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Promoting Social Justice, Human Rights, and Peace

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## **METAL OF DISHONOR: DEPLETED URANIUM**

*(Peoples Video Network*

Ellen Andors, editor, 53 min. 1997)

Transcribed by Darrell G. Moen

**Carol Picou (Sergeant First Class, Army [retired], MISSION Project):** This weapon is scary. To look at me, you would think that there was nothing wrong with me. I have long-term and short-term memory deficits. I have toxic encephalopathy of the brain. I have developed thyroid deterioration. Our babies are born without thyroids. Our atomic veterans suffer from thyroid cancer. I'm on medication for the rest of my life now. I have developed "suspicious" squamous cancer cells of the uterus. I have tested 12 times for the military and they want to keep repeating my tests.

We need to get this information out and we need your help. This is six years now that we're fighting for our health. The Vietnam veterans, it took them 22 years [before the government acknowledged its responsibility for the deaths and illnesses caused by its use of Agent Orange]. This is an "agent orange" of the 1990's for the Persian Gulf War veterans.

**Sara Flounders (International Action Center):** Six years ago, depleted uranium was used for the first time extensively in armor-piercing bullets and tank armor in Desert Storm. And just that experience left 300 tons of particles and fragments in the Gulf, creating an environmental and human health disaster. Iraq was a testing ground for a weapon of a new type. Desert Storm, as was said at the time, was a great advertisement for DU (depleted uranium) penetrators.

And after the Gulf War, DU weapons flooded the world arms market. Britain, Russia, Turkey, Saudia Arabia, Pakistan, Israel, Thailand, France, and others [including Japan] now have these weapons. They are both sold by the U.S. and they are developing their own DU industries. So it's a "genie that's out of the bottle" and all over the world.

**Helen Caldicott (physician and antinuclear activist):** The world has had one nuclear war and that was the one with bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the second nuclear war was the one with the bombs dropped in the Gulf region in what

people call the Gulf War and I call the Gulf Massacre. Nearly a million shells were used from airplanes and then there were tens of thousands of shells from tanks. Those shells were made of depleted uranium. Depleted uranium, when it hits something, tends to spontaneously ignite producing tiny, airborne particles that can be inhaled into the lungs and stay there and then be transported to other areas of the body. Uranium is an alpha emitter. It's highly carcinogenic. And so, this was a nuclear war.

**Dan Fahey (Swords to Ploughshares):** I just want to talk a little bit about how depleted uranium was used in the Gulf War. It's really important to understand how effective this was as a weapon in order to comprehend why the Pentagon is so reluctant to even discuss this as an issue. During the war, the primary way it was used was in the M1-A1 tanks that shot DU Penetrators and also the A-10 aircraft, which is an Air Force plane that is used primarily against armor and artillery. 1,900 U.S. M1-A1 tanks had depleted uranium armor and were shooting the DU shells. Only seven U.S. tanks were hit by Iraqi tank fire. None of them was seriously damaged because the armor on the tanks made them essentially impenetrable.

Now, what happens when a DU Penetrator is shot from a tank (it's an eleven pound dart of uranium that's being shot at extremely high velocity), when it hits, say an Iraqi tank, it concentrates an extreme amount of kinetic energy on a single point and it burns through to the inside of the tank. And as it has been described, it's just like cutting through butter, it just slices through the armor. But when it does this, up to 70% of it burns up and is scattered in small particles and dust inside and around the vehicle. If there are explosions, it can also be thrust up into the air and be carried downwind. During the war, about 4,000 tank rounds were shot in combat, and each one about 11 pounds of depleted uranium.

