

Depleted Uranium - A Hidden Looming Worldwide Calamity

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Theme: [Militarization and WMD](#)

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Forget about Avian (bird) flu. The threat of it becoming a pandemic is more a political scare tactic and potential bonanza for drug company profits and its major shareholders' net worth (including Gilead Sciences, the developer of the Tamiflu drug and its former Chairman and major shareholder Donald Rumsfeld) than a likely public health crisis - unless you live around infected chickens or take an unproven safe immunization shot. There are much more other likely killer bacterial and viral threats than Avian that get little attention. Don't worry about possible or unlikely threats. Worry about real ones. Bacteria and viruses untreatable by anti-biotics are good examples. So is global warming and many others. But, there's possibly one threat that tops all others both in gravity and because it's been deliberately concealed from the public - never discussed, explained or had any action taken to remediate it. It's the global threat from the toxic effects of depleted uranium (DU), and like global warming, DU has the potential to destroy all planetary life. How can something so potentially destructive be hidden and ignored and why?

THE ARROGANCE OF DOMINANCE

There's little dispute that the U.S. today is the preeminent world power and unlike any that ever preceded it. It now admits to being an empire. In fact, it's the first ever world global empire. To expand its reach and influence, it now spends nearly as much on its military as all other nations combined and has built and maintains a military capacity no other nation dare challenge. It also reserves for itself the sole right to develop and use the most dangerous and destructive weapons, even those banned from use by international law or custom. Some of those now in charge at the highest levels believe they have a divine right to use them, even a duty. George Bush may be one of them. A self-proclaimed and so-called born-again Christian, he says he gets his direction from the Almighty. That's real arrogance, the supreme kind only an unchallengeable power and its leaders dare arrogate to itself.

Up to now, the U.S. has effectively used its power to dominate other nations either by persuasion, economic isolation or conquest. We claim to be a model democracy, but our policies and actions prove otherwise. At home we're a democracy for the few - the privileged and powerful. It's they who govern and run our institutions including the most dominant one of all - the giant transnational corporations whose interests all administrations serve including waging war for their benefit. Wars are good for business - as long as they're easily winnable, the public supports them, and they don't cause undo economic stresses that may disrupt the economy, in which case they're bad for business.

There's a striking term often used in the plural and in a business context that's also appropriate more broadly. The term is "externalities." In business it refers to the

unfortunate side effects or consequences of a company's action that may have a detrimental affect on others. A typical example is an industrial plant that produces a dangerous substance as an unsalable byproduct from its production process. To avoid the cost of disposal, storage or treatment, the plant dumps it into waterways, unused land areas or through smokestacks. In so doing it harms the environment. Wars also have "externalities" - with far greater consequences. Overall, death, disease and destruction are the best examples. But so are the dangerous residues and their side effects from the use of weapons like toxic chemicals, biological agents and all types of nuclear munitions. We're all aware of the danger from the first two categories, although when used they only affect small areas and are not "weapons of mass destruction." We've also seen the destructive capability of a nuclear bomb and have heard of DU. But, the public has little or no knowledge about the real danger and threat from the use of any nuclear device or substance. That information has been willfully and deliberately suppressed because the potential harm is so great and irreversible. Even when there's clear evidence of widespread problems as there was in the case of the Agent Orange effects on Vietnam veterans and "Gulf war syndrome" on the military from that conflict, our government has denied any connection and stonewalled efforts to help those in need - until they no longer could hide the truth and had to act.

Depleted uranium (DU) is a "dense metal" that increases its ability as a weapon to penetrate a target, thus enhancing its destructive capability. Pentagon propaganda and disinformation falsely describe all DU weapons as only being coated. In fact, they are solid missiles, bombs, shells and bullets weighing up to 5,000 pounds in a single "bunker buster" bomb. All these weapons have solid DU projectiles or warheads in them, and their use in combat as the U.S. military has done in 4 wars and is now doing every day in Iraq is the "de facto" use of nuclear bombs. From Nagasaki in 1945 until the 1991 Gulf War, these weapons were effectively banned by common consent (and common sense) and never used (except for one time in the 1973 Yom Kippur war). No longer.

