



EUROMIL aisbl
(European Organisation of
Military Associations and Trade Unions)
Rue John Waterloo Wilson 78
B-1000 Brussels
Tel: +32.2.626.06.80
E-mail: euromil@euromil.org
N° Ent.: 0538.809.759

EUROMIL Position on Depleted Uranium (DU)¹

1. About EUROMIL

The European Organisation of Military Associations and Trade Unions (EUROMIL) is an umbrella organisation composed of 33 military associations and trade unions from 22 countries, representing 500.000 soldiers and their families. It is the main Europe-wide forum for cooperation among professional military associations on issues of common concern. EUROMIL strives to secure and advance the human rights, fundamental freedoms and socio-professional interests of military personnel of all ranks in Europe and promotes the concept of "Citizen in Uniform". As such, a soldier is entitled to the same rights and obligations as any other citizen. EUROMIL particularly calls for recognition of the right of servicemen and -women to form and join trade unions and independent associations and for their inclusion in a regular social dialogue by the authorities.

2. Background information on DU

It is known that DU weapons were used in the Gulf War, Kosovo and other Balkan regions, Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria. The debate on the impact of the use of these weapons on the health of those using the weapons, troops in mission in these areas, local populations and the environment has intensified over the years since their first use.

DU shells burn on impact, releasing microscopic (nanoparticle size), radioactive and toxic dust particles of uranium oxide that can travel hundreds of miles with the wind. DU can contaminate by seeping into the land and water, but the greatest danger that almost everyone agrees exists, comes when the particles are inhaled. From the lungs these particles travel through the blood stream, often landing in vital organs. Once inside the human body, DU can harm internal organs both by its chemical toxicity as a heavy metal and its release of low-level doses of radiation

¹ As approved by the 120th Presidium Meeting in Brussels on 26 October 2019



EUROMIL aisbl
(European Organisation of
Military Associations and Trade Unions)
Rue John Waterloo Wilson 78
B-1000 Brussels
Tel: +32.2.626.06.80
E-mail: euromil@euromil.org
N° Ent.: 0538.809.759

over a long period of time. The toxic and radiological effects of uranium contamination may weaken the immune system. Altogether, depleted uranium is a genotoxin and carcinogen. It may also cause acute respiratory conditions like pneumonia, flu-like symptoms, and severe coughs, renal or gastrointestinal illnesses. The full impact of the use of DU weapons is yet unknown. Although many scientific peer reviewed papers (see [here](#) and [here](#)) prove the harmfulness of DU upon their use.

3. International and national legislation

Several international and national rules and regulations are dealing with the use of DU in weapons. EUROMIL recalls the most relevant:

On the United Nations level:

- The resolutions 1996/16 and 1997/36 of the former UN Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, re-named UN Sub Commission on Promotion and Protection of Human Rights urge all states to be guided in their national policies by the need to curb the production and the spread of among other things weaponry containing depleted uranium.
- The UN General Assembly resolutions A/RES/62/30 (adopted on 5 December 2007), A/RES/63/54 (adopted on 2 December 2008), A/RES/65/55 (adopted on 8 December 2010), A/RES/67/36 (adopted on 3 December 2012), A/RES/69/57 (adopted on 2 December 2014), A/RES/71/70 (adopted on 5 December 2016) and A/RES/73/38 (adopted on 11 December 2018) highlight serious health concerns about the use of depleted uranium weapons and call for a precautionary approach to depleted uranium weapons as well as for transparency and assistance to affected States

On the Council of Europe level:



EUROMIL aisbl
(European Organisation of
Military Associations and Trade Unions)
Rue John Waterloo Wilson 78
B-1000 Brussels
Tel: +32.2.626.06.80
E-mail: euromil@euromil.org
N° Ent.: 0538.809.759

- The Recommendation 1495 (2001) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on the "Environmental impact of the war in Yugoslavia on Southeast Europe".

On the European Union level:

- The resolutions of the European Parliament of 17 January 2001, 13 February 2003, 17 November 2005 and 16 November 2006 on biological weapons and inhumane conventional weapons and the need to ban cluster munitions and of 22 May 2008 on (depleted) uranium weapons and their effect on human health and the environment – towards a global ban on the use of such weapons.
- In a wide-ranging resolution on Iraq on 27 February 2014, the European Parliament has called on EU member states to develop a common position in favour of a ban on DU weapons and support affected communities and decontamination (27 February 2014).
- The European Parliament recommendation of 5 July 2018 to the Council on the 73rd session of the United Nations General Assembly suggests the Council to work "towards the clarification and development of post-conflict obligations for the clearance and management of contamination from the use of depleted uranium weapons, and the assistance of communities affected by their use."

Altogether, there is a growing link to discuss trends around the issue of "conflict and the environment" as reflected within UNEA, the ILC and the UN Human Rights Council.

On the national level:

The first country in the world with a legal ban on DU ammunition although neither producing nor using such kind is Belgium after a voting in Parliament in March 2007. On 27 April 2011, the Congress of Costa Rica passed a law prohibiting uranium weapons in its territories, becoming the second country in the world to do so. The law prohibits the use, trade, transit, production, distribution and storage of uranium weapons on Costa Rican territory.



EUROMIL aisbl
(European Organisation of
Military Associations and Trade Unions)
Rue John Waterloo Wilson 78
B-1000 Brussels
Tel: +32.2.626.06.80
E-mail: euromil@euromil.org
N° Ent.: 0538.809.759

New Zealand and Ireland showed willingness to work on a ban. The subject was placed on the parliamentary agenda of various countries: Germany, Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands, UK ...

4. EUROMIL recommendations

EUROMIL recognizes that there may be long-term implications for the health of soldiers performing duties in areas where DU weapons were used. To counteract any such effects governments should ensure that measures are put in place that guarantee the safety and protection of troops during their missions in areas contaminated as a result of the use of DU. These protections should include:

- Full medical screening of troops
 - o prior to departure
 - o at regular interval during mission
 - o on immediate return from the mission area
 - o at regular intervals for the ten years post-mission
- Clear identification of areas in which DU weapons were used
- Pre-Posting briefings to troops on the known dangers resulting from DU weapons use
- Regular environmental impact assessment of contaminated areas, e.g. ground water testing and soil analysis.

EUROMIL also recognizes that there may be long-term implications for the health of the population in the area where DU weapons were used. Besides, the impact on the environment can have a negative influence on the living and working conditions in the contaminated area, as well as during the military operation many decades after the attack with DU ammunition.

Above all, EUROMIL strongly urges governments to ban the use of DU weapons and to use their influence to promote a worldwide abandoning of DU ammunition as well as to strive for helping affected regions and people.