclear activists were planning to block a train carrying explosive Trident rocket motors to the Trident submarine base at Bangor when the train derailed en route. At the time, the Navy told reporters and the public there was nothing explosive on the train. One year later, through the Freedom of Information Act, activists would learn that the train carrying Trident rocket motors was equal to the net explosive weight of 140,000 pounds of TNT. A front page Seattle Times article, dated April 7, 1987, declared, "Navy lied about derailed Trident train." There have been other issues and incidents but none as irresponsible as the ongoing loading and handling of Trident nuclear missiles at the Explosives Handling Wharf at Bangor. Although Hood Canal is an explosives handling zone on a routine basis while the Navy is handling Trident missiles, the public is never informed of the threat.

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103A Keets Road, Deerfield, MA 01342

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