Above I asked why are these weapons used if they're so deadly and dangerous well beyond the areas they target? The answer's simple - because they work so well, and the enemy forces attacked don't have them and can't retaliate against us with them. The fact that we understand the danger from their use and the "externalities" left in their wake is someone else's problem to deal with. Just like a public corporation worries only about meeting Wall Street estimates of next quarter's earnings, our government and the military only worry about winning the next battle and next war - too bad if in the process we irradiate the planet and threaten all future life on it. That's someone else's problem later on. That's how big business thinks and also how our political and military leaders do as well.

OUR PRECIOUS PLANET AND HOW BADLY WE TREAT IT

Today we're threatened by many natural and "man-made" disasters we could act to prevent but don't. To the ones mentioned above add polluted air, water and soil. Include the unsafe food we eat from the chemical and other contaminants and unsafe additives in them. Don't ignore ozone layer damage, deforestation, the destruction of precious natural habits and endangered species, the reckless ways we develop and use our natural resources including wasteful overuse of a finite supply of fresh water that could run out and is irreplaceable. And don't forget wars that get more recklessly destructive as new technologies and weapons are developed to fight them and powerful nations having them show no restraint in their use.

In November, 2005 this nation lost a great man unfortunately unknown to most of the

public. His name was Vine Deloria, Jr, a renowned Native American intellect, historian, author, scholar and activist. With great eloquence Deloria spoke and wrote about how for all its existence the planet was well preserved by those who lived on it – until about 200 years ago when western technological development began and changed everything. It was then transformed from being pristine to poisoned. He expressed such great wisdom in his writings and talks, it's worth quoting. Below are some examples:

“Progress is the absolute destruction of the real world in favor of a technology that creates a comfortable way of life for a few fortunatelsituated people. Within our lifetime the differences between the Indian use of the land and the white use of the land will become crystal clear. The Indian lived with his land. The white destroyed his land, he destroyed the planet earth.”

Deloria once said that Christian missionaries had “fallen on their knees and prayed for the Indians” before rising to “fall on the Indians and prey on their land.” He also claimed the destruction wrought by corporate values and its technology was so damag that a return to Native American tribal standards and culture could be viewed as salvation.

He viewed a corporate run predatory society, like the U.S., as an “Adolph Eichmann of the plains”, whose soldiers were tools “not defending civilization; they were crushing another society.”

Deloria wrote 20 books, edited others, and published his memoirs and a two-volume set of U.S. – Native American treaties, all of which are devastating accounts of U.S. duplicity. Every treaty made was broken or ignored to this day, and the rights of our Native Indians willfully violated and trampled over through lies, deception and deceit. Just the latest example of this is in one of the accusations in the ongoing Jack Abramoff political and financial corruption scandal now making daily headlines. Abramoff, his partner, and other well-known Republicans are accused of bilking Indian casino gambling interests out of an estimated \$85 million. Further, in his now disclosed emails, he referred to Native Americans as “monkeys, troglodites (people with a sub-human like nature), and idiots.”

Deloria also wrote that unlike African Americans, Native Indians did not want to be equals in U.S. society. They wanted no part of it. Vine Victor Deloria, Jr., historian, scholar, activist and much more was born March 26, 1933 and died November 13, 2005. He will be missed.

The Industrial Revolution and its single-minded pursuit of profit (what Veblen called “the maximization of pecuniary interests”) was Deloria’s point. It produced along with it a vast array of toxins that have done untold ecological damage. The alarm was prominently sounded in Rachel Carson’s landmark book “Silent Spring” published in 1962 that forced the banning of DDT, influenced President Jack Kennedy and led to legislation affecting our air, water and soil. It also launched an environmental movement that’s grown into many and diverse advocacy groups that lobby and fight for environmental sanity and justice. Since Carson’s time we know much more about the dangers we face, and we have many more of them. But despite our knowledge and the influence of many concerned scientists and a public supporting the need for a healthy environment, our political leaders from both parties, in service to the dominant corporate interests they serve, pay little more than lip service to this most important of issues along with war and peace. Although the Congress passed more than a dozen major environmental statutes and laws since the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 including the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts, CERCLA establishing the Superfund to pay for toxic cleanups, the Endangered Species Act and more,

those statutes have since been weakened or ignored. As a result, conditions today are much worse than 40 years ago and the dangers from them threaten our survival.

