

VIDEO: Star Wars In Iraq

Is The U.S. using new experimental "Tactical High Energy Laser" weapons in Iraq?

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“Star Wars in Iraq” is a new investigative report by Maurizio Torrealta and Sigfrido Ranucci.

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According to official Pentagon sources, military vehicles equipped with this laser device have been used in Afghanistan to explode mines. According to two reliable military information sites - Defense Tech and Defence Industry Daily - at least three such vehicles are being used in Iraq as well and some people report having seen them.

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TRANSCRIPT

St by Majid Al Ghezali They used incredible weapons

Patrick Dillon Experimental weapons?

Majid Al Ghezali Yes... Yes, I think. They shoot the bus. We saw the bus like a cloth, like a wet cloth. It seemed like a Volkswagen, a big bus like a Volkswagen.

This testimony was reported to American filmmaker Patrick Dillon a few weeks after the battle for the airport. The person interviewed, Majid al Ghezali, is a well-known and respected man in Baghdad, who is the first violinist in the city orchestra. In addition to describing the battle, Majid al Ghezali wanted to show Patrick Dillon the site near the airport where this mysterious weapon was used, along with the traces of fused metal still visible, and the irregularly sized ditches where the cadavers were buried before they were exhumed. We sought out Majid al Ghezali to hear more details of his story. We met up with him in Amman and he pointed out some inexplicable peculiarities on the bodies of the

victims of the battle for the airport.

Majid Al Ghezali Just the head was burnt. In the other parts of the body there wasn't anything.

Al Ghezali reported that he had seen three passengers in a car, all dead, with their faces and teeth burnt, their clothes intact, and no sign of projectiles.

Majid Al Ghezali There wasn't any bullet. I saw their teeth, just the teeth, and they had no eyes, all of them, there was nothing on their bodies.

There were other inexplicable aspects: the terrain where the battle took place was dug up by the American military and replaced with other fresh earth; the bodies that were not hit by projectiles had shrunk to just slightly more than one meter in height.

Majid Al Ghezali Except the ones killed by the bullets, most of them became very small. I mean... like that... Something like that.

When we asked Majid what weapon he imagined had been used, he said that he had reached the conclusion that it must have been a laser weapon.

Majid Al Ghezali One year later we heard that they used an update technology, a unique one, like lasers.

We found another disturbing document on the use of mysterious weapons in Iraq, which referred to episodes that took place almost at the same time as those described by Majid al Ghezali.

Saad al Falluji They were 26 in the bus. About 20 of them had no head, the head had been cut, some of them had no arms or no legs. The only unwounded was the driver and really I don't know how he reach our hospital, because one arm was on his side, one head just beside him. It was a very strange and horrible situation. In the roof of the car there were parts of the body: intestines, brains, all parts of the body. It was a very very very miserable situation.

Geert Van Moorter (medical doctor working in Iraq during and after the war, as a volunteer for the belgium NGO Medical Aid fot the Third World) Do you have idea with what kind of weapon the attacked the bus?

Saad al Falluji We don't know with what kind of weapon they hit this bus.

Doctor n°2 It seems to be a new weapon

Saad al Falluji Yes, a new weapon

Doctor n°2 They are trying to do experiments on our civilians. Nobody could identify the type of this weapon.

We went to Belgium to find the filmmaker of this sequence, Geert Van Moorter, a doctor working as a volunteer in Iraq.

Geert Van Moorter This footage is taken at the General Teaching Hospital in Hilla, which is about 100 Km from Baghdad, and close to the historical site of Babylon. There I talked with

the colleague doctor Saad al Falluji, which is the chief surgeon in that hospital. Doctor al Falluji said me that the survivors that he operated said him that they did not hear any noise, so there was no explosion to hear, no metal fragments or shrapnels or bullets in their bodies, so they themselves were thinking of some strange kind of weapon which they did not know.

Let's hear Dr. Saad el Falluji's story about this in more detail.

Saad al Falluji This bus was very crowded, they were going from Hilla to Kifil, to find their families, but before they had arrived at the American checkpoint the villagers said to them "return back, return back". When the bus tried to return back it was shot by the checkpoint.

Geert Van Moorter No gunshot wounds?

Saad al Falluji No, no, I don't know what it was. We are here 10 surgeons and we couldn't decide which was the weapon that hit this car.

Geert Van Moorter But inside the bodies you did not discover ordinary bullets?

Saad al Falluji We didn't find bullets, but most of the passengers were dead, so they took them immediately to the refrigerator and we couldn't dissect and see, but in those who were alive we didn't find any kind of bullet. We didn't find bullets in their bodies.

Doctor n°2 Something cutting organs, cutting limbs, attacking the abdomen, attacking the neck and goes out.

Dr. Falluji also ended up speaking about a laser weapon....

Saad al Falluji I don't think that the bombing, or the cluster bombs, or the laser weapons can bring democracy to our country.

