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INVADING HIROSHIMA

by William Thomas

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American and British troops entering Iraq are advised to bandage all cuts, keep their overheated rubber suits zipped tight, and stop breathing. It is dust, not bullets, that will likely pose the most lethal consequences to their invasion of Iraq.

American military strategist Harlan Ullman will not be accompanying them. But Ullman is excited about seeing his plan for mass murder enacted. Only weeks away from a "live-fire" demonstration over the streets of Iraq's biggest cities. Ullman compares hundreds of cruise missiles hitting Baghdad to moments of total devastation directed at another war-ravaged population half a century before.

"You have this simultaneous effect, rather like the nuclear weapons at Hiroshima, not taking days or weeks but minutes," Ullman boasts. [*The Sun-Herald*, Jan. 26 2003]

Intended as a lesson for a worldwide audience, the Pentagon says its plan is intended to shatter Iraq "physically, emotionally and psychologically" by raining down on its people in two days more than twice the number of missiles launched during the entire 40 days of Desert Storm. The World Health Organisation estimates that "as many as 500,000 people could require treatment as a result of direct and indirect injuries" from this unprecedented onslaught or radioactive high-explosives. [*The Mirror*, Jan 29, 2003]

In the annals of *CNN*, *Time* and similar mass media war pornography, the neighborhood-busting cruise missile is touted as a "smart" munition, able to strike infant formula factories with robotic pinpoint accuracy. But as all home computer users know, computers malfunction constantly, while carrying out the simplest tasks.

In fact, Washington warmongers with oil and empire in their eyes must fire massive waves of missiles at Iraq's teeming cities in order to "take out" sporadically-functioning power stations, sewage and water purification plants -- and bring hundreds of thousands of already suffering families to their knees.

Repeatedly blasted in 1991 -- and then denied spare parts under U.S. and British-imposed sanctions in order to deliberately cause waterborne epidemics -- these key city facilities are located in crowded neighborhoods.

Extensive experimentation against urban centers in Bosnia, Libya, Afghanistan and Iraq have shown cruise missiles to be wildly inaccurate. Military insider Al Martin recalls a U.S.

general laughing during Desert Storm at the inaccuracy of American cruise missiles. "The defense contractors will get paid as long as the things go off and hit the right country," the general said.

The solution to inaccuracy is to fire 800 missiles at a few hard-to-miss cities in Iraq. As a Pentagon official boasted to *CBS News*, "The sheer size of this has never been seen before, never been contemplated before. There will not be a safe place in Baghdad."

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It's not safe now! With a postwar count of perhaps 650,000 corpses from lingering wounds, illness and DU exposure, Iraq has already suffered more radiation deaths than the 130,000 corpses produced at Hiroshima through American know-how and acute radiation exposure. [UN and Japanese figures]

Much of Iraq remains radiologically "hot" following undeclared nuclear attacks that have randomly distributed lethal air and food-borne radiation -- without any mushroom clouds. The same type of Depleted Uranium-tipped cruise missiles that have carried cancer into Bosnia and Afghanistan will only add fresh "rems" to the radioactive dust of this distant desert land. Even if resistance collapses along with already tortured and teetering cities, allied forces face the specter of severe casualties from the lethal legacy of their last munitions testing on Iraq.

"If your son or daughter is in the military today, opposition from the hapless Iraqi army is not the greatest threat," warns Depleted Uranium (DU) investigator John Kaminski. "In southern Iraq, American soldiers will be sent into battle with inadequate protections against a proven health hazard that will almost certainly doom them to lives diminished by a variety of cancers caused by uranium 238, which means they may transmit these illnesses to their family and friends -- and birth defects to their children -- when and if they return home."

JUST A DAB WILL DU YOU

DU shells retain 60% of the radioactivity of unspent "hot" uranium. Radiobiologist Dr. Rosalie Bertell warns that "it can be breathed in by anyone: a baby, a pregnant woman, the elderly, the sick."

A speck of Uranium-238 can cause cancer. The Pentagon admits to firing 320 tons of DU into Iraq's farms and neighborhoods during Desert Storm. Greenpeace puts the figure at more than 800 tons.

Foremost expert on radiation sickness, Dr. Helen Caldicott explains that DU dust is a potent radioactive carcinogen, emitting a heavy alpha particle that can lodge in open wounds, the lungs or the stomach depending on its pathways of ingestion.

DU shells retain 60% of the radioactivity of unspent "hot" uranium. As Caldicott comments, Pentagon "studies prior to Desert Storm warned that aerosol uranium exposure under

battlefield conditions could lead to cancers of the lung and bone, kidney damage, non-malignant lung disease, neurocognitive disorders, chromosomal damage and birth defects." [*San Francisco Chronicle*, Oct. 10, 2002]

The results are cancers in the lungs, bones, blood or kidneys. These devastating diseases are already surfacing in Afghanistan and Bosnia, while continuing to decimate the survivors of genocide in Iraq. With a half-life of 4.5 million years, if not buried by custom-equipped decontamination teams, Caldicott says that dust-laden winds in Iraq, Kuwait, Bosnia and Afghanistan "will remain effectively radioactive for the rest of time." [*San Francisco Chronicle*, Oct. 10, 2002]

In his story on "Going Nuclear in Iraq", Ramzi Kysia interviewed Dr. Alim Abdul-Hamid at a major medical college in Baghdad. The dean of medicine says he has "plenty of firsthand experience with Iraq's unprecedented plague of cancers and birth defects."

Dr. Abdul-Hamid is seeing breast cancer among women in their 20s. "In their 20s!" he repeats. "There are increased incidences of colon cancer, thyroid cancer -- in addition to, of course, leukemias and lymphomas." [*Counterpunch*, Dec. 28, 2001]

TARGETING CHILDREN

Children are 10 to 20 times more sensitive to the effects of radiation than adults. Today more than half of all cancers in Iraq are occurring among children under the age of five.