In his 2003 published book - "Hegemony or Survival" - Noam Chomsky cited the reflections of eminent biologist Ernst Mayr. Mayr observed that other species were better able to survive than humans and that the average life of a species is about 100,000 years. It's generally believed the human species has now about reached that limit and may be near becoming extinct. If so, and in light of our more recent behavior, we may, as Chomsky notes, turn out to be the only species ever to destroy ourselves and much else along with us.

THE NUCLEAR AGE CHANGED EVERYTHING

Since the atom was first split in a Berlin laboratory in 1938, the world has never been the same. The great scientist Albert Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity was instrumental in the nuclear development that followed creating the atom bomb. But his greatest influence was the letter he sent to Franklin Roosevelt in 1939 urging him to build it. Einstein feared the Nazis might do it first with disastrous consequences. He later regretted his action and said: "I made one great mistake in my life....when I signed the letter to President Roosevelt recommending that atom bombs be made...." He also said "our world faces a crisis as yet unperceived by those possessing the power to make great decisions for good and evil. The unleashed power of the atom has changed everything save our modes of thinking, and thus we drift toward unparalleled catastrophe." If he were alive today, what might Einstein say about the threat from depleted uranium (DU) which when weaponized is possibly the ultimate weapon of mass destruction. But even if he said it, would the public be allowed to hear him? And most important, would his words change anything?

DEPLETED URANIUM (DU) - WHAT IT IS AND HOW IT'S USED

To use uranium as a fuel for commercial reactors or for nuclear weapons it must be enriched. The enrichment process is then followed by gaseous diffusion in two streams - one is enriched and the other depleted. Before a use was found for it, DU was just stored in vast amounts as a byproduct. However, when it was discovered that solid "dense metal" DU projectiles in all forms (missiles, bombs, shells and bullets) greatly increased their ability to penetrate and destroy a target, the Pentagon had a new technology it hoped to use in combat and now has for the past 15 years.

The first DU weapon system was developed for the Navy in 1968, and DU weapons were first given to Israel for use in the 1973 Yom Kippur war under U.S. supervision. These weapons were later sold to 29 countries but never used until the 1991 Gulf War when the U.S. broke an international taboo prohibiting them. Since then the U.S. has fought wars in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and again in Iraq. In all these conflicts, thousands of tons of solid DU weapons have been used causing far more devastation thus far from its radiation and chemical toxins than from the targets destroyed and those killed in target areas. Worst of all, the lingering and spreading affects from DU contamination never end, resulting in all those exposed to it and their loved ones with whom they have intimate contact and their offspring the likelihood of having one or more of virtually any illness, disease or disability imaginable often leading to early death or at the least a lifetime of pain, suffering and great expense. In Orwellian language, DU is the (deadly and unwelcome) gift that keeps on giving - and killing.

USING DU AS A WEAPON IS ILLEGAL UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW

Poison gas in various forms was first used as a weapon in WW I by both sides. It's effects were deadly causing well over 1million total casualties and nearly 100,000 deaths. After the war, the revulsion over their use led to the 1925 Geneva Protocol and other succeeding Geneva Weapons Conventions that specifically outlawed the use of chemical and biological agents in any form for any reason in war. The 1925 Geneva Convention Gas Protocol specifically prohibits the use of poison gas weapons. Although no Geneva Convention or other treaty bans the use of radioactive uranium weapons, including DU weapons, these weapons are, in fact, illegal de facto and de jure when judged by the standard of the Hague Convention of 1907 which prohibits use of any "poison or poisoned weapons." DU weapons in all their forms and uses are radioactive and chemically toxic, and thus clearly fit the definition of poisonous weapons banned under the Hague Convention. The U.S. is a signatory to the Hague and Geneva Conventions (which are binding treaties under international law). In using DU weapons in combat or for any purpose, the U.S. has violated its sacred treaty obligations and is guilty of a war crime. Further, all DU weapons also meet the U.S. federal code definition of "weapons of mass destruction" (WMD) in 2 out of 3 categories:

[The US CODE, TITLE 50, CHAPTER 40, SECTION 2302 defines a Weapon of Mass Destruction as follows: "The term 'weapon of mass destruction' means any weapon or device that is intended, or has the capability, to cause death or serious bodily injury to a significant number of people through the release, dissemination, or impact of (A) toxic or poisonous chemicals or their precursors, (B) a disease organism, or (C) radiation or radioactivity." Because the U.S. is a signatory to the Hague and Geneva Conventions, the U.S. military is violating its own military code. By using depleted uranium (which is clearly a WMD and thus illegal) in combat in 4 wars, the U.S. is clearly guilty of the very crime we claimed our right to go to war against Iraq to prevent.

