

"America's 'New' Wars : Precisely Delivering 'Lethal Injection' by Using Depleted Uranium"

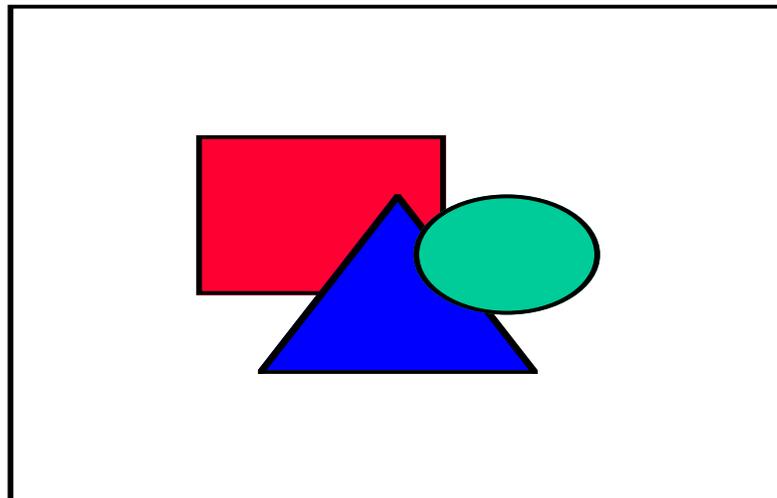
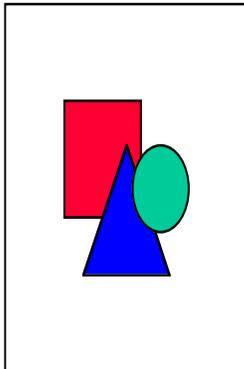
by

Marc W. Herold

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"the A-10 is a near-perfect aircraft for combating [such] third world conflicts"¹

In the U.S. campaign against Afghanistan, the two primary delivery agents firing depleted uranium munitions have been the F-15E 'Strike Eagle' and the A-10 'Warthog.'



Photos: A F-15E heading for Afghanistan prepared for launching at a Saudi Arabian air base [from http://www.af.mil/photos/images/011113_14.jpg] and an A-10 leaving Bagram Air Base on November 7, 2002 [AP photo, Amel Emric]. Capt. Mark Wendrok of Texas, waves to ground crew before taking off for a mission in Afghanistan.

¹ Capt. Robert H. Brown [USAF], "A Real Hog War. The A-1- in Low-Intensity Conflict," *Airpower Journal* [Winter 1990]

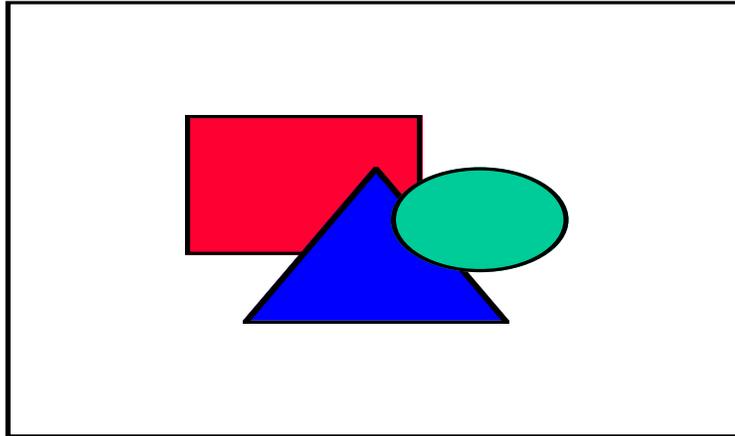
The following **Table** summarizes estimated usage of radioactive depleted uranium [DU] in three of America's recent wars. All these weapons will be heavily used should Gulf War II take place.