Since the misnamed "end" of an ongoing Gulf War, helpless pediatricians in Basra have watched childhood leukemia and cancer increase up to 12-times peacetime rates. Hospitals throughout Iraq have reported as much as a 10-fold increase in birth defects since cities and countryside were strafed with radioactive munitions.

Pointing to a map of Basra, Dr. Abdul-Hamid demonstrated the dose-response relationship between DU and cancers, saying, "Areas which have got the higher level of background radiation have higher levels of cancers."

"GRUNTS EAT URANIUM!"

Boot camp grads preparing to occupy Iraq could chant cadence with this catchy ditty. American and British military "doctors" insist that eating and breathing radioactive uranium is perfectly safe.

So, they say, is being injected with mycoplasma-spiked anthrax vaccine. Believing these lies, an estimated 250,000 disposable Desert Storm troopers currently suffer from debilitating "Gulf War Illness". [*Bringing The War Home*]

Because Depleted Uranium is unmatched as a shield and a weapon, international efforts to ban DU continue to be ignored by the U.S., Canada and Britain. Radioactive warfare is also a convenient way to explosively redistribute mountains of mutagenic debris from America's atomic annihilation factories to distant "colored" neighborhoods. As former South African President Nelson Mandela remarked two days ago, Bush's policy of "carnage" is

fundamentally racist. [*Independent*, Jan. 30, 2003]

The good news for black and Hispanic tank crews wheeling into attack formations on Iraq's borders is that Iraqi Army tank shells cannot penetrate their dense DU armor. The bummer is that expendable "tankers" are exposed to whole-body gamma radiation emitted by the uranium-tipped shells racked tightly around them. "It's like receiving a tiny X-ray every second," one DU expert explains. [*Bringing The War Home*]

NO TANKS

Dr. Doug Rokke knows these dangers internally. The American physician in charge of dealing with postwar contamination in Iraqi communities saw his medical records confiscated by the U.S. Army after long-delayed examination results showed radiation in his body at 5,000 times maximum "safe" levels.

Rokke, who headed the army's Depleted Uranium program after the Gulf Massacre, told reporters after returning from Iraq, "'Oh my God' is the only way to describe it. Contamination was all over."

Rokke's recruits measured dangerous levels of radiation up to 150 feet away from DU-fired tanks -- including up to 300 millirems an hour in beta and gamma radiation. Alpha radiation registered in the thousands to the millions counts-per-minute on their Geiger counters.

"That whole area is still trashed," Rokke remarked. "It's hotter than heck over there still. This stuff doesn't go away."

Rokke's team spent three months cleaning up 24 tanks for return as outdoor exhibits to the United States. According to the dying DU expert, the army took another three years to clean up the tanks. Some could not be decontaminated and had to be buried. [*Bringing The War Home*]

But human tissue cannot be decontaminated. Just three days after commencing their work, Rokke and his crew started getting sick." Over the past decade, 30 men out of 100 servicemen dealing with DU, "dropped dead."

ROKKE'S RADIATION

Rokke says the biggest danger is the dust given off when a Depleted Uranium shell detonates. In heat fierce enough to melt armor plating, up to 70% of a DU round oxidizes. "This aerosolized power -- uranium oxide -- is the really dangerous stuff," Rokke says. "Particularly when it is inhaled."

Rokke suspects that, like many Iraqi adults and children, radioactive uranium oxide dust is permanently trapped in his lungs. Rokke also has lesions on his brain. Pustules protrude from his skin. He suffers from chronic fatigue, and cannot stop wheezing for breath and coughing. His fibromyalgia inflicts chronic pain in his muscles, ligaments and tendons.

Rokke's radioactive regrets reveal the hazards facing unprotected U.S. and British soldiers,

as well as peacekeepers brought in from other countries to secure the second biggest oil fields on Earth. Caldicott warns that "these tiny particles travel long distances when airborne" -- infecting distant populations, peacekeepers, and the entire food chain.

The misery of radioactive warfare extends to those who produce it. Serious health effects have been documented among DU processing workers and their families in Kentucky, Ohio, New Mexico, Tennessee, Washington state, New York, Tennessee, Iowa, Massachusetts, and the Four Corners area of southwest Colorado. In Yugoslavia, Depleted Uranium fired into agricultural areas has irradiated food. Scottish scientists recently verified that residents of the Balkans exposed to fallout from DU-tipped cruise missiles are excreting uranium in their urine. [*Counterpunch*, Dec. 28, 2001]

GULF WAR ILLNESS -- THE SEQUEL?

Even before American and British troops enter Baghdad's radioactive environs to "liberate" families suffering the sickening strangulation of their sanctions -- allied casualties continue to mount.

In preliminary announcements of what may later be called "Gulf War Illness II", *Reuters* reports that "Veterans groups on both sides of the Atlantic say up to one in three soldiers has fallen ill after taking the vaccine, and six of them died in the United States."

"We have hard facts," says British-based National Gulf Veterans and Families Association coordinator James Moore. "Two and Three Parachute Regiments have had anthrax injections. At least a third come down with flu-like symptoms and have been very poorly. In the United States, over 30 percent have come down with symptoms and six have died after taking the vaccine." [*Reuters*, Jan. 8, 2003]

As the last Gulf conflict so savagely demonstrated, GI immune systems reeling from multiple doses of experimental vaccines offer little defense against further exposures to chemical weapons, industrial toxins, stress, caffeine, insect repellent and radiation leftover from the last war.

This is a war even the victors will lose.

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