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Former Head Of Pentagon's Depleted Uranium Project Says Thousands Of Troops Are Sick And Dying From Illegal DU Use And Military's Failure To Admit Responsibility

After Maj. Doug Rokke went public in 1997 exposing the military's flawed DU program, his life has been threatened but he still continues to search for solutions in order to save the lives of those afflicted.

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By Greg Szymanski

Army Major Doug Rokke has been shot at, run off the road, threatened, harassed, black-balled, intimidated, called a liar and treated like a “hated enemy” not by opposition forces in Iraq, but by ‘secret ops’ in the U.S. government, obviously acting on orders from top military brass.

And in May 2000 he was subjected to the biggest scare of his life when bullets rang through his son’s bedroom window while living in Jacksonville, Alabama, in what he calls “another near miss” by government hit men bound and determined to remove his presence from the planet.

Maj. Rokke, living in Rantoul, Illinois, and still active in the Army Reserves, has been a government target ever since going public in a May 1997 article in the Nation Magazine, criticizing the military for

failing to clean-up depleted uranium used in Iraq during the first Gulf War.

Although Maj. Rokke's accusations have been echoed by many others what makes his statements so electrifying – so damaging to the military - is that he was one of the Pentagon's 'top boys.' In fact, he was not only one of the Pentagon's elite, he was "the man" so to speak when it came to determining the causes and effects of depleted uranium (DU) used in the battle field.

Being so well-respected by the Pentagon brass, Maj. Rokke was the military expert assigned as director of the 1994 U.S. Army Depleted Uranium Project in response to congressional inquiries and direct Department of Defense (DOD) orders.

The study was commissioned after it was found the military lacked adequate preparation to deal with the adverse health and environmental effects regarding the use of DU in the battle field. This highly efficient 'killing tool,' which amounts to nothing less than a radioactive nuclear assault, has been extensively used in U.S. weaponry in the first Gulf War as well as the present Iraqi conflict, even though it is a direct violation of the Geneva Convention and United Nation regulations.

In simple terms, Maj. Rokke was asked to evaluate the extent of DU used and asked to advise the military how to adequately comply with its own existing regulations of training, clean-up and medical care involving soldiers and civilians contaminated.

In his final report, Maj. Rokke, however, didn't beat around the bush or

provide a technical escape for evading regulations. He simply laid it on the table plain and simple, saying if the military intended to keep using DU, it needed to address the above problems, as regulations mandated, or simply cease and desist from its use.

And, in hindsight, it was probably the words “cease and desist” or Maj. Rokke’s simple ultimatum of “clean-up or don’t use” that initially ticked-off military brass, since behind the scenes the ‘big boys’ never really intended to open up a can of worms caused by Maj. Rokke’s report.

But when the implacable army officer went public about the extent of the DU problems in 1997, letting the cat out of the bag about the military’s outright refusal to comply with existing regulations, the ‘big boys’ put their boxing gloves on and are still trying to punch Maj. Rokke into submission today.

“They have been after me ever since I went public,” said Maj. Rokke in a telephone conversation this week from his country home in the heartland of Illinois. “I’ve been shot at, run off the road several times, harassed, threatened and whatever else they could think of doing to discredit me for what I was doing.

“They even shot bullets through my son’s bedroom window. These guys don’t play around and the first thing I was told when I went public was to keep my 45 loaded at all times.”

Even though Maj. Rokke’s obviously right and the military wrong, the cold and hard truth is that the big brass tried to crucify him for simply

telling the truth. The cold hard truth is that even though the military admits using DU, it never has admitted to the legal causal connection between its use and its adverse effects on human and environmental health.

And critics contend that such outright contempt for its own regulations and the military's failure to provide adequate medical care for those exposed to DU has left hundreds of thousands of military personnel and civilians sick or dying, including Maj. Rokke.

"It's really very simple," added Maj. Rokke. "I was asked to report on what they needed to do about the DU problem. Our team of experts then reported and provided our recommendations, plain and simple.

"But when I realized in 1997 we were being ignored and thousands of people, including myself, were sick and possibly slowly dying from DU exposure, I had to go public and blow the whistle."

