

INTERVIEW WITH MAJOR DOUG ROKKE, PH.D

Former Director of the U.S. Army Depleted Uranium Project

A Military Perspective

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By W. Leon Smith

Major Doug Rokke, PhD, is a retired Army combat officer who served as the director of the U.S. Army Depleted Uranium Project at the start of Gulf War I. His job was to prepare soldiers for nuclear, biological, and chemical warfare. He was in charge of cleaning up American tanks hit by friendly-fired depleted uranium (DU) munitions as well as helping casualties contaminated with DU. His own health has suffered from the effects of uranium poisoning. Reports indicate that he has 5,000 times the acceptable level of radiation in his body and that he suffers from reactive airway disease from DU. Prior to deployment to the Persian Gulf, Dr. Rokke worked with the University of Illinois Physics Department and served in Vietnam. His PhD is in health physics. His original training was in forensic science. Today, he travels the globe informing people and governments of the dangers of DU exposure.

THE INTERVIEW

ICONOCLAST: How do you view depleted uranium?

ROKKE: DU...interesting nightmare.

ICONOCLAST: Actually, it's a lot more widespread and damaging worldwide than I had realized before talking to Leuren Moret.

ROKKE: Absolutely. The United States gave it to Israel. The first time it was used that I can document, for which I have the reports that I base my work on — it was 1973, during the Arab-Israeli conflict, and U.S. Army guys actually went on-site. We've got all the photographs, measurements. We've got trash medically, and equipment was trashed, so we know that for a fact. And then we used it extensively, probably close to 375 tons — now this is solid uranium, not uranium plus explosives or casings, but solid uranium, the amount of munitions in Gulf War I. In '94 and '95 we used three tons in the Balkans, and I was specifically asked to write the clean-up procedures and emergency management procedures for that for the Army. I've still got them. In December of '95 and January of '96, the U.S. Marines shot the hell out of Okinawa, Torishima Island. We didn't tell the Japanese for a year. And then we used it getting ready for the Balkans in '99 down in Puerto Rico. When I found out about that, I tried to activate our Army emergency response team called Army Contaminated Equipment Recovery team. That's by the Army regulation 700-48 that I wrote that was adopted, accepted, and implemented. The Army refused to do that. Then I tried to get medical care for them down there, and they refused to do that. Then, on April 16 of '99, we got called up to the White House to meet with what's called Bill Clinton's Presidential Oversight Board and that was under Senator Warren Rudman and Navy Admiral Elmo Zumwalt. Our team met with them and told them we're going to see all these health effects in the Balkans. We were still trying to deal with health effects from Gulf War I. At that time, I still got all the emails, copies of all the letters sent. They said we won't use it (DU) in the Balkans, and lo and behold, they were already using it. They used 30-40 tons in the Balkans in '99. Since then, we've been shooting it up, as U.S. Congressman James McDermott from Seattle, Washington, has confirmed. The Coast Guard's been shooting it up in the Puget Sound, Chesapeake Bay, off the coast of Texas, every place.

ICONOCLAST: Why have they been doing that?

ROKKE: They're just crazy. They want to make sure their guns work. Real simple. They're crazy. And, then, we came along with Gulf War II. We started planning Gulf War II back in '95. That had nothing to do with 9/11 at all. Zero. Not a thing. What's real interesting, if you go to the actual 9-1-1 report, General Franks totally acknowledges in the report in his testimony, that, yeah, they took and dusted off the invasion plans for Iraq and implemented it, which everybody knows because all that stuff was based on lies. So, anyhow, we went into Afghanistan based on a Feb. 12, 1998, Congressional discussion to overthrow the Taliban because it wouldn't go along with the Unocal oil deal, so that's why that happened. We probably dumped a thousand tons or more in Afghanistan, and God knows how many, thousand, two-thousand tons in Iraq, and we're still using it as we speak.

ICONOCLAST: You have no idea how much exactly?