In addition, under various UN Conventions and Covenants that are binding international law for its signatories, the use of any weapons that cause harm after the battle including away from the battlefield, harm the environment, or kill, wound or cause harm inhumanely are illegal and banned. DU weapons are poisonous under international law and violate all the above conditions. Even the seminal Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is legally non-binding to its signatories, implies a moral duty never to use any weapons as potentially harmful as DU.

KNOWN EFFECTS FROM DU USE THUS FAR - AND THIS IS JUST THE BEGINNING, THE WORST IS YET TO COME

I'm very indebted to Leuren Moret for the data discussed throughohis article and below. Leuren is an independent scientist and internationally recognized expert on radiation, DU and public health. She's done extensive research on the environmental and public health effects of low level radiation from atmospheric testing fallout, nuclear power plants and DU weapons radiation in 42 countries, has written detailed reports and articles on her important findings, given testimony on the harmful affects of DU poisoning and is an outspoken critic of DU use. In an article she authored in July, 2004 she wrote: "The use of depleted uranium weaponry by the United States, defying all international treaties, will slowly annihilate all species on earth including the human species, and yet this country continues to do so with full knowledge of its destructive potential."

Leuren's work has revealed some shocking facts. Since the U.S. military first used DU weapons in the 1991 Gulf War, it has released the radioactive atomicity equivalent of 400,000 Nagasaki nuclear bombs into the global atmosphere (that's no misprint) causing permanent contamination with a half-life of 4.5 billion years. Furthermore, that DU radiation is 10 times the amount released by all atmospheric testing which in total equaled 40,000 Hiroshima bombs (again, no misprint). The 2 atom bombs used against the Japanese killed a likely 300,000 or more people from the initial blasts and subsequent radiation and chemical poisoning deaths. To this day, there are still reported deaths attributed to the bombings. Now imagine the potential threat to all planetary life from all the DU weapons used since 1991 and their continued use in Iraq and Afghanistan - the equivalent of 400,000 Nagasaki bombings and increasing daily as U.S. forces now are conducting 4 to 6 daily bombings of target sites in Iraq alone using DU bombs.

Leuren calls DU "The Trojan Horse of nuclear war - it keeps giving and keeps killing. There's no way to clean it up, and no way to turn it off because it continues to decay into other radioactive isotopes..." As it decays, it continues to release more radiation. DU when used as a weapon in war, as the U.S. has now done 4 times and continues to do so in Iraq and Afghanistan and intends to continue using, is Stanley Kubrick's fictional Doomsday Machine for real (from his 1964 film *Dr. Strangelove*). DU may be the ultimate weapon of mass annihilation. Unless there's a mass worldwide public awakening to this threat to demand an immediate end to its use for any purpose, we're left with little more than the message from the subtitle of the Kubrick film - stop worrying and love the bomb-and likely prepare to die.

The greatest damage from DU comes from the radiation residue after its use. When a DU weapon strikes a target, it penetrates deeply and aerosolizes into a fine spray which then contaminates the air and soil around the target area. The residue is permanent, and its microscopic and submicroscopic particles remain suspended in air or are swept into the air from the tainted soil and are carried by winds around the earth as a radioactive component of atmospheric dust. That dust falls to earth indiscriminately everywhere causing radiation contamination that affects every living thing and cannot be remediated. The contamination causes virtually every known illness and disease from severe headaches, muscle pain and general fatigue, to major birth defects, infection, depression, cardiovascular disease, many types of cancer and brain tumors. It also causes permanent disability and death. In June, 2003, the World Health Organization (WHO), without specific reference to DU, announced in a press release that global cancer rates will increase by 50% by 2020. WHO is usually conservative in its estimates. Might they believe things are potentially far worse? And are they closely examining the effects of DU to those in combat areas where these weapons are and have been used?