The Air Force A-10 aircraft fired almost one million small-caliber depleted uranium rounds. Each of those is about a half a pound of depleted uranium. So all told, during the actual combat of the war, about *300 tons worth of uranium bullets were shot and much of that is still left in the Gulf.*

**Sara Flounders (International Action Center):** The Pentagon and the giant highly profitable munitions industries on which so much of our economy today is based, they see DU (depleted uranium) as a cheap way to enhance shells and bullets, making them hard enough to penetrate armor. And using the term "depleted" means that the weapons containing this radioactive and highly toxic material are classified as "conventional" weapons. Depleted uranium is a waste product of uranium, but as I said calling the material depleted also gives the false impression that it's harmless, that the biological and environmental danger of enriched uranium has been eliminated. Nothing could be further from the truth!

**Helen Caldicott (Physicians for Social Responsibility):** When you dig uranium out of the ground, it contains two isotopes: 238 and 235. 235 is a fissionable isotope. 235 is present in a concentration of only .7%. It must be enriched to 3% to be used in a nuclear reactor. If it's enriched to 50% or more, then you make bombs out of it. It's called highly-enriched uranium or it's used for special nuclear reactors like the one at Brookhaven or research reactors. Now, left behind from this enrichment process is the depleted uranium or a lot of uranium 238 which can't be used. But it has one very special property - it's extremely dense. It's also radioactive! And it emits gamma radiation as well as alpha radiation (like x-rays). So the people handling it are at risk.

**Michio Kaku (Professor of Nuclear Physics, City University):** If you've ever handled DU, you that waste uranium, if I were to hold it in my hand, just a small sphere of it, you'd realize that it's extremely heavy, deceptively heavy. A small piece, smaller than a softball, weighs 1.7 times that of lead! It's one of the heaviest of all known metals because of the fact that it has 238 protons and neutrons in the nucleus. And what about the half-life? People wonder how long is Iraq going to be irradiated? Well, let me ask you a question. You all heard about half-lives, plutonium, over 20,000 years!

How long is DU going to be radioactive? Anybody? It is the age of the solar system! It is the age of the sun, the age of the earth, and the age of the moon. It is over 4.4 billion years, the half-life of uranium!

**Sara Flounders (International Action Center):** One particle of DU in the lungs radiates 800 times the accepted annual level of radiation. So what's the impact of that continuing radiation over 10 years, over 15 years as it continues to radiate all the surrounding cells and tissues and organs? And what happens when millions of people breathe the DU dust of the explosions?

**Helen Caldicott (Physicians for Social Responsibility):** Low level radiation is a misnomer and it's used by the industry to get away with their death-producing activities. The fact is that if you get an alpha emitter, be it plutonium or uranium or uranium or radium or whatever in your body next to a living cell, the alpha particle itself composed of two protons and neutrons is a very dense, heavy mass compared to a DNA molecule.

Now, normally if an alpha particle hits a cell, it will kill the cell because it's so damaging or psytotoxic. However, the strength of radiation decreases with the square of the distance. If you look at some plutonium or uranium under the microscope within a complex of cells, the piece of uranium or plutonium looks like a star shooting out alpha particles all the time. So cells on the periphery of that alpha radiation field will survive and some of them may be affected by the radiation in that the alpha particle mutates or chemically changes a regulatory gene. And the regulatory gene is the one that controls cell division.

And if a regulatory gene is damaged, it's quite possible that the patient will then go on years later to develop cancer. So in fact, the cells within the area of the alpha emitting particle, are in an area of intense radiation! That's high-level radiation!

But the whole of the rest of the body may be receiving none, and what the nuclear industry does is take that radiation from that tiny particle and average it over the trillions of cells in the body, and then they call it "low-level" radiation. And so you get as much radiation as from sleeping with your wife or from eating a banana similar analogies.

**Dan Fahey (Swords to Ploughshares):** In the Gulf War, there were a number of "friendly-fire" incidents involving depleted uranium. As a result of that, 22 veterans retained shrapnel in their bodies. The Depleted Uranium Program at the Baltimore VA Medical Center is currently following 30 veterans who have uranium in their bodies. The reason they're only following 30 is that the Army has repeatedly stated that the troops in the Gulf War were not exposed or people who came in contact with these contaminated, destroyed vehicles are unlikely to have gotten the uranium in their bodies.