	Munitions containing DU	Delivery agent of munitions	Total tons of DU delivered
Iraq, 1991	30mm and 120mm cannon shells	Abrams tank and A-10 Warthog	320- 750
Balkans, 1999	30 mm cannon shells	A-10 Warthog	13
Afghanistan	30 mm shells, bunker busting bombs [GBU-28 and 37, AGM-130]	F-15E, B-2, A-10, and Apache helicopter [AH-64], Tomahawk cruise missile	~3'000

The U.S. military has used DU munitions since Gulf War I because they are very effective at penetrating armor and, more recently in the Afghan campaign, at destroying underground facilities and caves. DU burns intensely and is very hard. DU is also much cheaper than the substitute metal, tungsten. In effect, the U.S. military is cutting cost by allowing increased health hazards. The health dangers of using DU-munitions have now been widely recognized and reported upon and need not be repeated here.² Beyond just the health consequences, DU-munitions must be considered weapons of mass destruction insofar as the consequences of their usage are indiscriminate. Intensely bombed hard target zones like Tora Bora and Shah-i-Kot may now be heavily contaminated with DU oxide. During the battle of Shah-i-Kot, A-10s were heavily used, flying up to 8 hours every day from an unnamed base outside Afghanistan. The potential health risks to US and Afghan troops being sent to check out bombed cave systems are horrendous unless they are using full NBC protection. But even more serious are the risks in densely populated target zones like Kabul - where DU oxide is likely to contaminate soil, buildings and water and be suspended in the Kabul "haze" seen in several media reports.

Depleted uranium is the staple in the ammunition used by the M1A2 Abrams main battle tank [which fires 120 mm DU rounds to cut through enemy armor], and in the 30 mm rapid fire Gatling gun in the A-10 attack aircraft. The Gatling cannon fires 4'000 rounds per minute of 30 mm armor-piercing munition, delivering 1'200 kgs. of depleted uranium per minute! The GAU-8/A 'Avenger' 30 mm cannon. Made by General Electric, the 'Avenger' is a formidable weapon, as the photo below suggests in a line-up of the Avenger next to a VW Beetle. The 30 mm shell itself is 11.3 inches long.

² see the extraordinary report by Dai Williams, "Mystery Metal Nightmare in Afghanistan? Depleted Uranium Weapons in 2001-2002. Occupational, Public and Environmental Health Issues" at : <http://www.eoslifework.co.uk/du2012.htm>



[source: <http://www.wpafb.af.mil/museum/research/attack/a6/a10arm-3.jpg>]

The A-10 has now become the main fighter plane used in Afghanistan.³ Four A-10s were deployed to Bagram on March 23rd.⁴ In the Kosovo-Serbian theater, NATO forces delivered 31'000 - 50'000 rounds of DU ammunition during 100+ air sorties, primarily by the A-10 Warthog with its GAU-8/A cannons. The 30 mm PGU-14/B API Armor-Piercing Incendiary [DU] ammunition was extensively used in Gulf War I and in Kosovo. A report on the Kosovo campaign noted,

"repeated by NATO propaganda, "31 thousand DU bullets" were only at the Kosovo sites with records. Many entries in the list of DU sites indicated "unknown number" of bullets. Probably Yugoslav and Russian army estimate of 50 thousand bullets in the Kosovo campaign was closer to the truth. Zoric [7] analyzed NATO Kosovo list. Out of 112 sites, NATO knew DU quantities for only 89 sites. The rest was "unknown". The known number was 30 523 DU bullets, which represented a total mass of about 9 metric tons. One 30 mm bullet contains just under 0.3 kg of DU metal. Using an average from the sites with known quantities, Zoric estimated 7 888 additional DU rounds at the "unknown" sites, adding up to a total of 38 411 [<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/du-watch/files/nato%20du%20kosovo.xls>]. The number might be higher still, if NATO used large or very large quantities at some sites. This could be the reason NATO hid the true quantity from the start, with a view on belittling the problem through propaganda. It is unclear why the quantities appear counted precisely only in a few cases. The rest appear rounded up or down to tens and hundreds."⁵

The widely-used Raytheon GBU-28 5'000 lb. 'bunker-buster' bomb with a BLU-109 penetrator head carried only by the Air Force's F-15E's and B-2s, contains 1.5 metric tons of depleted uranium, compared to only 5 kilograms in the 120 mm shell. According to the GBU-28 Bunker

