

Low Level Radiation Campaign
The Knoll,
Montpellier Park,
Llandrindod Wells,
Powys LD1 5LW
2nd November 2006

Dr. Habib N. El-Habr
Director and Regional Representative
UNEP/ROWA
P.O. Box 10880
Bahrain, Manama

Dear Dr. El-Habr

I work closely with Dr. Chris Busby of Green Audit. Together we have worked on issues arising from the use of Uranium in weapons for a number of years.

We note the statement attributed to you (albeit under a mistaken name) in The Independent 30th October 2006: "If Uranium was used (in Lebanon) we will find out and we will announce it."

(http://news.independent.co.uk/world/middle_east/article1940826.ece)

It is a matter of great concern that in the past UNEP has employed inappropriate methods for monitoring Uranium during both its missions to Kosovo. We see no sign that the current mission in Lebanon will use any different methods. Dr. Busby visited Kosovo and found ample evidence of depleted Uranium. The details are at <http://www.llrc.org/du/subtopic/durs2.htm#kosovo>. An outline critique of the UNEP Kosovo missions is at <http://www.llrc.org/du/subtopic/unep.htm>. The Green Audit report is at <http://www.llrc.org/du/subtopic/uneprept.htm>.

We were additionally concerned to hear a contribution by Henrik Slotte, Head of the UNEP Post Conflict Branch to the BBC "Today" broadcast 1st November 2006 in which he said "Without the coordinates and clear information about what was used and when - it is impossible to start working on depleted uranium in the field - it's like looking for a needle in the haystack." We know Dr. Slotte was talking about Iraq but the same considerations apply to any theatre in which Uranium has been or may have been used, namely that large fragments and entire Uranium penetrators are not the only objects of interest and monitoring techniques capable of detecting fine particles must be deployed. Since the aerosol created by the impact of Uranium is readily dispersed the point of impact is to a large extent irrelevant. The search must be wide and must take account of geophysical and meteorological mechanisms affecting distribution and deposition.

A third consideration is that the Lebanon mission is committed to looking for depleted Uranium. It is imperative that this criterion does not limit the monitoring since there are persistent reports that undepleted Uranium has been incorporated in some weapons. This is especially relevant in Lebanon following the discovery of enriched Uranium in two craters, as reported in the Independent on 28th October (<http://news.independent.co.uk/world/fisk/article1935945.ece>). We are in possession of an air filter obtained from an ambulance in Lebanon. There are clear indications of hot particles on the filter and the evidence is consistent with enriched Uranium. This is subject to confirmation following analysis at Harwell.

A final consideration is the concept of radiation dose and its invalid application to certain exposure regimes. Particles of Uranium Oxide created by the impact and combustion of Uranium weaponry are capable of being inhaled and retained in body tissue for far longer periods than soluble forms of the metal. It is now generally acknowledged that there are circumstances in which energy deposition from internal radionuclides is so highly heterogeneous that the notion of absorbed dose is virtually meaningless. The effectively insoluble Uranium particles we are here concerned with are one such circumstance. Authorities which have made statements on the insecurity of absorbed dose as a predictor of risk include the International Commission on Radiological Protection, the Institut de Radioprotection et Surete Nucleaire, the European Committee on Radiation Risk and the UK Government's Committee Examining Radiation Risk of Internal Emitters. We therefore caution UNEP against any repetition of the statements based upon radiation dose which were made after its Kosovo missions. An approach to understanding the true risks can be made by applying the weighting factors developed by the European Committee on Radiation Risk as modifiers of the ICRP's recommendations.

Dr. Busby has considerable experience and reputation in the fields of radiation protection, epidemiology and environmental monitoring. We attach his c.v. and invite you to note his connections with the UK Ministry of Defence Depleted Uranium Oversight Board and the European Committee on Radiation Risk. In light of this we suggest that UNEP should commission him to go to Lebanon to investigate. Please contact him directly to discuss the matter. His contact details are as follows:

email: christo@liverpool.ac.uk; christo@greenaudit.org
Telephone 0044 1970 630215; 0044 7989 428833

Yours sincerely

Richard Bramhall

Dr. Habib N. El-Habr
Director and Regional Representative
UNEP/ROWA
P.O. Box 10880
Bahrain, Manama
Tel: +973-17 812777 ext 755
Dir: +973-17 812755 or +973-17 825288
Mob: +973-3 9443225
Fax: +973-17 825110/111
E-Mail: habib.elhabr@unep.org.bh
Web: www.unep.org.bh