ROKKE: Not really. Nobody can get a solid estimate. We do know from on-site measurements and videos and photographs, there's stuff lying all over the place. We shot up water treatment facilities. I've got live video and photographs. Apartment buildings, tanks, everything just left there...kids climbing all over them. Scott Peterson with the Christian Science Monitor reported it. The Japanese reported it. Ted Wayman who works for Uranium Medical Research Center went over there and measured it and reported it, not just took somebody's word for it, but went over and did the stuff. Medical reports coming out of Iraq on birth defects probably two or three days ago are just catastrophic, much less what's happened to our own troops. It's just incredible because the U.S. Army had required since I issued the initial order back after the ground war in 1991 that medical care in the form of testing be provided to everybody that was exposed within 24-72 hours. Still not happening. The government Department of Defense is trying to prevent information from getting out. They'll say thousands of people have been tested since '92. If you go to the local VA and pick up a brand new issue of the Gulf War Review, Vol. 13, No. 1, or you can get it online <www.va.gov>, go to page 12 of it. It states since 1992 only 270 people have ever been tested. (laughs). I can't get my own staff tested yet, 14 years after the fact.

ICONOCLAST: What do you know about the munitions?

ROKKE: There are two different types of DU rounds. We have the kinetic energy penetrator, and that's fired by an Abrams tank, a Bradley Fighting Vehicle, and HN Warthog aircraft, the Navy Phalanx, and then the machine gun. Those are all basically gigantic darts of solid uranium, contaminated with all the other junk from DOE's facility down at Paducah, Oakridge, and Portsmouth where they make the stuff. The Abrams tank round is a solid rod of uranium about three-quarters of an inch in diameter, 18 inches long. Each and every rod is over 10 pounds of solid uranium. The A-10 fires one that's three-quarters of solid uranium at 4,000 rounds a minute. The Bradley Fighting Vehicle, that's a chain gun that's pretty fast, too, fires thousands of rounds. Each and every one of those rounds is half a pound. Those are kinetic energy penetrators. The machine gun is a giant bullet, too. Then we have submunition landmines. These are cluster bombs. The casing is uranium, DU, with high explosives inside. I mean it's the absolute perfect dirty bomb. And then we have the bunker busters where you've got the uranium casing from the McAlester army ammunition plant. The guys got sick putting these things together just about six months ago. I mean, real sick, and they had to shut the line down.

ICONOCLAST: Where do they make these?

ROKKE: The DUs are made all over the place. I mean Aerojet ... we got health effects where they shut the whole thing down, up at Albany, New York. That was National Lead. They've got horrible effects all around Concord, Mass. Where it's manufactured. 60 Minutes did a story back in 1981 about all the adverse health effects that were at the Aerojet facility in Tennessee. They make it up in Minneapolis at Twin Cities. I mean, all over the place. This stuff's a nightmare. When you get to Oakridge and Paducah and Portsmouth where they have this stuff, and the health effects around there are just legendary, with all the respiratories and the cancers and everything. The best report that's out is called Discounted Casualties. It was written by a Japanese journalist who's an expert on Hiroshima, you know, the atomic bomb. Akira Tashiro was his name. You could just go online, and type Discounted Casualties, and pull the whole book up in English. Just read through it. There are interviews. Leuren Moret did the forward on it, and I talk about all my work

as director of the DU Project when I was health physicist with the assessment team after Gulf War I. You won't find hardly anything on the web. If you go to the Department of Defense website, and you put in the "Depleted Uranium Project" for which I was director, you won't find any of this stuff. You won't find any report on the depleted uranium assessment team from Gulf War I, and all the reports we did. It's just not there. We had all these orders mandating medical care, going way back to day one. I issued the initial one and have a whole shitpot of medals. In '91, the commanding general issued the order to provide medical care for everybody, identifying those who needed it. It never happened. And then General Shinseki, who is retired as the head Army general, issued the order himself Aug. 14, 1993, mandating medical care, thorough environmental clean-up and remediation, and education and training. As a consequence of that, as director of the DU Project, we developed all the regulations, environmental clean-up, all the training and education, videotapes to support it, and in September of 2002 General Shinseki signed Army regulation AR700-48 making it mandatory. But they just ignore it. And then General Peake on April of last year issued the same order mandating medical care for everyone exposed. But they ain't doing it.

ICONOCLAST: Why won't they do it, if they received an order from the General?