**Carol Picou (Sergeant First Class, Army [retired], MISSION Project):** I served my country willingly. I volunteered because of patriotic reasons. I wanted to help. We were the frontline hospital, going into Iraq, going into Basra, going into Kuwait, we had to make parachute jumps. And everywhere there was a battle zone, we would jump, take care of the wounded, the sick, and move on. As we drove on the desert, it wasn't a highway, just a road created for us. There was ammunition laying everywhere. There were bunkers that were blown up. And we passed through this unprotected, a medical unit of 150.

I was recruited because I was the next highest ranking female, because seven men refused to go to the front, so I had to take seven other women. We're all sick. The men who all stayed in the rear are perfectly healthy and they all got awards. We got nothing. So what happened in the front, out of the 150 who went to the front, 40 are sick [with radiation poisoning], six have died, from homicides, suicides, heart attacks, and cancer. What happened over there? We have no answers yet.

What I did see on those front lines was astonishing. I was involved in Germany where they had friendly fire incidents on the battlefields there in tanks when we were doing training exercises. This was something I have never seen before in my life. These vehicles, once we reached the highways in the desert, were just burning and charred beyond recognition. They weren't just destroyed, they were melted and burnt. The bodies were charred black, as black as this microphone. When I was in Iraq, I started noticing these black specks all over my skin so I reported it.

My health started changing. I started getting sick. I couldn't control my bowels and my bladder anymore. So after we pulled out of Iraq and we started cleaning our equipment to return back to the United States, I went on sick call. They said, "It had to something mechanical. You need to have it checked once you return to the United States." My first night home, I said to my husband, something's wrong with me. I don't feel the same. My brain doesn't feel the same. My body doesn't feel the same. Something happened over there. And I knew it wasn't combat stress because that war was over so quick. I was in more stressful situations than in that war.

So I started seeking answers. As I started seeking answers, I was threatened with losing my military career. And that happened. So I went publicly to find out what was happening with the Desert Storm soldiers. Why are the people in my unit sick? An atomic veteran called me and said, "You have depleted uranium poisoning." What's depleted uranium? I have no idea what that is. We knew we took anthrax vaccinations, the experimental drugs, the other experimental pills and medication the government gave us, but what's depleted uranium? I started to look at what depleted uranium was and I started asking how can I get tested for this.

Well, I called Washington D.C. and was told that I can't get tested because I wasn't hit by friendly fire. Well, if you can inject these particles and breathe these particles, then I should be able to be tested. These particles can travel up to 60 miles. When the winds blow, those particles blow. We had wind storms every day in Iraq. They were blowing everywhere. So I said, okay, let me figure this out. How can I get tested? So I went to a civilian doctor. He said, "It's been two years now. I would need two weeks of your urine to find these contaminants. It's very expensive. Then I would have to find a laboratory to test it outside of the United States."

So, that request fell on deaf ears. Then I called my Congressman and asked him if I could be tested for uranium. I finally got tested in February of 1994. My tests came back positive of uranium contamination. The doctor read the test results to me on September 10th, 1994 and said, "This is nothing to worry about. This is just indicative of living in San Antonio." I said, "Excuse me?" I didn't want to argue because now I was educated about depleted uranium, we came to Washington, we did the press release, the book came out, "Battlefields at Home and Abroad." I just accepted his insult and just said, "I want my copies."

**Dan Fahey (Swords to Ploughshares):** After the war ended, the U.S. sent in a National Guard company from New Jersey to recover the contaminated vehicles to ship them back to the United States for decontamination. 27 people worked for three weeks climbing into these vehicles working on them without any knowledge that they were contaminated with depleted uranium. After three weeks, a team from the Army

Munitions Command showed up and told them that they were considered contaminated and that they needed to start taking protective measures.