And Maj. Rokke said his warnings as well as warnings from many other experts were not only dismissed by the military, but also by every other bigwig on Capital Hill, including President Clinton, Senator John Kerry and every other member of Congress, all very much aware of his position since he even addressed the 2000 Fall Congressional Coalition Leadership at its quarterly breakfast in Washington D.C.

Adding that the DU problem is even worse today, Maj. Rokke pointed out the military continues to bombard the Iraq and Afghanistan with "increased levels" of nuclear weaponry, leaving in its wake even higher levels of nuclear fallout than were present in Gulf War I.

And like President Clinton, his predecessor, President Bush has failed to address or even recognize the problem, leaving behind 'hot zones' in the Middle East while, at the same time, failing to care for radiation illnesses in returning troops.

“President Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair must acknowledge and must accept responsibility for the willful use of illegal uranium munitions, their own ‘dirty bombs,’ resulting in adverse health and environmental effects,” wrote Maj. Rokke in recent open letter, criticizing the two major leaders of the Iraq occupation.

And being crystal clear about his demands in compliance with existing military regulations, he added:

“President Bush and Prime Minister Blair need to immediately order medical care for all DU casualties, order thorough environmental remediation, issue immediate orders for the cessation and retaliation against all of us who demand compliance with medical care and ban the further use of depleted radiation munitions.

“They arrogantly refuse to comply with their own regulations, orders, and directives that require United States Department of Defense officials to provide prompt and effective medical care "all" exposed individuals [Medical Management of Unusual Depleted Uranium Casualties, DOD, Pentagon, 10/14/93, Medical Management of Army personnel Exposed to Depleted Uranium (DU) Headquarters.

“U.S. Army Medical Command 29 April 2004), and section 2-5 of AR

70-48. They also refuse to clean up dispersed radioactive contamination as required by Army Regulation- AR 700-48: "Management of Equipment Contaminated With Depleted Uranium or Radioactive Commodities" (Headquarters, Department Of The Army, Washington, D.C., September 2002) and U.S. Army Technical Bulletin-TB 9-1300-278: "Guidelines For Safe Response To Handling, Storage, And Transportation Accidents Involving Army Tank Munitions Or Armor Which Contain Depleted Uranium" (Headquarters, Department Of The Army, Washington, D.C., JULY 1996).

To further bolster Maj. Rokke's accusations, all the following regulations are being violated, specifically section 2-4 of United States Army Regulation-AR 700-48 dated Sept.16, 2002, requiring:

- (1) "Military personnel "identify, segregate, isolate, secure, and label all RCE" (radiological contaminated equipment).
- (2) "Procedures to minimize the spread of radioactivity will be implemented as soon as possible."
- (3) "Radioactive material and waste will not be locally disposed of through burial, submersion, incineration, destruction in place, or abandonment" and;
- (4) "All equipment, to include captured or combat RCE, will be surveyed, packaged, retrograded, decontaminated and released IAW Technical Bulletin 9-1300-278, DA PAM 700-48."

With the military's blatant violations placed in the public eye due to Mj. Rokke's courage to buck the system, other experts and scientists quickly came to Maj. Rokke's side, offering startling information and detailed statistics showing the seriousness of the DU problem and the government's failure to take responsibility even though it obviously caused the problem.

Radiation experts Leuren Moret and Marion Fulk, along with others like Dennis Kyne, Bob Jones and Mark Zeller, have provided documentation for an explosive video just released, written and produced by Joyce Riley and William Lewis, called "Beyond Treason," providing an in depth look at DU used in the Gulf Wars and its likelihood of causing numerous civilian and military illnesses.

"It has been determined that the equivalent of more than 400,000 Nagasaki bombs has been released in the middle east since 1991," said Moret, citing a report and subsequent speech at a 2000 depleted uranium conference given by Professor Yagasaki, a physicist and well-respected nuclear radiation expert.

Moret, who has spent a life time working in the nuclear field, first as a staff scientist at the Livermore Nuclear Weapons Laboratory in California, is now a member of The Radiation and Public Health Project (RPHP), a privately funded group studying the devastating effects of depleted uranium especially in Iraq and Afghanistan.