ROKKE: They're above the law. They're just simply above the law.

ICONOCLAST: These guys issued the orders on behalf of the DOD, right?

ROKKE: They are the commanding generals of the DOD.

ICONOCLAST: If they issued the order, who has the authority to stop the orders?

ROKKE: Dickie Cheney. It stopped way up there because when you go through this, and you find they aren't complying with the order, not giving the medical care, they haven't told the truth, then you have to figure it out. You've got Deputy Secretary of Defense Bill Winkenwerder who's in charge of all medical. He issued an order himself in 2003 to do it, but they don't do it. If you come down the medical line, you've got Georgie Bush, Dickie Cheney, and then you come on down from that to Don Rumsfeld. Then you've got Bill Winkenwerder, and then you've got Mike Kilpatrick, Department of Defense. These guys are absolved from telling the truth or complying or doing anything like this. And the only one that's got the authority and knowledge, who's been there from day one, and can do that stuff, is Dickie Cheney. Rumsfeld's new. Georgie Bush is new. He didn't have any clue what's going on until after his 2000 election. He called me and had me go up there and speak to the U.S. Senate on all this stuff. Real interesting, to get ushered into the U.S. Senate as keynote speaker for a Veterans Day breakfast. It's a fascinating experience. It's pretty neat. But you have all this stuff happening, so you figure, but we continue to use it. It violates United Nations laws and regulations. It doesn't even pass common sense to take tons and tons of solid radioactive material and throw it in someone else's back yard, refusing to give medical care although it's been ordered, refusing to clean up the environmental contamination, although it's required. And they keep getting away with it. When you look at the commanding generals who can do this shit, although Shinseki signed off on the order, as the head of the Army, and Kirpatrick and Winkenwerder can get away without doing the medical care, who's got the authority above them that can do it? Well, Rumsfeld's an idiot. He's only been around a short while, and George Bush didn't know, so it points at Dickie Cheney, because when you figure Dickie Cheney back in 92, we got a directive sent down from a lady named Madeleine Albright, secretary of state, down through General Paul Greenberg to the U.S. Army corps research lab. We were ordered at that time to write a no-bid contract for Halliburton.

ICONOCLAST: Really?

ROKKE: Uh-huh. We did. And we did it, and they got it. You know, Brown and Root ... Halliburton. So we hired them, and they went over to Kuwait and pushed a whole bunch of junk into a big hole at one of the camps and then walked away. Now they've had all the no-bid contracts, as everybody's heard about. How much money's been wasted and can't be accounted for? It's real easy. When you trace the whole thing, who was involved in the beginning to allow this stuff ... it all points to Dickie Cheney. I mean, just 100 percent. And then you still have all the generals who knew what was going on, and they've never done anything.

ICONOCLAST: Why would Dick Cheney want there to be —

ROKKE: Money. Money. Money. Money. Money.

ICONOCLAST: Is DU cheaper to produce or something?

ROKKE: Yeah. It's free. You have to understand, this is an incredible weapon. It kills and destroys everything. I mean, it's absolutely incredible. When I had to clean up the mess following Gulf War I, I learned how good this stuff was. There's no two ways about it. It's incredible. It's the best we've got. And then we did all the testing in '94 and '95, and we saw it again. In '94 we did what was called a Bradley Fighting Vehicle burn test. I loaded a Bradley Fighting Vehicle with munitions and explosives, and I set it off. And I found that the contamination was so extensive within 50 meters that you absolutely had to wear full respiratory and skin protection. Well, the Army adopted those recommendations I put in, absolutely implemented them. They're in place now. So with every single incident where they use it you have to wear full respiratory and skin protection within 50 meters by U.S. Army specific guidance adopted by the Navy and everybody else. When you get the stuff destroyed, it's like a checkerboard. It's all over the place. And we know also from our experience that all respiratory and skin protection required within 50 meters' radius, that's about 160 feet, but the stuff goes out to about 400 meters. Now I did not measure any farther than 400 meters, because I couldn't get out of my pad called the Nevada test site area 25. God knows how much farther it went. We know, absolutely totally confirm, no question about it, that at the National Lead site where they were manufacturing it in Albany, N.Y., it went 30 miles, in sufficient quantities to cause health effects. So, we put tons and tons and tons of solid radioactive materials all over the place. This stuff, when it hits, it breaks up, forms fine dust and oxides, and some of these dusts are so small, they are smaller than the inner diameter of a red blood cell. That's always been known. Marion Fulk knew that from day one when he did the work on the Manhattan Project. Marion Fulk is one of the last living gods of the Manhattan Project. He was the particle physicist who spread of all of this stuff in the atmosphere. He's the last living god. Two or three of the last remaining ones have died during the past few months.