Those individuals (military and civilian) at or near target areas are most immediately affected by DU contamination, especially if they remain there for an extended time. During the 6 week 1991 Gulf war only 467 U.S. personnel were wounded and about 150 killed. Out of the 580,000 military personnel who served in that war, 325,000 were reported to be on permanent medical disability by the year 2000. It was also reported then the number was increasing by 43,000 each year. In fact, the annual increases were even greater, and by 2004 the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (the VA) reported over 518,000 Gulf-era veterans to be on medical disability. It also reported over 500,000 veterans were homeless. Studies were also done on veterans whose wives had normal babies before the war. It reported two-thirds of post-war births of those studied had severe birth defects, such as missing brains, eyes, legs and arms and blood diseases.

There are already scattered early reports of DU caused health problems from the current Iraq conflict (and probably Afghanistan) as well as an above normal rate of still active duty military and veteran suicide and family violence. As deployments in the current conflict are much longer than the short Gulf war and most serving go back for a second or even third tour of duty, it's easy to imagine a literal holocaust that will eventually devastate all military and other personnel who have or are now serving or will serve in Iraq and the region. And it likely will have a similar effect on the wives and husbands of veterans and their post-service offspring. Once again it must be emphasized. The U.S. government prior to 1991 had full knowledge of the devastating effects DU would cause and still used it, still does and still intends to keep using it. Beyond belief? You bet. If someone wrote this as a work of fiction or science fiction, no one would believe it, and probably no one would publish it.

DU USED AS WEAPONS - A WILLFUL ACT OF GENOCIDE

From its use already in 4 wars, the use of DU weapons is an act of insanity as well as possibly the greatest ever crime against humanity (and all other living species) and a war crime. Those responsible include 3 presidents, scores of high government officials and the Pentagon high command to include a lot of generals and admirals. These people are criminals. They're guilty of mass murder without end. They all should be made to answer for their crimes through indictment and trials both in our federal courts and at the International Criminal Court (ICC) at the Hague which was established in 2002 to try individuals for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. These people, or at least most of them, are guilty of all three crimes and should pay the highest price for them with no leniency. Their convictions should once and for all serve as a reminder to all future leaders that this type reckless behavior will never again be tolerated.

Nobel laureate Harold Pinter, a distinguished author and man of great honor, passion and eloquence, in his 2005 acceptance speech made these comments about the current Iraq war. Too ill with cancer, he was unable to travel to Oslo for the award ceremony and instead read his comments on videotape. Pinter is a sharp critic of the Iraq war and the U.S. and his U.K. government's role in it. In his Nobel award address he called the invasion of Iraq a "bandit act, an act of blatant state terrorism, demonstrating absolute contempt for the concept of international law." He stressed "the United States no longer bothers about low intensity conflict. It no longer sees any point in being reticent or even devious.....It quite simply doesn't give a damn about the United Nations, international law or critical dissent, which it regards as impotent and irrelevant."

Pinter is right, and he said much more in his 46 minute acceptance speech. He also could have added the Bush administration since 9/11/01 has governed recklessly and arrogantly. With obsessive secrecy and contempt for the Constitution, the Congress, the courts and the U.S. public, George Bush has governed by Executive Order or Decree, a tool of tyrants when used to excess as this president has. He's done it to pursue a policy of permanent imperial war for U.S. global domination. The tragedy of 9/11 aside, the Bush administration created a fear-induced sham world terrorist threat to fight a so-called "global war on terrorism" for decades to come. It also created a near police state at home with baseless mass roundups, illegal detentions and deportations as part of a racist war against dark-skinned immigrants, illegal warrantless domestic spying and systemic use of torture of those detained and those held in offshore prisons and "renditioned" to mostly unnamed countries tolerating this practice. The Bush administration did all this based on a foundation of willful deception, deceit, and endless web of lies, and an utter contempt for political, economic and social justice at home and abroad and the rule of law.

Until recent months, Bush has gotten away with it all. Now with his poll numbers plummeting, the Iraq war a hopeless quagmire (despite the disinformation to the contrary), the possibility of further high level administration officials being indicted beside Lewis Libby along with the potentially huge political and financial Jack Abramoff corruption scandal, and the Democrats and some Republicans finally stirring and expressing their ire, the administration may be nearing its Waterloo. Like many other regimes in the past guilty of imperial arrogance and overreach (like the last one that tried - the Nazis - and thought they'd rule for 1000 years but only lasted 12) this administration and its reckless and heartless agenda may meet a similar fate.