Thousands of other veterans during the war were similarly exposed to depleted uranium when they may have breathed smoke from burning vehicles that had been hit. Some people I've talked to were tasked with going and seeking out the Iraqi vehicles and recovering any salvagable equipment. Other people just went on informal battlefield tours after the war and climbed in and on these vehicles. Literally thousands of people were exposed. The only real survey that has been done was done by a group in Texas that surveyed over 10,000 Gulf War veterans and found that 82% had come in contact with destroyed vehicles after the war.

But as I said, the Department of Defense and specifically the Army, denies that any of these people are at risk. But I am here to tell you that these people have been exposed. There are a number of veterans who the Army says were not exposed who have been tested and have tested positive for uranium in their bodies.

**Carol Picou (Sergeant First Class, Army [retired], MISSION Project):** So, were we exposed? I keep asking. I keep [being told] that I don't fall into that category. Yet, on March 8, 1991 during the war, this report came out which says, "For your information, this is going out to the field. By Major Woodward." I'm going to read it to you: "Any systems containing DU (depleted uranium) ammunition and involved in a fire can be assumed to be contaminated with DU. Previous experience indicate that only significant contamination is inside the system. Any system struck by a DU Penetrator can be assumed to be contaminated.

Personnel should avoid entering contaminated systems unless life or property is impacted. The DU contamination hazard is not significant to preclude entry into these cases. Personnel should wear gloves when handling suspected DU rounds or protective gear should be worn." We weren't warned of any of that! I have photos of me sitting there in Iraq with other soldiers not in [protective clothing] uniform. No gloves! We handled these patients. We climbed in and out of the tanks. Here I am in this picture with all these soldiers. No protective gear, no gloves on! Were we warned? No! Were we exposed to this? I'll never get the answer [from the government].

The Department of Defense to test me, to see me, to answer my questions! I have developed skin burns which started out as a rash, and this is what I look like this week. From here [the chest] down, I'm full of blisters this week. Our babies [those born to contaminated Gulf War veterans] are born with birth defects. When I came home, I knew that with all the drugs they gave us and everything we were exposed to, [because it would be very risky having a child] I had my tubes tied. I was afraid I would have a child born with birth defects. These babies here [pictured] in Life Magazine, have been born with birth defects.

This baby here was a baby born to a soldier in my support group in San Antonio of 125 families affected by this illness. He was missing an ear, an eye, his heart was on the wrong side. This baby was born in Iraq. These photos have been sent to me from Iraq. This Iraqi baby looks just like our American baby, with similar birth defects. What happened over there? They're coming into contact with these DU rounds that are left in the sand in Iraq as they try to clean up the mess. These are Iraqi babies born with club feet, same as our American babies. We have both American and Iraqi babies born with these abnormal blood vessels. What happened over there?

**Ramsey Clark (Former U.S. Attorney General):** The doctors over in Iraq are working with nothing except their wits and their learning. They have no medication, medical equipment, nothing! But by 1993 when we went back, in the south, with all the illnesses they had seen that they hadn't heard of before, with tens of thousands of people dying from bad water and nutrition deficiencies. They were suddenly seeing things that were very difficult to diagnose and that they hadn't seen before. Some they could detect.

Sudden increases in leukemia, particularly among children. Sudden increases in tumors. Birth defects unlike anything they had seen before. When we went back in 1994, it was the preeminent concern of the Ministry of Health in Iraq. They didn't know the cause, they just knew the numbers were springing out at them. They didn't know where, and they still don't know where it will stop, how far it will go.

**Unidentified Iraqi medical doctor:** I have been working here since 1989. Before the war, during the war, and after the war. And we have noticed a change in pattern in diseases in this city. Definitely, our figures show that there is an increase in the number of cases malignancies, cancers, leukemias, and also there is an increase in birth defects among newborns. These cases are increasing more and more. Just a small example, I just now arrived here from another clinic and today we discovered three new cases of cancer.