ICONOCLAST: So, to recap?

ROKKE: What we have is deliberate use of solid radioactive materials all over the place and the deliberate refusal to provide the medical care that's mandated by Army orders and regulations, Department of Defense directives, and a simple refusal to clean up all the environmental contamination that must be done by the direct Army regulation. It's that easy. There's no accountability. Anybody that speaks up becomes persona non grata and the attacks just come flying your way beyond comprehension.

ICONOCLAST: Is this a move toward population control or something?

ROKKE: No. No. Just killing and destroying on the battlefield. It's real simple. You've got to remember the soldier and the warrior. His job is to kill and destroy. And they don't think anything beyond that. I've heard people say it's about population control. No. It's about killing and destroying. How do you do it effectively? That's it. I mean, when I was director of the DU Project, when I was still in the good graces of the military and the secretary of the Army and everybody, at that time they loved me. Then they had a real problem. Anyhow, I went in with the intent to insure that if we did use this in combat that we could clean it up and provide the medical care and that everybody had the education: which is knowledge, which is training, which is skills necessary to work with it and respond and clean it up. Well, what I found out real fast when I got in doing all this work for 15 months was "God Almighty, you can't clean it up. You can't provide medical care."

We knew we had to put procedures in place to minimize the effect as much as we could. That's why I wrote the Army regulations and put all the training programs together.

ICONOCLAST: Would you list yourself as a whistleblower?

ROKKER: Me? No. I'm an Army officer finishing my job. I had a direct order to make sure the stuff is cleaned up. Multiple direct orders. Some people might call it a whistleblower because I got fed up with the fact they weren't complying in 1997 when the guys were sick and dying. I got fed up with it, but no, I'm not a whistleblower. I'm just finishing a job. I got an order signed by Gen. Schwartzkopf's chief of staff assigning me to do this for the commander. Schwartzkopf got the order on down from the Pentagon telling him to assign me to clean up the mess. To this day, I have no idea why.

ICONOCLAST: I understand a law just passed in the Louisiana House regarding testing for DU.

ROKKER: You betcha. 101 to nothing, mandating medical care. The individual that was responsible for that is Command Sgt. Major Bob Smith.

ICONOCLAST: What would it take to get Texas to pass something like that, for the health of our soldiers coming home?

ROKKER: I don't know. I've given talks at the University of Texas Medical School in Houston. Done the same up in Dallas. We've been right there in Crawford. All over the place. One of the other doctors that works with us is Dr. Ruth McGill. They tried to kill Ruth McGill and I down there on the south side of Dallas a couple of years ago. They tried to run us off the road on that big expressway. We had just finished a radio and television interview, and we were on the way back, and they came right at us. Man, if Dr. McGill hadn't been a good driver we would have been dead meat.

ICONOCLAST: Who did this?

ROKKER: DOD guys. I had my house broken into a gazillion times when I was in Jacksonville, Alabama. Had windows shot out. I have had direct threats from Army officers in uniform. They bounced me out of the Army Reserve after I testified and forced the Secretary of Defense in England to admit he lied to the House of Lords. That was real interesting. Oh, they don't like any of us. The simple thing is, you take tons and tons of solid radioactive waste, and you spread it all over the world, both here in the states and overseas, in combat situations and non-combat situations, do it into the ocean, then refuse to clean it up and provide the medical care. It's that easy. You guys are so close to one the largest Army bases in the world that you could spit. I can bet you that if you go over there, even though you had all the orders mandated, thorough training on DU, and it's in the common task training manual for the Army, which means everybody in the Army must pass the DU test that I wrote, knowing what it is and how to handle it, how to respond — I betcha if you went over you wouldn't find anyone that knew or did it. And that's scary as hell.

