**Court Ruling in the Case of Salvatore Vacca – May 20, 2016, Rome, Italy**

**1. Key Facts**

The soldier Salvatore Vacca, an infantryman of the 151st Regiment of the Sassari Brigade, had participated in a mission in Bosnia in 1998 and 1999. In September 1999, at the age of 23, he was diagnosed with an acute form of leukemia after coming into contact with depleted uranium (DU) ammunition. His parents filed the claim for compensation.

[Link to article (German):](http://www.stol.it/Artikel/Politik-im-Ueberblick/Politik/Tod-wegen-Uran-Munition-Italien-verurteilt)

The ruling was issued on May 20, 2016. The compensation amount is around 1.8 million euros (some sources report “around 2 million”).

**2. The Ruling**

**2.1 Summary**

In their ruling, the judges stated that “the danger of the substances is independent of their concentration” and criticized “the negligent inaction of the Ministry of Defense” as well as “the negligent behavior of military authorities in not thoroughly planning and assessing the risk factors.” Furthermore, the Civil Appeals Court in Rome affirmed “the compatibility between this case and the indications present in scientific literature” and “the existence of a causal link between the deployment area and the onset of the illness.”

(Italian original cited confirms the same content.)

[Source: La Repubblica article](http://www.repubblica.it/politica/2016/05/20/news/uranio_impoverito_ministero_condannato-140227199/)

**2.2 Original Document**

[PDF of ruling (Il Sole 24 Ore)](http://www.ilsole24ore.com/pdf2010/Editrice/ILSOLE24ORE/ILSOLE24ORE/Online/_Oggetti_Embedded/Documenti/2016/05/20/Vacca.pdf)

**3. Background**

So far, 330 deaths and 3,765 illnesses linked to depleted uranium have been reported. A total of 43 court rulings have mandated compensation, 13 of which are final. In 20 cases, the victims or their families have received compensation.

[Source: Corriere della Sera article](http://www.corriere.it/extra-per-voi/2016/03/25/uranio-impoverito-330-morti-43-sentenze-risarcimento-numeri-strage-dimenticata-a8986170-f28b-11e5-a7eb-750094ab5a08.shtml)

**4. Assessment**

**4.1 Three Key Aspects**

According to Italian peace activists, the ruling contains three notable aspects:

1. The compensation amount of €1.8 million is very high.
2. The judges clearly assign responsibility for the soldier’s death to the Ministry of Defense.
3. The court’s reasoning clearly identifies contact with DU ammunition as the cause of death.

**BUT:** Judgments are often not immediately implemented. The legal process can still take a long time before families actually receive compensation.

**Example:** Last year, the family of Valery Melis was awarded around €580,000 in damages by a court, but they have not received a single euro to date.

Sources:

* [L’Espresso article](http://espresso.repubblica.it/attualita/2016/02/29/news/silenzio-di-piombo-le-basi-militari-in-sardegna-e-quelle-morti-senza-risposte-1.252237)
* [Atuttadestra article](http://www.atuttadestra.net/index.php/archives/94024)

**4.2 Comment on Significance / Observatorio Militare**

“With this verdict, a final word is placed on the numerous investigative commissions,” said Domenico Leggiero, Head of the Defense Division of the Observatorio Militare. He added that “a ruling of this kind could open the uranium issue to serious criminal implications. Moreover, the ruling is clear: there is unequivocal certainty that the military leadership already knew—before deploying personnel—that exposure to areas contaminated by DU projectiles involved a likely risk of illness and possibly death from cancer.”

[Source: Observatorio Militare](http://www.osservatoriomilitare.it/uranio-ministero-condannato-anche-in-appello-in-via-definitiva-inequivoca-certezza/)

**5. The Parliamentary Inquiry Commission:**

**“Commissione parlamentare di inchiesta sugli effetti dell'utilizzo dell'uranio impoverito”**

* 4th Inquiry Commission, Chair: Gian Piero Scanu
* 20 members in total
* There were three previous commissions, all discontinued due to legislative or governmental changes
* Experts involved: Antonietta Gatti, Domenico Leggiero, Zucchetti

[Link to parliamentary composition](http://www.camera.it/leg17/436?shadow_organo_parlamentare=2588)  
[Additional sources: [Observatorio Militare](https://www.osservatorioamianto.it/sindrome-dei-balcani-assistenza-legale/), [La Repubblica](http://www.repubblica.it/politica/2016/05/20/news/uranio_impoverito_ministero_condannato-140227199/)]