In all of these new cases, the similarity is that they were all exposed in some way to the types of bombs used during the war. I was here at this hospital during the war, and in this city, there was daily bombing for 42 days. This was an important city because it has many bridges, you know, and it was really horrible. The bombing was so severe, but you know, we don't know what we were bombed with. We can expect any type of bombing, but with kind of this increase in leukemias and malignant cancers, we expect that they used something which is not conventional.

**Barbara Nimri Aziz (journalist, anthropologist):** What we are talking about here tonight is not visible yet in many cases. But in the course of my research, sitting with farmers, we got to the question of families, and several young farmers said, "We are

not marrying. We're delaying marriage." And I asked why. And the reason was that there were so many deformed babies born in that village that young people were now afraid to marry. And I asked for further evidence, and this is a village of 160 households, and we were about eight villagers gathered around and so we could do a kind of a survey. The group included the village school teacher and of course with a village of 160 households everyone know everyone else and are in fact often related to each other. And we went through house by house, and there were 20 malformed, congenitally- defective babies born in four years in 160 households. And most of those children's fathers were in the war.

**Ramsey Clark (Former U.S. Attorney General):** Here's a country that's lost a million people [after the war] to sanctions that are a crime against humanity. Sanctions which are weapons themselves of mass destruction: like a neutron bomb, they kill life and preserve property. But DU is far more insidious. We know about hunger and we know about medicine, and we know what happens when you don't have food and medicine and you're sick and hungry. But we really don't know the potential consequences for what we're doing. But we do know that nothing will stop the Pentagon from doing what it wants to do!

**Sara Flounders (International Action Center):** The Pentagon clearly considers the contamination of its own soldiers, of the environment, of millions of civilians an acceptable cost. And we should remind ourselves this has always been true. Just consider their record on nuclear and chemical devastation over the past fifty years.

We could start with the first development and use of nuclear weapons, the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, or we could recall the tests in the South Pacific where thousands of Pacific Islanders were consciously made guinea pigs. [U.S. Army officer briefing Bikini Islanders (through an interpreter) about the upcoming tests: "Just tell them please that the United States government now wants to turn this great destructive power into something for the benefit of mankind. And that these experiments here at Bikini are the first step in that direction."] [U.S. television broadcast: "Despite the fact that the island of Bikini may be utterly destroyed come July 1st, the natives, in their utter simplicity, in their pleasantness, in their courtesy, they're more than willing to cooperate. Though they don't understand the world of nuclear energy any more than we do, and though they have no way of understanding what the tests are all about."]

And let's remember the "atomic veterans." Between 1946 and 1963, more than a quarter million U.S. troops were consciously exposed to atomic testing and then secretly studied by the Pentagon. They were never told the risks to their children nor were the tens of thousands of people who lived downwind of the tests. [Caption insert: "...there was a desire by the military for some degree of off-site radiation for troop training purposes. They wanted American servicemen to be radiated." -AEC Minutes, Nov. 14, 1958; Leslie Freeman, Nuclear Witnesses, 1961] [U.S. Army training film:

"Put on goggles or face away from the target area. Looking at an atomic explosion with the naked eye will cause a temporary impairment of vision. Like looking at the sun, nothing serious but enough to draw a curtain on the "show of shows" no one wanted to miss. 30 seconds - final - turn!"

**Howard Hinkie (U.S. Army switchboard operator, Nevada Test Site):** I myself walked up toward the bomb after it was ignited, yes. The mushroom cloud was still in the air on our way towards it. Sometimes it would stay up there for a long, long time, and it goes a long way up, too. By the time it goes off and you turn around from that light to look at it, there's already a mushroom cloud started up.

**Van Brandon (U.S. Army medic, Nevada Test Site):** When you read the film badge, we had an actual reading and these were entered into one log. Then, we had a second set of books in which the records were to reflect that he did not exceed his daily allowance [of radiation]. They processed them, General Electric or DuPont. We were human guinea pigs. At the time, we were being [criminally] used.

