

**Question for oral answer O-000045/2014
to the Commission**

Rule 115

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Subject: The use of depleted uranium for military purposes

Depleted uranium (DU) is a chemically toxic and radioactive by-product of the uranium enrichment process whose radioactivity increases over time. It is used by a number of states in armour piercing munitions for use in tanks, armoured vehicles and aircraft. Six states are known to produce these weapons, and it is thought that around 20 currently possess them in their stockpiles. DU munitions combust, generating a fume of uranium oxide particles that present an inhalational hazard to civilians and military personnel. Munitions that miss their target can contaminate soils and groundwater. Significant quantities of DU munitions have been used in Iraq and the Balkans by the US and the UK. There are ongoing concerns over its potential use in Afghanistan. DU-contaminated vehicles pose significant risks to scrap metal collectors and children who often play on them. DU munitions have been deployed in spite of considerable data gaps in DU's environmental behaviour, chemical and radiation hazards, the level of contamination likely to be created in different scenarios and, crucially, the extent to which civilian populations may be exposed to DU residue. Parliament has consistently questioned and opposed the use of DU munitions for more than a decade. Concern over the use of DU munitions has been growing at the United Nations General Assembly, where a fifth resolution on the topic will be tabled in October 2014. In some areas of Iraq, childhood cancers and severe congenital birth defects have increased exponentially, up to the point where women no longer want to have children. In consideration of the issues raised above, could the Commission specify:

1. what action has been taken to date to promote restrictions and/or prohibitions on the use of DU munitions among Member States and to demonstrate leadership on this issue internationally?
2. what efforts have been undertaken to develop a common EU position in favour of the prohibition of the use of DU munitions?
3. what assistance the EU is able to provide to help the Iraqi Government to better manage the legacy of DU in its country?
4. DU is just one of many hazardous substances used in conventional munitions that have the potential to impact on civilian health. In light of the EU's position as a leader on chemicals regulation, will the Commission support research into the impact of these toxic remnants on civilians?

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