As in any war, the war in Iraq, left us a dreadful gallery of horror - images of mutilations that not even doctors can explain. The witnesses referred to laser weapons, arms with mysterious effects. We do not know what kind of weapons could produce such terrible effects. We tried to learn more about it, by asking for interviews to members of companies manufacturing laser and microwave weapons. Yet, the US Defence Department prevented any information from being released to us. They also did not answer - up to the time the film was edited - the questions we had sent them in order to know whether or not experimental weapons had been tested in Iraq and Afghanistan.

We then reviewed the Pentagon's media conferences released before the II Gulf War. Willingness to test new weapons emerged from the words of both the Defence Secretary and General Meyers. The questions from the media on direct energy and microwave weapons produced a certain amount of embarrassment.

American journalist Mr. Secretary, can I ask you a question about some of the technology that you're developing to fight the war on terrorists, specifically directed energy and high-powered microwave technology? Do you — when do you envision that you can weaponize that type of technology?

Donald Rumsfeld Goodness, it is in — for the most part, the kinds of things you're talking

about are in varying early stages. (To the general.) Do you want to — do you have anything you would add?

General Myers I don't think I would add much. It's — I think they are in early stages and probably not ready for employment at this point.

Donald Rumsfeld in the normal order of things, when you invest in research and development and begin a developmental project, you don't have any intention or expectations that one would use it. On the other hand, the real world intervenes from time to time, and you reach in there and take something out that is still in a developmental stage, and you might use it. So the — your question's not answerable. It is — depends on what happens in the future and how well things move along the track and whether or not someone feels it's appropriate to reach into a development stage and see if something might be useful, as was the case with the unmanned aerial vehicles.

American journalist But you sound like you're willing to experiment with it.

General Myers Yeah, I think that's the point. And I think — and it's — and we have, I think, from the beginning of this conflict — I think General Franks has been very open to looking at new things, if there are new things available, and has been willing to put them into the fight, even before they've been fully wrung out. And I think that's — not referring to these particular cases of directed energy or high-powered microwaves, but sure. And we will continue to do that.

But what is meant by directed-energy and microwave weapons? We went to ask retired colonel John Alexander, former program director in one of the most important military research laboratories in the United States, Los Alamos National Laboratory.

Retired Colonel John B. Alexander The research and the concepts for directed energy weapons go back many decades. What is happening is that the technology has now advanced sufficiently that now we are starting to see these weapons becoming real. There are several types of directed energy weapons and basically what they do is they're known as "speed of light" because they shoot electrons very fast over very long distances. Lasers of course are in the light range, then there are microwave weapons that are operating at other frequencies, but basically they're beam weapons, which is nothing physical that goes out, because they move electrons, while the kinetic weapons shoot big bullets to go out and physically hit and destroy something. These work because the energy is deposited on the target and causes some effect.

These images document one of the THEL tests. THEL stands for Tactical High Energy Laser. In the sequence, you can see the laser beam hit and destroy missiles and mortar rounds as they are about to hit the objective.

In this other test we see the laser beam identify and destroy two missiles at the same time.

It doesn't make any noise and it's invisible?

Retired Colonel John B. Alexander Some are visible, some are just outside... You have, you know, in the infrared range... What's emerging now are laser weapons where the effect is that that of the laser. They can be all burners, in what we call High Energy Lasers, because with the concentrated energy you can literally drill holes, you know, in the target.

Former Pentagon analyst William Arkin, who presently works as a journalist for the Washington Post, also confirms this revolutionary change from kinetic weapons to energy weapons.

William Arkin For thousands of years, the way in which you have killed someone is you have hit them with a sword, a spear, an arrow, a bullet, a bomb. It's kinetic, you're killing them by hitting them. And now, all of the sudden, out of nowhere, you have a completely new physical principle being applied in killing people, in which they don't know that they're being killed because their skin and body is being heated by high power microwaves or they are being hit by a laser that would have an instantaneous effect.

There are other types of weapons made with lasers, such as the device we can see in this sequence. The target is not hit by a projectile, but rather by an impulse of energy that manages to bore through the armor of an armored car. Excluding acoustic weapons, for the moment, the only sign of the use of energy weapons in a war scenario is a laser device known as Zeus. According to official Pentagon sources, military vehicles equipped with this laser device have been used in Afghanistan to explode mines. According to two reliable military information sites - Defense Tech and Defence Industry Daily - at least three such vehicles are being used in Iraq as well and some people report having seen them.

Geert Van Moorter When you showed me the picture of what you described that is a laser weapon, it reminded me that I was talking with some American soldiers, in August 2003, and there was some kind of box on their tank with a blue light like this. I recall it very well not because they said me what it was used for, but because I was teasing a translator, which was an Iraqi female, by telling her "look, with this kind of thing they can look through and see somebody without clothes". That's why I remind it, but I have seen for sure this kind of thing on that tank.

William Arkin is one of the American experts who follows the Pentagon activity most closely. So what does Arkin think about the possibility of the use of directed energy weapons in battle in Iraq?