**Howard Hinkie (U.S. Army switchboard operator, Nevada Test Site):** Oh, my one boy, he would have been 18 years old today, he died in 1966, twenty-one months after he was born. He was born without an esophagus and stuff like that.

**Unidentified atomic veteran:** I have had cancer of the colon.

**Rudy Florentine (U.S. Navy, Nagasaki):** In the course of that following week, I believe it was, the child died.

**Unidentified atomic veteran:** But there's one thing about radiation: it's a wound that the G.I. [soldier] receives but it's unique because he can pass it on. He can give it to somebody else, his children and his grandchildren. That is the terror!

**Sara Flounders (International Action Center):** Let's remember Agent Orange, the chemical defoliant that was sprayed all over Vietnam. Millions of Vietnamese were the victims, and tens of thousands of G.I.s. And the Pentagon spent years denying the effects and denying the veterans who desperately needed treatment.

**John Jones (Vietnam combat veteran, Jersey City All Peoples Congress):** I am a Vietnam War combat survivor unlike the majority of my brothers and sisters who were forced to go and fight in Vietnam. I happen to be one of the fortunate few who are not out on the street, who make up over 75% of the homeless without any health care, without any housing, without a job. The same government that sent us to fight a war against the Vietnamese people, not for liberty, not for independence, but for profits, is the same government with the same U.S. military that continues to send our brothers and sisters, your sons and daughters, mothers and fathers, to fight a war in the Persian

Gulf, not for independence, not for justice, but for megaprofits, for a handful of bankers and oil companies.

And when I see the Gulf War veterans who are afflicted with an "unknown disease," we have to remember that the U.S. military is capable of tremendous destruction and it's also capable of tremendous coverup. You only have to read the Pentagon Papers to see thirty years later what was done, what we were exposed to. Hopefully we won't have to wait that long to bring justice to those who fought in the later wars.

**Sara Flounders (International Action Center):** DU contamination is a form of environmental racism. It affects poor communities and people of color here in the U.S. while targeting them around the world. It's on Native American reservations where 80% of uranium is mined and where almost all uranium waste is dumped. It's the frontline soldiers who face the greatest contamination and the majority are people of color. Nor is it any surprise that DU assembly and testing facilities are mostly located in the poorest communities.

**Anna Rondon (Southwest Indigenous Uranium Forum):** In the Navajo creation story we have been told and always known that uranium must be left in the ground. It's a yellow substance identified in our legends, in our creation stories. We were told by the gods in our songs, in our creation stories that we had an important choice: a choice between the yellow uranium dust and the yellow corn pollen which is what we pray with every morning, carry in our medicine bags, and which possesses the positive elements of life. We chose the corn pollen, the beauty way of life, life-giving. Then uranium, life-taking, was to remain in the ground. If it was to be released, like other beliefs among indigenous cultures around the world, it's a serpent that would appear. It will bring you evil, death and destruction. And we are at that brink today.

Eleven thousand tons of uranium was mined between 1942 and 1945 for the secret Manhattan Project which we all know was creating the atomic bomb. Between 1946 and 1968, 13 million tons of uranium was mined by 1,500 mostly Navajo uranium miners. Today, more than half have died from cancers and respiratory diseases. The U.S. government is not going to pay out millions of dollars to future victims of radiation exposure. From 1954 to 1968, four uranium mills were constructed. The tailings and over 1,000 underground and open pit mines still remain on our reservation. Children play in the uranium tailings. Sure, they have warning signs posted, but most of our people still don't understand or read English. Homes are being built from tailings. 600 homes are already being lived in that were made from uranium tailings, the actual uranium rocks that come from the mines.

Back in 1975, 95 million gallons of radioactive water and 1,100 tons of contaminated debris spilled from United Nuclear Corp.'s waste storage lagoon at Church Rock mine into the Rio Puerto River, the worst nuclear accident in U.S. history. We're still living

with that contamination. Our livestock are still being contaminated. The water is still radioactive.