³ Jusuf Fuduli, "The Politics of Depleted Uranium," ICE Case Studies 92 [May 2002], at : <http://www.american.edu/TED/ice/uranium-training.htm>

⁴ Chris Otton, "Deadly A-10 Fighter Jets Show US Not Backing Down," Agence France-Presse [March 24, 2002 at 8:49 PM IST]

⁵ A paper by Piotr Bein and Pedja Zoric titled "Propaganda for Depleted Uranium: A Crime against Humankind" was prepared for "Facts about Depleted Uranium" conference that was held in Prague, Czech Republic, November 24-25, 2001. The text can be found at: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/du-list/files/DUPraha.doc>

Buster animation on USA Today the warhead is "classified".⁶ The 30 mm PGU-14 armor-piercing cannon shell contains 4,650 grains [0.66 pounds] of extruded DU, alloyed with 0.75 weight percent titanium.⁷

An improved version of this bomb - the GBU-31 - with a BLU-113 warhead also contains DU. Another bunker-penetrating munition dropped on caves and tunnels in Afghanistan is the AGM-130 - widely used in the Tora Bora campaign - which is a 2'900 lb., rocket-propelled bomb fired by helicopters and F-15E's up to 40 miles away from its target.⁸ Other earlier versions of bunker-penetrating bombs include the GBU-15, GBU-24 and the GBU-27.

The \$231'000 GBU-37B bomb began being dropped upon Afghanistan on October 10th by B-2s flying out of Missouri. On October 22nd, Abdul Hemat of the Taliban's Bakhtar News Agency, announced that doctors in both Herat and Kandahar were reporting patients showing unusual toxic sickness symptoms which could not be identified.⁹ Two or three of the patients died mysteriously.¹⁰ The Pakistani daily, Dawn, reported on November 12th that

"a leading military expert told Dawn that since October 7th the United States Air Force has been raining down depleted uranium shells at targets inside Afghanistan, especially against Taliban front lines in the north...."¹¹

On October 28th, an article in the Sunday Times noted,

"in the past three weeks, the U.S. air force has used burrowing or "bunker-buster" bombs against caves that showed signs of human use. Last week it reportedly focused on the Paktia province, near Pakistan. Dr. Jack Schroder, a University of Nebraska geologist who worked in Afghanistan, says a recent video statement by bin Laden showed distinctive patterns on the rock behind him, indicating a spot in Paktia, where the mountains are full of natural limestone caverns and tunnels - and man-made passageways. Bin Laden was based in this area when fighting the Russians."¹²

At about the same time, bunker-busting bombs were being dropped by F-15Es on old mujahideen caves containing ammunition supplies in the Spin Shagga mountains of eastern Paktia.

In mid-November, concerns were being raised about bunker-busting bombs being used to flush out Al Qaeda and Taliban fighters from caves, tunnels, and karezes and in so doing, leading to severe delayed environmental consequences as water supplies get contaminated with DU.¹³ Given the heavy U.S. bombing of the mountains in eastern Afghanistan, it seems probable that large amounts of DU have found their way into the rivers of the Hindu basin whose source is precisely in the mountains of the Hindu Kush. For example, after heading east from Kabul through heavily-bombed Nangarhar, the Kabul River crosses into Pakistan and feeds into the Indus River. In arid areas as in southern Afghanistan, most of the DU remains as surface dust where it is easily dispersed by wind.¹⁴

⁶ See <http://www.usatoday.com/graphics/news/gra/gbuster/frame.htm>

⁷ "PGU-14/B API Armor Piercing Incendiary 30 mm Ammunition," at FAS site <http://www.fas.org/man/dod-101/sys/land/pgu-14.htm>

⁸ Vernon Loeb, "Concrete-Piercing Bombs Hammer Caves," Washington Post [December 13, 2001]

⁹ "US Deploying Chemical, Biological Weapons: Taliban," Agence France-Presse [October 22, 2001 at 14:39 IST]

¹⁰ Sayed Salahuddin, "Taliban Claim U.S Using Chemical Weapons," Reuters [October 29, 2001]

¹¹ "US Bombings to Have Lasting Effects: Experts," Dawn [November 13, 2001], at : <http://www.dawn.com/2001/11/13/int6.htm>

¹² Tony Allen-Mills, "Why They Can't Find bin Laden," Sunday Times [October 28, 2001]

¹³ Fred Pearce, "Bombing Afghan Water Supplies," New Scientist [November 17, 2001]: 7.