Great thinkers and perceptive observers have ventured to guess what our fate may be as a result of our actions. Without predicting it, Noam Chomsky in a recent talk cited the worst of all possible outcomes - a nuclear holocaust, environmental destruction or the end of even nominal democracy.

Yale Senior Research Scholar Immanuel Wallerstein in his important 2003 book, *The Decline of American Power*, believes the U.S. "has been a fading global power since the 1970s, and the U.S. response to the (9/11) terrorist attacks has merely accelerated this decline." He goes on to say "the economic, political and military factors that contributed to U.S. hegemony are the same factors that will inexorably produce the coming U.S. decline." He later wrote he can't predict the outcome of "this chaotic crisis of our capitalist world system", but the U.S. attempt to stop it will fail. At best, they'll only delay it as they've been trying to do. Wallerstein sees a future that will go one of two ways (if we survive) - either one based on progressive values or something that's quite the opposite.

Retired professor Chalmers Johnson, in his important 2004 book, *The Sorrows of Empire*, also predicts the dissolution of the U.S. empire if its present path continues. Unlike imperial Rome that took hundreds of years before it fell, he sees U.S. sorrows arriving "with the speed of FedEx." He predicts 4 sorrows if the present trend continues that will create an ugly alternative to our present constitutional form of government: imperial overreach with a "state of perpetual war" leading to more terrorist retaliation against us; a loss of democracy and our constitutional rights; the end of truthfulness "replaced by a system of propaganda, disinformation, and glorification of war, power, and the military legions"; finally, he sees the nation going bankrupt from its inability to maintain ever more "grandiose military projects." The U.S. national debt now exceeds \$8.2 trillion. It's growing unsustainably by over \$400 billion annually as is the current account deficit that in 2006 may reach \$1 trillion. Both deficits rely "on the kindness of strangers" (foreign governments and investors willing to keep buying our treasury securities and invest in our equity and fixed income markets) to sustain us. They'll do it only as long as they believe they're making sound investments. Johnson doesn't believe the present trend is irreversible. There's still time to change it, but so far he says we're not even trying. He thus believes the only hope for us and the planet is for the world community of nations to act together to "checkmate" us. If they don't or won't or can't, nuclear war may eventually ensue and "civilization will disappear."

To prevent the above scenarios from happening, the world community of nations must coalesce soon and go for "checkmate." And united they should demand that this kind of behavior will never again be tolerated by any nation. They should strengthen the international laws now in place enough to insure it, require every nation to be a signatory and force all nations to abide by these binding laws with the severest consequences for those who don't. But even if all this were to happen, the damage already done is overwhelming and spreading. It may already be too late. In the U.S. alone, 42 states are

now contaminated with DU from its manufacture, testing and deployment. Also, the manufacture of millions of DU bombs and their deployment to U.S. military bases around the world continues.

Leuren Moret just learned from a declassified document a Hawaii based Quaker group obtained through a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request that the U.S. military has 2.7 million DU bombs in U.S. still occupied South Korea (over 50 years after the end of the Korean War). She says it's little wonder North Korea wants nuclear weapons. She believes these bombs were moved there in the 1990s from U.S. still occupied (Japanese) Okinawa (60 years after WW II) because the Japanese (who abhor nuclear weapons) refused to domicile them any longer. And she speculates further that we very likely have many millions more DU bombs deployed in other countries where we have bases. That could include a great many more according to Chalmers Johnson. In *The Sorrows of Empire*, Johnson mentioned the existence of at least 725 known U.S. bases in 153 countries, besides hundreds more in this country. He also believes we have secret bases so the real total could be much higher and now likely is with all the new bases we're building in Iraq, Central Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America and plans for Africa. Even without these weapons being used, imagine the potential danger we're placing the people of these countries in (and our own citizens as well) just because the weapons are there (and here). There could be accidents, the military engages in exercises where they likely test and use these weapons, and, of course, they could be stolen or even sold by rogue military or other personnel looking for a quick buck.