**Alice Slater (Global Resource Action Center for the Environment):** The DU is a piece of this bizarre recycling program. The world is really awash in radioactive waste. We simply haven't a clue as to where to put it. So, enchanted by the hardness of depleted uranium which can penetrate tank armor, some evil genius in the pay of the Pentagon thought to make bullets from it in this bizarre recycling program which enabled the government to make a dent in the over half a million tons of depleted uranium waste amassed since the Manhattan Project. We have over 4,000 contaminated sites.

In Idaho, I saw rusting tin cans in an open earth pit sitting on top of an aquifer in an earthquake zone containing plutonium from the nuclear navy. It's shipped from Albany, New York to Idaho on trains [and trucks], this deadly nuclear waste. And they're still making nuclear reactors and making more waste. In Amarillo, Texas they store the plutonium pits on top of the Oglala aquifer, the world's largest freshwater aquifer that provides drinking water to 16 states. And now that we're stuck with mountains of radioactive wastes that remain lethally toxic for at least 250,000 years, what are the "great minds" of today working on?

Space nukes, bunker busters, depleted uranium bullets and armor, third generation hydrogen bombs in virtual reality computer simulations so that we can give lip service to having stopped nuclear testing while we go merrily, madly on our way building still more bombs, thinking up even grander schemes of nuclear terror, instead of working on how to clean up the poisonous legacy of the nuclear age.

**Michio Kaku (Professor of Nuclear Physics, City University):** So when you hear powerful, moving stories of the people who have been victimized by the nuclear fuel cycle, when you realize that we now "shoot" nuclear waste into other peoples' backyards, you realize that this story is obscene. We're talking about laying the groundwork for perhaps a war of crimes, a war crimes investigation to crimes against ordinary people. And this is a message that has to go out. And yet, where do we see the national media here? I don't see network news. I don't see Channel 2 or Channel 4 [covering this story about crimes against humanity and the movement to stop it]. I don't see the big media today. It just goes to show you that "the revolution is not going to be televised." And it just goes to show you that we have "freedom of the press" if you happen to own one.

**Helen Caldicott (Physicians for Social Responsibility):** [Interviewer: What do you think of the credibility of the military investigating itself?] The military investigating itself is the fox guarding the chicken coop. You never have an investigation by people who has something to preserve or something to hide. You always have an independent

group investigating. A group of doctors who've made a mistake, a group of architects who've built a building a building that's collapsing, or the like. The military, in this instance the Gulf War Syndrome, I mean they hid the fact for years that they blew up chemical facilities, let alone have they even started to talk about the actual nuclear war that they conducted in that gulf region. So I wouldn't trust them as far as I could kick them.

**Sara Flounders (International Action Center):** The government knew well the lethal short- and long-term effects of depleted uranium, way before Desert Storm. This is obvious, if you look at the various reports filed by the Army Environmental Policy Institute, the GAO (Government Accounting Office), or other government-sponsored scientific studies on DU. But it's clear on the use of depleted uranium, especially on the battlefield, that it had grave medical consequences and that military personnel would be exposed if DU weapons were used.

Looking at these reports, it's even all the more irresponsible and misleading for the Presidential Advisory Committee on Gulf War Illnesses to conclude that depleted uranium is not a causative agent in what it says are the "complaints" by Gulf War about "medical problems." But they also conclude in the very same reports where they describe the grave hazards of DU, that if they were to admit these hazards it would involve having to pay out potentially huge sums of money to sick and dying veterans and their families for generations to come. Now when you look at these government documents, you know we need an independent inquiry into Gulf War Syndrome and not another government whitewash.

