

Gulf War Illness and Depleted Uranium

What does the latest report tell us?

Gulf War Illness and the Health of Gulf War Veterans

- Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veteran's Illnesses (RAC)
 - Set up by US congress
 - Report released November 2008

Headline findings

- Distinct medical condition
 - 2 Major Symptom Groups
- Causal link with two factors
 - Pyridostigmine Bromide (PB) pills – given to protect from chemical weapons
 - Pesticides used in coalition camps

DU and Gulf War illness – What we don't know

- Where it was used
 - Map not supplied to RAC
- Which veterans were affected
 - Cites estimates by Independent US researcher: 'several hundred thousand'
- Problems with self-reporting methodology

DU exposure and wider health problems – What we don't know

- Little information about rates of cancer in veterans
- No studies on birth defects and DU
 - US department of Veterans Affairs (VA) may not have released all information on this matter
- Problems with 'Gulf War and Health' reports
 - Recommends VA department be stripped of responsibility

Report's conclusions on DU

- Recent animal research 'potentially of great importance'
- DU "not likely a primary cause of Gulf War Illness for most Gulf War veterans"
- Disparity with expected symptoms
- No 'syndrome' in recent conflicts
 - Questionable that use is as comparable as they believe
- CADU and ICBUW believe conclusions broadly correct
 - 40% of veterans in combat area
 - Symptoms in all 3 services

McDiarmid Studies

- Highly important project – frequently cited
- Veterans with known DU exposure
- Included veterans with high level exposure & embedded DU
- 70 out of 900 involved in incidents with potential high level exposure
- 29 to 50 in each follow up
- No control
- Crude categorisation

McDiarmid Studies

- Did not follow up significant findings
 - DU in sperm of five veterans in 1997
- Did not report incidences of tumours in the group
 - Non Hodgkin's Lymphoma mentioned in passing
 - Non malignant bone tumour not mentioned at all
 - Described as "puzzling"
 - "Because they were not believed to be the result of DU exposure"

Conclusions

- Deplorable lack of information after 17 years
- Recommendations are essentially research from first principles
- Serious questions over VA research & independence of scientists
- Importance of animal and in vitro studies
- Research on civilians urgently needed