

Strengthening peace in the United Kingdom Campaign Against Depleted Uranium

The Campaign Against Depleted Uranium (CADU) marks its tenth year in 2009. Its decade-long campaign against the use of this toxic substance has been impassioned and determined, and it is paying off. In 2009 CADU will have an extra pair of hands, thanks to the provision of a QPSW peaceworker placement for the first time.

“There is significant evidence that DU is dangerous, and faced with scientific uncertainty the responsible course of action is for it not to be used.”

In 1991, during the first Gulf War, the world witnessed the use of a new substance on a large scale for the first time as part of the British and American arsenal: depleted uranium (DU). It is used as the ‘penetrator’ in armour-piercing tank rounds and bullets. Because it burns on impact and throws up tiny particles of DU dust, it continues to contaminate the local environment long after its initial military use.

After the Gulf War, more DU was used in the vicious conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and again during the 1999 NATO bombing of Serbia during the Kosovo crisis. It was also employed by the Coalition in the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

According to CADU research, DU – being both chemically toxic and

radioactive – has been the cause of significant environmental and health problems in both these regions

Uranium oxide remains present in the lungs, kidneys, brain and bones for years and may, over time, contaminate underground water supplies and pass into the food chain.

Eighteen countries have DU in their military arsenals, including the United Kingdom, France, China and the United States. But it’s not just the usual suspects – Greece, Thailand and Oman are among the others who possess DU weaponry.

The health effects and military necessity of using DU are hotly contested by governments and campaigners alike. CADU takes a precautionary approach: there is significant evidence that DU is dangerous – even if the science doesn’t convince some governments – which is why CADU is calling for an end to its use.

CADU’s energetic campaigning, thorough research and dogged determination are beginning to



A congenitally blind child with her father in Ghifran, Iraq. Her condition is believed to be connected to the use of DU munitions by Allied forces during the first Gulf War.

pay off. In September 2008, 141 countries at the United Nations General Assembly voted in favour of a resolution asking the UN’s various agencies to look again at the environmental and health effects of DU – evidence that the international community is acknowledging this concern. Only four countries – Britain, France, Israel and the US – opposed the resolution.

But CADU is campaigning for more – it seeks to persuade the UK government to take the potential dangers of this deadly substance more seriously, like Belgium, which has recently banned its use altogether. And, as part of the International Coalition to Ban Uranium Weapons, CADU’s ultimate ambition is for an international treaty banning the use of DU altogether.

They’re ambitious goals, and in 2009 CADU will continue to work towards them with its characteristic dedication and conviction.

Find out more about Quaker peaceworkers – visit
www.quaker.org.uk/appeal