**Ramsey Clark (Former U.S. Attorney General):** And the Pentagon doesn't seem to care what the consequence might be, not just for their own soldiers, not just for those living in southern Iraq or other areas of Iraq where there was a concentration of this kind of firing, and the next generation or so, but what it might mean for the survival of life on the planet - they don't even care! They'll go right ahead. And they'll cover up and lie about it. And they'll flaunt the law. And they're in the laboratories right now working to find more efficient means of kill lots of people - on the quick. And we have to stop it or it'll stop us!

**Helen Caldicott (Physicians for Social Responsibility):** I've written two op-ed pieces (opinions to the editor) about Casenee which is going to launch its Saturn probe and launch 72.3 pounds of plutonium 238 which is 280 times more toxic than plutonium 239 (which is the most dangerous element known to the human race) into space in October 1997 aboard two dangerous rockets that tend to explode.

One is the Centaur, armed with liquid hydrogen, and the other is the Titan IV which has exploded on several occasions. Now, if that blows up like the Challenger did, in transit or on the pad, the whole of the world's population, not just people but animals,

will be at risk. Then it's coming back two years later. It's going to fly up to Venus and then come back in the year 2000 and swing by the earth (312 miles above the surface of the earth) to increase its momentum off to Saturn. If any of the vectors are slightly off in this "swing by" they call it, it could come through the atmosphere and burn up, thereby exposing the world again to the most hideously dangerous situation. Plutonium, being the most carcinogenic substance we know, such that one pound, hypothetically, if adequately distributed could give everyone on earth lung cancer. That's one pound and they're going to launch 72.3 pounds of plutonium 238 which is much more dangerous than plutonium 239 which is the one pound I referred to.

I've written an article for The New York Times op ed piece nearly a year ago which they promised to publish, they promised to publish, they promised to publish, then they finally said, no, there's no way we can get that past the editors here. So recently I wrote a similar article for the Los Angeles Times. They were very keen, had it all edited, yes, they said publish it two months ago, it still hasn't been published. I rang them up the other day and asked, "Has NASA been on to you not to publish?" "No," they said. "Are you going to publish it?" I asked. "Yes" I don't believe them. There's a huge press coverup about one of the most dangerous potential situations the human race has ever faced! And I can't help but be reminded of Nazi Germany. "Yeah, we saw those cattle trucks and we didn't know what was in them. Yeah, we saw that smoke. It smelled funny but we didn't know what it was." What on earth does the press think it's doing?!? You know, now 5.4 billion people are at risk.

**Sara Flounders (International Action Center):** Today, there is no weapon that can challenge the Pentagon militarily. There's only one thing the Pentagon fears. That's people informed, mobilized, and angry. It's the only way testing stopped. It's the only way wars are challenged. It's the only way Agent Orange was packed up.

**Barbara Nimri Aziz (journalist, anthropologist):** We can accumulate information, we can bring people together, but information is not enough. You must take a risk! I must take a risk. All of us who are organizing this effort must take a risk, and as one speaker said, "Do something!"

**Ramsey Clark (Former U.S. Attorney General):** The symbol of our challenge: this is the moment for DU. If we can't come to grips with this, is it conceivable that it is acceptable by any human standard that we would permit for one moment one shell of depleted uranium to be manufactured, to be used, to be stored? No! Stop it now! End it now! Abolish it! Prohibit forever! And make it the war crime it is!

**Michio Kaku (Professor of Nuclear Physics, City University):** Remember, there's one thing more powerful than a hydrogen bomb. That is the power of a people united! A power of a people educated, a power of a people enraged that this obscenity is being committed against other people! But I believe that this is a winnable battle. When the

American people realize that we're shooting nuclear wastes into other peoples' backyards, poisoning our very own, inflicting unparalleled casualties on other people, then I think the American people will rise and we will see the day when nations beat our DU, our swords, into plowshares.

**Sara Flounders (International Action Center):** Information is power! And information, when it's mobilized, it actually undergoes a chemical transformation. It becomes outrage! And then it has explosive potential. Potential to force great, sweeping changes. And that's our secret weapon!

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