William Arkin You know, there's even some possibility that high power microwaves have been used experimentally. I think that the panic about IEDs, about Improvised Explosives Devices, has been so bad that if these things are sitting in the lab, I'm sure that they want to get them to Iraq to see whether they are effective. So I can imagine that there could be some, what we call, "black" use of these weapons, but not in any significant way, and certainly not in such a way that one would conclude that they've had any impact.

But let's look at the Pentagon budget figures to see how important the outlay is for directed energy weapons.

William Arkin Right now you have about \$50 million a year being spent for non-lethal weapons, you have about another \$200 million or so being spent on High Power Microwaves, Active Denial type Systems, you've got probably another \$100-200 million being spent on "secret", "black" laser programs, and then you have the big lasers, the High Energy Lasers of the Air force and the other Tactical Lasers. So probably, when you add all of that up, you know the United States are probably spending \$½ billion a year right now on directed energy weapons. This is a significant amount of money; this is the size of the Defence Budget of some countries in Europe.

You might think that energy weapons only pose a danger for the countries involved in a military conflict, but that's not the case. One particular weapon called the Active Denial System - better known as the pain ray - has been built specifically for use in maintaining public order. Given its claim to be non-lethal and the suffering it produces, this weapon could become a very controversial one.

Retired Colonel John B. Alexander The Active Denial System is a Millimetre Wave System, operates at about 93 GHz. It sends out a beam for a very long distance, and what's important about it is that when it hits the skin it penetrates only a very slight, for a few millimetres under the skin and it it's the pain receptors and causes, you know, people to be adverse to the pain. It hurts, it hurts a lot.

The tests that had been run they were to go for 3 seconds, each individual was given a kill switch and nobody made 3 seconds. The answer to the pain is extremely rapid, and you don't have to do it very long, I mean, it gets your attention instantly.

To understand the consequences this new weapon could have for human rights we went to the Empire State Building in Manhattan, home of the offices of Human Rights Watch, one of the most important human rights organizations.

Marc Garlasco We can see the effects of a gun very easily and understand them, but when you cannot see the effect of a weapon because it is not visible and because the science is not very well understood because technology is so new, then it becomes a grievous concern that enrages the states for potential human rights violations and abuses. And that is something that we have to understand about the Active Denial System, that it exists to create pain and is very different in most other non-lethal weapons where the desire is either to immobilize someone or make it so that they cannot walk in the area. With the Active Denial System the main desire is pain, and we have to be very careful because in international law is very clear that devices created solely for the creation of pain can eventually lead to torture and are therefore illegal, and it's very critical that the United States does a careful legal review of the Active Denial System and is open with their findings. To date they have not been open.

William Arkin Some people say "ooh acoustic weapons, or High Power Microwave weapons, the Active Denial System, we can use it for crowd control..."

What crowd control? What does that mean?

It pretends that anyone in the crowd is eighteen years old, and male and in good health, and we're just going to shoot these microwaves or shoot these acoustic weapons on this crowd, and it's going to be carefully calibrated at a power level, in the intensity and at a range to affect all these eighteen years old men in the crowd.

Well, what crowd is made up of just eighteen years old men?

Look at the Intifada, look at any riot in Iraq today: children, women, pregnant women, old people, and so the effect... the effect that you would need in order to have an impact on a healthy male, you target, would be too much for a child or a pregnant woman or an old person.

Marc Garlasco There's been a lot of discussion also about the potential for eye damage. They have done some tests on the skin to show that is not harmful, but where is the eye

test? And there are concerns raised by scientists about potential harm to the eyes. And we also have concerns about the effects to children, to the infirm, to the elderly... Why are they not producing the data? Why are they not sharing it with us?

As regards the use of the pain ray in the field of war, the military review Defence Industry Daily reports that three Sheriff vehicles were ordered at a price of about 31 million dollars, and that approval has been requested for another 14 vehicles by Brigadier General James Haggin, chief of staff of the multinational forces in Iraq.

Retired Colonel John B. Alexander In my view the next global conflict has already began and we don't have an understanding of what that conflict looks like. Because of the issues of terrorism for instance the adversaries are going to be I think mixed in with civilian populations. We need weapons that allow us to be able to sort, minimize what they call "collateral casualties". I think the battlefields are going to be in urban areas.

William Arkin If you look at the Active Denial System, or the High Power Microwaves, or the LRAD, the acoustic weapon, what you see is enthusiasm for those are being displayed by the Us Northern Command, which is the homeland defence command of the United States, or other counterterrorism organizations, which are looking at them like "oh well, maybe, in some special circumstances we can take these secret weapons, boutique weapons, you know, we have only 10 or 20 of them somewhere in a secret place and if we need them we can pull them out and use them in this kind of specialty warfare". So ironically, even though the Americans would probably think "oh yeah, special new weapon, it would make sense because Iraq is such a mess and maybe we can do something to turn that corner in some way with the use of this weapon, the truth is that the only real way in which they, the military, sees the prospects for the deployment of these is in their domestic use. And you know quite well... that if the United States adopts these weapons for their domestic defence... Nato in Italy are not far behind...

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