Imagine for a moment a reverse scenario. What if the U.K, France, Russia or China had bases in this country (bad enough) and additionally stored millions of DU bombs or other nuclear weapons on our soil. Would we citizens tolerate just the bases, let alone with DU bombs? Unlikely. Also imagine if the public here knew thousands or millions of these weapons were being stored on U.S. bases here, near where they lived.

They might also consider the 104 current operating commercial nuclear power plants in the U.S. They're all dangerous, but especially the aging ones. Every one is a potential unstable nuclear bomb and possible disaster waiting to happen, either from an inevitable accident or from sabotage. Responsible experts believe it's just a matter of time before a major nuclear disaster occurs somewhere in the world, possibly or even likely a full nuclear core meltdown – the worst possible kind of nuclear catastrophe other than a nuclear or thermonuclear explosion or widespread use of DU weapons.

If a core meltdown happened (or more likely when one happens), a vast area would be contaminated and made uninhabitable forever. Where I live in Chicago I'm surrounded by 11 nuclear power plants, many of them aging and all of them with histories of safety violations caused by aging and shoddy maintenance. Even without an accident, these facilities (and all others everywhere) discharge enough radiation daily in their normal operations to contaminate the food we eat (even organic food), the water we drink and the air we breathe into our lungs. If one of these plants had a core meltdown and metropolitan Chicago was downwind from the fallout, the city and suburbs alone would become uninhabitable forever and would have to be evacuated quickly with all possessions left behind and lost (including our homes) except for what we could carry in suitcases or in the trunks of our cars. Everyone should thus ask the obvious question – is this kind of insane “nuclear Russian roulette” risk worth taking? There are much cleaner, safer alternatives available or that can be developed, if we'd just be willing to invest heavily in alternative energy sources other than the nuclear option and fossil fuels. There are also common sense ways to practice conservation, without significantly impeding our western lifestyle.

Up to now, our leaders have been irresponsible and derelict in their duty to inform us of the risk and act responsibly to remove it to protect us from potential harm. They've also shown no restraint in their actions or respect for the people in countries we seek to dominate. Those countries are never the developed ones in the Global North with the power to respond. They're always weak, less developed and overexploited ones, usually with darker skinned people and a non Judeo-Christian faith. In this country, especially without a draft and with few good career opportunities for the poor and underprivileged, military service with the promise of education and other benefits (that most inductees never get) becomes the temporary career choice of expedience. The rich and well-off only wage the wars but don't fight in them. Instead they send the poor to fight and die for them to make them richer. When our Vietnam era military came home sick and dying from the toxic effects of Agent Orange (highly toxic dioxin), Henry Kissinger, a Nobel Peace prize recipient and accused war criminal, arrogantly insulted them all when he called them "just dumb stupid animals to be used as pawns in foreign policy." Used, abused and discarded like worn out shoes. Kissinger's past has come back to haunt him. Before travelling abroad now, he must check with the State Department to be sure there are no warrants out for his arrest.

The world today is closer to the tipping point than ever before. We may, in fact, have passed it and it's already too late. The price we've paid for our technological advances has been an equal growth in the threat to our survival. Up to now we've found no way to end this destructive path. We're fast running out of time, and unless we do it and soon, we may not get another chance. The U.S. today is like a giant Gulliver Agonistes and the rest of the world like the Lilliputians - in Jonathan Swift's classic satire. Despite the mismatch, the Lilliputans (who stood 6 inches high) were able to tie down this giant and prevent him from wrecking their homes. In the end, they got Gulliver to leave and were able to go on with their lives. The lesson is clear. People everywhere need to understand the great peril we all face - our survival. Then, like the Lilliputians, we need to hog-tie this out-of-control predatory Gulliver to save ourselves.

Two final thoughts to consider - the first one from Dr. Helen Caldicott, president of the Nuclear Policy Research Institute, an expert on the medical hazards of nuclear energy, author, activist and Nobel Peace Prize nominee from her 1978 book Nuclear Madness (updated in 1994): "As a physician, I contend nuclear technology (military and commercial) threatens life on our planet with extinction. If present trends continue (and they have and have gotten worse), the air we breathe, the food we eat, and the water we drink will soon be contaminated with enough radioactive pollutants to pose a potential health hazard far greater than any plague humanity has ever experienced."

The second is from the great British journalist, Robert Fisk from his year end London Independent column entitled War Without End: "Only justice, not bombs, can make our dangerous world a safer place."

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