

Press Advisory -

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Nationwide campaign against secret shipments of radioactive ammunition announced.

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Four organizations have called for an end to unmarked radioactive ammunition shipments across the United States. The highly toxic, radioactive ammunition, also known as 'depleted uranium' or DU, has been used in recent Iraq and Afghanistan wars. The shipments occur on a daily basis throughout the U.S., on our highways, railways, and waterways.

Unmarked radioactive ammunition shipments are currently allowed by a special Department of Transportation (DOT) exemption, allowing explosive and radioactive ammunition to be shipped with only an "Explosives" placard. The DOT exemption, DOT-E 9649, was first applied for in 1986 by the Military Traffic Management Command (MTMC).

DOT-E 9649 has been renewed every few years by the DOT and the MTMC, and could be renewed again on June 30, 2004. Activists against the use of depleted uranium munitions and these secret shipments plan to block the renewal process for the DOT exemption. If successful, depleted uranium munitions shipments will be required to be labeled with "Radioactive" and "Explosives" placards.

DU munitions are a uniquely hazardous material, consisting of a radioactive penetrator which breaks down into small particles when burned, and an explosive charge or combustible propellant in the shell of the cartridge. In a highway or railway fire, DU munitions can spread radioactive material downwind for great distances. First responders (local police and firefighters) would have no idea the shipment contains radioactive materials.

Why should we care about DU shipments while devastation continues in foreign countries from the actual use of this radioactive weapon? Glen Milner, of the Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action, explains, "By understanding the danger of shipping DU through our neighborhoods, we will better understand the actual damage done by firing DU in neighborhoods in other countries in our name."

Sunny Miller, of Traprock Peace Center, states, "The Department of Defense knew in 1986 that depleted uranium munitions, and the shipment of this highly toxic and explosive material would be a controversial issue." Sunny Miller adds, "That is the reason our military has been shipping deadly uranium weapons secretly for all these years. First responders, residents and soldiers need to know about these exposure pathways."

Organizations sponsoring the plan are Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action, Poulsbo, Washington; Traprock Peace Center, Deerfield, Massachusetts; Military Toxics Project, Lewiston, Maine; and Nukewatch, Luck, Wisconsin.

Please call (206) 365-7865 or (413) 773-7427, or e-mail gkaajm@juno.com or traprock@crocker.com for a six page action plan, fact sheet and references on radioactive munitions shipments.

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