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5104
Ser N455/9U595873
19 Aug 99

From: Chairman, Naval Radiation Safety Committee
To: Commanding Officer, USS KEARSARGE (LHD-3)
Via: (1) Commander in Chief, U.S. Atlantic Fleet
(2) Commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Atlantic Fleet

Subj: UNAUTHORIZED USE OF DEPLETED URANIUM (DU) ON VIEQUES
NAVAL RANGE, PUERTO RICO

Ref: (a) Navy Master Materials License (License #45-23645-01NA)
(b) Title 10, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 20
(c) Naval Radioactive Material Permit No. 13-00164-L1NP

1. On February 19, 1999, two AV-8 Harrier aircraft assigned to VMA-231, operating from the USS KEARSARGE (LHD-3) in support of the 26 Marine Expeditionary Unit (26-MEU), discharged 263 rounds of 25mm PGU-20 API (armor piercing incendiary) depleted uranium penetrators into the Live Impact Area, Vieques Naval Range, Atlantic Fleet Weapons Training Facility, Naval Station Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico. The incident was identified by the Marine Corps Deputy Chief of Staff for Aviation and referred to Marine Corps Headquarters, Safety Division. The Office of Chief of Naval Operations, Radiological Controls and Health Branch (N455) was notified on March 5, 1999. Immediate voice notification was provided by N455 to the United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), Region II, Atlanta, Georgia.

2. The issuance of the 25mm PGU-20 API depleted uranium munitions by the USS KEARSARGE (LHD-3) and the subsequent firing of these munitions by the 26 Marine Expeditionary Unit (26-MEU) are in direct violation of references (a) through (c). This is a Severity Level IV violation and requires that a formal command response be submitted to the Naval Radiation Safety Committee. This response shall be forwarded within 60 days and shall include: (1) the reason for the violation; (2) the corrective steps that have been taken and the results achieved; (3) the corrective actions that will be taken to avoid a violation in the future; and (4) the date when full compliance was or will be achieved.

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3. My point of contact on the Naval Radiation Safety Committee is the Executive Secretary, Commander G.A. Higgins, MSC, USN, at Commercial (703) 602-5365 or DSN 332-5365.



A. A. GRANUZZO
Rear Admiral, U. S. Navy
Chairman,
Naval Radiation Safety Committee

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