ICONOCLAST: So what needs to happen?

ROKKER: The President needs to issue an order — he and that idiot over in England, his puppy dog ...

ICONOCLAST: Blair?

ROKKER: Yeah, Tony Blair. Just say, "Guys, you are going to comply with the orders that are issued." When the commanding generals and all the captains and colonels and everybody don't comply with an order and regulation, an order signed by the Surgeon General of the U.S. Army, and they don't comply with the Army regulations signed by General Shinseki, they ought to court martial their ass.

ICONOCLAST: But wouldn't that be the President overriding the Vice President?

ROKKER: No, the Vice President is just the head of the Senate. Cheney runs the thing because George is an idiot.

ICONOCLAST: But you would tell him (Bush) to start running it himself.

ROKKER: Yeah, he needs to run it himself. He's the Commander-in-Chief. He just needs to tell them to comply with the orders and regulations that are issued. And tell them to stop using DU because it doesn't even pass the common sense test. Who would want thousands and thousands of tons, who would even want five pounds, of solid radioactive materials thrown in your back yard? It doesn't even pass the common sense test.

ICONOCLAST: You don't think Bush is for DU?

ROKKER: Oh, yeah. They just go along with everything that's happening. If you look at everything, it's real interesting. We know the Pentagon was never hit by an airliner, okay? Got hit by a cruise missile. Everybody knows that shit. No evidence of wreckage. No nothing. The hole was only 16 feet across. There's no way an airliner is going to disappear in a 16-foot hole. When the roof fell down later on and they say in the 9-1-1 report, it was a dive bomb, no trench, no nothing. Hello. You know? Isn't it astonishing? You go to the photograph of the 9-1-1 report on page 312 and look at it. It's a little hole, and nothing's burned and nothing's along the sides of it. There's no evidence of an airplane. There's no trench. There's no nothing. And then you kind of wonder how can they say that an airliner the size of a 757 did it. Nothing fits. But you know, it's the same thing when you come on down. Bush and all those guys, and Powell knew better, okay? They kept saying, "The reason we're going into Iraq and Gulf War II is because they have WMDs, and they're going to use them," right? Hell, Scott Ritter, Hans Blix, Richard Butler, all of us said we didn't do it because we blew'em up way back in 1990. Schwartzkopf's autobiography on page 390 of *It Doesn't Take A Hero*, specifically states that we made the decision. This is a message from Schwartzkopf, between Powell, Schwartzkopf, Chuck Horner, and Dickie Cheney that we decided to blow up the stuff we gave Iraq in place so it wouldn't be used on us. And when we made that decision, we said we're all going to get sick and guess what? You now have over 325,000 Gulf War I vets, say from August 1990 up till Fall of last year, permanently disabled. Hello? I mean, what more does it take? It's astonishing. When you add this all up, it stinks. What I see I don't like. You have to understand, I'm a red, white, and blue Army officer all the way. I joined the military in 1967, and I just retired. So that's how many years? Thirty-eight? You know, you're retired, but you're still in. It's a hell of a lot of years. We got the orders to provide medical care for U.S. military, okay? Well, you can't under any common sense or international law or Geneva Convention refuse to provide that medical care for anybody else, especially non-combatants. But they do.

ICONOCLAST: It's unbelievable that medical care is not provided.

ROKKE: That's what I said when I kept getting these assignments to do it, and every time I got things done, I hit a roadblock, and then when I started yelling and screaming and trying to make them comply, I became persona non grata so fast it would make your head spin. You know, sometimes, you just have to do what's right. Boy, they don't like it. Hell, I'm just finishing a job. I got an order to do it, and I'm an Army officer that does it. If somebody gets wounded in combat, you give him the medical care. If the area gets trashed in combat, you clean up the environment. Because otherwise, it's useless to go in there. Everybody's scared and been lied to so many times. Then all this gets blown apart, like the fact that they've had to acknowledge that there were no WMDs — everybody knew that. The guys that said it knew that there weren't any because they had already made the decision to blow'em up. But you still have people that believe these lies.