And the writers of Beyond Treason added more ammunition to Rokke's accusations regarding the government's failure to recognize the DU problem 15 years after it was first exposed:

“The ailing Gulf War heroes from all 27 coalition countries slowly die from of “unknown causes,” they wait for answers from their respective governments, but no satisfying or even credible answers have come forth from the military establishment. Records that span over a decade point to negligence and even culpability on the part of the U.S. Department of Defense and their ‘disposable army’ mentality.

“The VA has determined that 250,000 troops are now permanently disabled, 15,000 troops are dead and over 425,000 are ill and slowly dying from what the Department of Defense still calls a mystery disease. How many more will have to die before action is taken?”

Although Maj. Rokke has been fighting to save the lives of thousands of afflicted veterans, he is also trying to save his own life as he was originally exposed to DU in 1990 and 1991 while deployed in Iraq and looking into the hazards of DU.

“First, I remember experiencing breathing problems, then a rash and then bleeding sores that never go away,” said Rokke, 56, adding DU exposure is slowly, day by day, turning him into an invalid. “The sad thing is that only several hundred military personnel have even been tested for DU exposure since the beginning when there are literally hundreds of thousands afflicted.

“In fact, it took the military more than two years to even tell me that I was ‘hot,’ withholding my urine tests and hiding the truth. One of the reasons I went public is because so many soldiers are dying from the

same symptoms I have and the military simply still refuses to take medical responsibility and care for them.”

Recently, to keep the DU issue alive, Maj. Rokke published an article in the Nov. 27, 2004 edition of the popular Vanity Fair magazine, where he updated his concerns with new information about Gulf War II.

After the article appeared, he said the Pentagon and others in military circles immediately unleashed another attack on his character, accusing him of lying and even saying he never headed up the Pentagon’s DU program in the first place.

“I guess if I played their game, I would sitting somewhere with a cushy \$100,000 a year job,” said Mj. Rokke. “But I decided to do what’s right no matter what the consequences. But, don’t get me wrong, I’m not a peace-nick. I am a military officer and a warrior. I would not hesitate to use nuclear weapons only, however, if it was a last. But I also feel the military should live up to its responsibilities and follow regulations, which is not the case now and why I am speaking out.”

Although declaring himself a warrior, Maj. Rokke tempered that statement, writing in September, 2002, what he called a “A Commitment To Peace.” In this short open letter, however, much is revealed about the inner-man, his obvious choice of peace versus war and his ultimate fears about the ramifications of the Iraqi invasion, which at the time of his writing was just on the horizon:

“As I sit here tonight unable to sleep, my mind is considering the ramifications of potential and ongoing military actions and economic

sanctions. As a disabled warrior with combat experience in two wars, Vietnam and Desert Storm, I can only hope and pray that the outcomes of these actions do not leave another trail of adverse health and environmental problems.

“I have concluded that we must unite in a concerted effort to prevent additional suffering. Throughout the history of the world those who make a commitment to peace have endured isolation and retaliation when they challenged the individuals and governments seeking economic and political advantages. A vision of peace where all nations can live together for the common good is an ideal dream but may be unrealistic.

“War is the ultimate weapon a nation or leaders can use to control the allocation and use of food, water, terrain, shelter, and mineral resources. War occurs when nations or individuals fail to reach a satisfactory compromise on sharing of these limited resources.

Today we are reaching another crossroads in history where we must decide which road we follow. We can select peace or go to war. One means life the other means death! The prevalent modus operandi at this time of those seeking power and control is to threaten economic sanctions or military attacks in order to achieve their goals and objectives.

“This is unacceptable. We must act to with a unified and strong voice prevent nations and leaders from imposing their demands on others. At the same time we must make sure that those nations and leaders who pose a viable threat to peace are checkmated. But that does not mean

that we result to military force.

“There are many options but only wise persons are willing to discuss and mutually select the option most beneficial to all. Today information control is used to prevent discussion and debate. If a person does not have adequate and validated information they will be unable to contribute to the resolution of serious problems. We must ensure the complete dissemination of information even if that information reveals illegal or disturbing actions by our own or any other nation.

“These ways to achieve peace will require a commitment of time, financial resources, knowledge, attitudes, life, liberty, and willingness to endure and retaliation by any person who wishes to contribute towards the resolution of local, state, national or international problems. The choice is ours. We can select a life as a mushroom or we can select to act. I select action for if peace is to be achieved then I must let peace begin with me.”

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