¹⁴ Richard S. Ehrlich, "Depleted Uranium Toxicity in Afghanistan," The Laissez Faire City Times 5, 44 [October 29, 2001]

In mid-December, the Pentagon announced deployment of another new, high-tech bunker busting bomb in Afghanistan.¹⁵ The laser-guided bomb is a thermobaric weapon, a high temperature, high pressure explosive that destroys underground caves and tunnels. The new warhead, known as the BLU-118B, is fitted onto the BLU-109 2'000 lb. air-launched bomb and is delivered by Air Force F-15Es. Ten of the bombs were sent to Afghanistan.

In early December, Philip Coyle, a senior advisor at the Washington-based Center for Defense Information, said that DU was being employed in Afghanistan, though he sought to minimize it. On January 16, 2002, Secretary Rumsfeld admitted that the U.S. had found traces of radioactivity in Afghanistan, but predictably quickly attributed such to the nefarious acts of Al Qaeda.

US Air Force A-10s shot 30 mm ammunition in combat in Afghanistan on at least four occasions between March - September 2002, namely on March 3-6 in Shah-i-Kot, May 21 at Chapman Air Base in Khost, August 25 at the Special Forces base in Asadabad in Konar province, and September 20 at the Lwara Special Forces base in Paktia.¹⁶

Dr. Asef Dracovic said in November 2002, that U.S. forces had used more DU weapons in Afghanistan than they had in the Gulf War and the Balkans.¹⁷ My **Table** indicates about ten times more than in Gulf War I. Thousands of DU bombs were dropped upon Afghanistan. In recent days - early November - reports have begun surfacing about the birth of disabled and deformed children in Afghanistan. A large number of health specialists in Afghanistan as well as international observers, including one of the officials of a local hospital, regard these increasing numbers of birth defects in Afghanistan to be the result of U.S. dropping DU munitions upon Afghanistan.

If the 30 mm cannon shells of the A-10 Warthog doesn't kill the Afghan immediately, the longer-term consequences of dispersing deadly DU [with a half-life of 4.5 billion years] just might, later on.

Precisely delivering a time-delayed, lethal injection. Should we wonder, knowing that as governor of Texas, George W. Bush regularly dispatched death row persons using lethal injection.

¹⁵ "Airstrikes Resume Over Eastern Afghanistan," CNN.com [December 21, 2001]

¹⁶ from site of Dan Fahey [October 13, 2002] at <http://www.antenna.nl/wise/uranium/dissafdf.html> : " The reported dates of A-10 attacks are March 3-6, May 21, August 25, and September 20, 2002. U.S. Department of Defense News Transcript, "DoD News Briefing - ASD PA Clarke and Brig. Gen. Rosa," (5 March 2002) http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Mar2002/t03052002_t0305asd.html http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Mar2002/t03052002_t0305asd.html.

Evan Thomas, "'Leave No Man Behind,'" Newsweek (18 March 2002) 26; Thomas Shanker, "U.S. tells how rescue turned into fatal firefight," The New York Times (6 March 2002) A1; Peter Baker, "Afghans Strengthen U.S. Force," The Washington Post (8 March 2002) A1. Eric Schmitt, "American Planes Foil an Attack on an Airfield in Afghanistan," The New York Times (22 May 2002) A9. Cesar G. Soriano, "U.S. to stay in Afghanistan indefinitely," USA Today (25 August 2002). Associated Press, "U.S. base in Afghanistan attacked," (20 September 2002).

¹⁷ "U.S. Used More DU Weapons in Afghanistan Than in Persian Gulf War: Dracovic," Tehran Times [November 9, 2002]