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DEPLETED URANIUM SHELLS DECRIED

Citizens find Bush guilty of Afghan war crimes

By NAO SHIMOYACHI

Staff writer

A citizens' tribunal Saturday in Tokyo found U.S. President George W. Bush guilty of war crimes for attacking civilians with indiscriminate weapons and other arms during the U.S.-led antiterrorism operations in Afghanistan in 2001.

The tribunal also issued recommendations for banning depleted uranium shells and other weapons that could indiscriminately harm people, compensating the victims in Afghanistan and reforming the United Nations in light of its failure to stop the U.S.-led operation there.

The tribunal participants spent two years examining Bush's role as the top commander in the war, making eight field trips to Afghanistan and holding nearly 20 public hearings.

"Bush said that military presence in Afghanistan is self-defense," said Robert Akroyd, a British lawyer who served as one of the five judges.

"But under international law," he said, "a defendant must pay great care to discriminate (between) legitimate objects and civilians" in claiming that one's act is self-defense, said Akroyd, former head of legal studies at Aston University in Britain.

Bush failed to do so with the U.S. military's use of "indiscriminate weapons such as the Daisy Cutter (a huge conventional bomb), cluster bombs and depleted uranium shells," he said.

Civilians and experts who have supported the tribunal movement agreed to work for creation of an international treaty that would prohibit the production, stockpile and use of depleted uranium rounds, like the Ottawa process that succeeded in 1997 in outlawing antipersonnel land mines.

Organizers said the tribunal on Afghanistan was the latest attempt to try a head of state by the efforts of citizens.

The history of citizens' tribunals dates back to the 1960s, when the British philosopher Bertrand Russell and others tried to examine the acts of the U.S. government during the Vietnam War.

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