FOIA/PA REQUEST
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Action Off: Rammling
Related Case:

From: [redacted]
To: <GXR@nrc.gov>
Date: 4/22/03 4:49PM
Subject: FOIA request dated March 4, 2003

Glen Milner
[redacted]

April 22, 2003

Ms. Gigi Rammling
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Mail Stop T-6 D8
Washington, D.C. 20555-0001

Ms. Gigi Rammling

Thank you for the response to my Freedom of Information Act request dated March 4, 2003 regarding the Navy's license for depleted uranium weapons. I appreciate the waiver of fees and the expedited processing.

Going through the documents I have received, the Navy's licensing agreement is still not very clear. I may be missing some of the issues or documents involved. Please let me know how I can obtain information addressing some of the following issues.

One important issue is where the Navy can fire depleted uranium munitions. The documents mention "at sea" and sometimes "international waters." Where can the Navy fire depleted uranium rounds? I believe the NRC would dictate where. The different limits seem to be 3 miles, 12 miles and 200 miles. It appears that international waters would be past 200 miles. Is the Navy allowed to fire depleted uranium rounds only beyond 200 miles of U.S. shore?

There are documents regarding this request that I did not receive:

1. Document A-3 mentions that MK149 20 mm ammunition may be test fired at sea as specified in Application (NRC Form 313) dated 21 June 1989. I did not receive this document--which might be important.

2. Did the NRC have documents showing where the Navy stores depleted uranium munitions? I have seen documents listing specific locations for the Army.

3. What is required of the Navy regarding record keeping? I did not see anything in the license as far as where depleted uranium rounds are expended or stored. Does the Navy have to provide documentation to the NRC on this?

4. Document A-16 mentioned Crane letter 5104 Ser 4012/7028 of 21 July 1997 regarding Navy 20 mm depleted uranium munitions. Do you have this document?

5. Document A-16 also mentioned that live fire exercises would require separate permits. Does the NRC have separate live fire permits?

6. Document A-16 also states that each Navy and Marine Corps facility needs to designate an individual in writing responsible for depleted uranium munitions. Does the NRC have these lists? Document A-20 listed several in charge of these munitions but not for each facility.

7. Document A-16 also states an audit of depleted uranium munitions is required every six months. Does the NRC have these records?

If you wish, I can file a revised Freedom of Information Act request on these issues. My first request, however, may have been broad enough to already cover the issues addressed above. I would again ask for expedited processing and a waiver of fees.

I am enclosing an article I wrote that appeared in The Seattle Times on April 21, 2003 regarding depleted uranium munitions to show public interest in this issue. The Seattle Times is the largest newspaper in the northwestern United States.

Thank you for your help with my initial information request and with these issues.

Sincerely

Glen Milner

[redacted]

Depleted-uranium weapons should be banned
Full story:
http://seattletimes.nwsource.com/html/opinion/134679445_milner21.html

By Glen Milner
Special to The Times

Depleted-uranium (DU) weapons are creating a radioactive nightmare for our troops and the civilians and combatants in the countries where they are used around the world.

Yet, as citizens raise their concerns over the magnitude of the problems related to DU weapons, which are more evident every year, the U.S. military maintains that no threat exists. How can this be?

Depleted-uranium weapons show the insanity of the short-term goal of winning the battle by quickly knocking out the enemy with overwhelming force, and the long-term effects from exposing an entire army, innocent civilians and enemy combatants to radioactive material that may cause far more suffering and death than from the initial battle.

DU weapons are prized by the U.S. military for their superior armor-piercing ability. In 1991, 320 tons of DU were used in Iraq. The Pentagon says the U.S. fired around 10,800 DU rounds, close to three tons, in Bosnia in 1994 and 1995. According to NATO, more than 31,000 rounds, about 10 tons, were fired in Kosovo in 1999.

The recent use of depleted-uranium weapons by U.S. military forces in Iraq has been extensive, with some civilian estimates as high as 2,000 tons of DU being fired. Last Monday, the Pentagon announced there are no plans to clean up the radioactive material.

The problems with depleted-uranium weapons are many.

Depleted uranium, U-238, is a waste product of the process to enrich uranium for use in nuclear power plants and weapons production. DU is 1.7 times as dense as lead and has a half-life of 4.5 billion years.

When a depleted-uranium projectile impacts a solid surface, the pyrophoric properties of this heavy metal ignite, producing intense heat, resulting in an aerosolized radioactive release as the projectile quickly burns through the armor. The residue of this firestorm is an extremely fine ceramic uranium dust that can be spread by the wind, inhaled and absorbed into the human body, and absorbed by plants and animals, becoming part of the food chain.

In a 1995 study, the Army Environmental Policy Institute concluded, "If depleted uranium enters the body, it has a potential to generate significant medical consequences. The risks associated with depleted uranium are both chemical and radiological."

In 2000, the U.S. Department of Energy admitted that depleted uranium used in Kosovo was contaminated with "transuramic" (heavier than uranium) fission wastes from inside nuclear reactors. Munitions used were spiked with plutonium, neptunium and americium.

The health consequences are fearsome: Americium, with a half-life of 7,300 years, decays to plutonium-239, which is 200,000 times more radioactive than U-238, the material the Department of Defense has claimed to be "depleted uranium."

In January, the U.S. Navy admitted firing depleted-uranium rounds in prime fishing areas off the coast of Washington state. The Navy stated that the Phalanx Close-In Weapons System (CIWS), on almost every surface ship in the U.S. Navy, has to be fired four times each year for calibration.

The Navy informed Seattle media that "all crew members are medically monitored" to assure their safety regarding depleted uranium. A Feb. 25 Freedom of Information Act response from Naval Station Everett, however, stated that no records exist for the testing of Navy personnel who handle DU munitions.

Letters from the Department of the Navy in February to U.S. Reps. Jim McDermott, D-Seattle, and Jay Inslee, D-Bainbridge Island, show the Navy's latest position on depleted uranium. Responding to the congressmen's concerns of DU weapons fired in Washington state coastal waters, Rear Admiral R. D. Reilly, Jr., director of the environmental readiness division, stated, "... there is no detectable increase of cancer or other negative health effects from radiation exposure to inhaled or ingested uranium."

After the Gulf War in the fall of 1991, the U.S. had a total casualty count of 727; 269 dead and 458 wounded or ill. The casualty rate now for Gulf War veterans is approximately 30 percent. Of those stationed in the theater, including after the conflict, 221,000 have been awarded disability, according to a Veterans Affairs (VA) report issued Sept. 10, 2002. Many of the U.S. casualties are a direct result of exposure to uranium munitions, according to Canadian and U.S. researchers.

Depleted-uranium weapons will be banned from use. It is the only logical decision to make, given the extreme toxicity of the materials involved, the hazards in deployment and the environmental damage caused from their use.

The end of depleted-uranium weapons will come when we realize there will never be enough VA hospitals for all our ill soldiers and that the lands and civilians we have contaminated will be harmed forever. At that time, U.S. leaders can only hope they will not be held accountable for our crimes against humanity.

Glen Milner [redacted] and is a member of Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action in Poulsbo, www.gzcenter.org