

PETROLEUM IN IRAQ 2003

1. WAR FOR OIL

Various reasons have been officially given for the causes of the war Bush has announced against Iraq, but it is clear that this is another oil war. An eventual overthrow of Saddam Hussein will open great possibilities for transnational oil companies, especially for US companies.

Iraq's proven reserves reach 112,000 million barrels of crude, the largest in the world after Saudi Arabia, although it is believed, since there have been no explorations in the last 10 years, since the Gulf War, that Iraq's reserves could be greater than Saudi Arabia's.

The US government will doubtless be the dominant foreign power in Iraq in the post-Hussein era. Representatives of various foreign oil companies have already been meeting with leaders of the Iraqi opposition, to discuss themes of "mutual interest".

Among these opposition groups are the umbrella organization Iraqi National Congress (INC), supported by the US government. An INC oil engineer who lives in London declared that all the oil agreements are going to be revised when there is a change of government. The leader of the INC, Ahmed Chalabi, said that he looks favorably upon the creation of a consortium led by the United States to develop Iraq's oil fields.

It is believed that companies such as ExxonMobil and ChevronTexaco could play a new role in Iraq. Iraq's continued presence in OPEC is also questioned. The five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, the United States, Great Britain, France, Russia and China, have international oil companies, with strong interests in Iraq. Of these, France and Russia have hesitated in approving an eventual warlike intervention.

On this matter, the ex-CIA director James Woolsey considers that since France and Russia have oil interests in Iraq, someone ought to say to these countries that if the government of Iraq is changed, the United States is going to do everything possible to ensure that US companies work closely with the government of Iraq. And if these countries do not support the overthrow of Hussein, it is going to be difficult, if not almost impossible, that the new government will want to work with them.

Russia, via Lukoil, has important economic interests in Iraq, in 1997 it negotiated a US\$4,000 million contract to develop the West Qurna oil fields in the south of Iraq

(with reserves of 15 thousand million barrels), but the company did not begin activities due to the sanctions imposed on Iraq by the United Nations. Iraq has threatened that it is going to rescind the contract if work does not begin immediately.

In October of last year, the Russian services company Slavneft signed a services contract for US\$52 million to drill in the Tuba field in the south of Iraq, and there is a proposal between the governments of Iraq and Russia for US\$40,000 million to carry out oil explorations in the western desert of the country.

Iraq has a debt to Russia of between US\$7 and 8 million dating to before the Gulf War. The leader of the INC has met with the Russian Ambassador in Washington, where he noted the urgency that Russia begin a process of dialogue with leaders of the Iraqi opposition.

On another side, the French company TotalFinaElf has negotiated the rights to develop the super giant oil field Manjón near the border with Iran, which could contain some 30 thousand million barrels of crude, but Iraq announced in July 2001 that it is not going to give France the priority in developing this field, due to its decision to join the economic sanctions.

In October 2001, Thierry Desmarest of TotaFinaElf said that this was not an opportune moment to negotiate potential new contracts with Iraq. "I am waiting to see what happens in the military/political arena in the coming months. However, we have carried out studies in the two principal Iraqi fields, and thus our presence would be important for a rapid development of these fields."

a) THE TRUE REASONS FOR WAR

The Ba'ath regime is brutally tyrannical, there is no doubt of that, and for many years it was an ally of the West. From them the regime received the know-how and the precursors for developing the chemical weapons that serve to repress the Kurdish population, the same people who were massacred with mustard gas.

Today, Iraq is accused of possessing the technology to develop weapons of mass destruction, including chemical, biological and nuclear weapons, and thus, of constituting a threat to planetary security. (On this subject, the White House astonished the international community last year when it rejected any new proposal to strengthen the agreement on biological weapons.

The obstacle was the theme of the processes of verification, which would permit inspection of the work that US biotechnology companies do. These companies made it very clear that they would not tolerate a monitoring of their installation for fear that their commercial secrets would be stolen. It is also ironic that in the war that is being planned, impoverished uranium could be used, which is a weapon of mass destruction, and that the United States has the largest arsenal of nuclear

weapons and is, up to now, the only country which has used these kind of weapons against a civilian population).

However, it is a secret from no-one that the true cause is oil, as has been the case in all the wars in which Iraq has been involved in the last few years.

As Faisal Qaragholi, leader of the INC, has declared, oil has been a curse for the people of Iraq. In fact, oil has been a curse not only for the Iraqis. All the conflicts that exist in the Middle East have had as their origin manipulation exercised by European and US empires with the goal of having access to and control of the oil resources that exist there.

When the Ottoman Empire was defeated and fragmented, its administration was divided among several European countries. England played a very important role in this division and from the beginning controlled oil production in northern Iraq (in Kurdish territory). Production increased with the construction of the Kirkuk oil pipeline to the Mediterranean. All this production was in the hands of British Petroleum, Shell, the French company Compagnie Francaise des Petroles and the US Near East Development Corporation.

With the new world leadership in the hands of the United States after the Second World War, it strengthened its presence in the Middle East, with the goal of maintaining control over production and over the important crude reserves in the region.

With major diplomatic pressure, the US achieved that 23.75% of the shares be handed over to US companies. In 1952 Iraq became one of the major crude exporters of the world.

In 1958 there was a revolution in Iraq led by Qasim, with one of its objectives being the reduction of the power which oil companies had had in their country up till that time, to renegotiate all the contracts and to use the foreign exchange from oil to reconstruct the failing Iraqi economy... A new legislation was developed and other measures were taken which were very well received by the Iraqi population.

In 1963 the Ba'th party - still in power today - carried out a bloody coup d'état, but maintained the nationalist policies of Qasim. In 1972 oil was nationalized.

Shortly afterward the Arab Israeli war took place, and the Arab oil-producing countries launched an oil embargo against the West. This increased the price of crude, and Iraq began to receive important foreign exchange for this resource, which greatly strengthened the Ba'th regime. Its oil earnings were only interrupted by the Iran-Iraq war. This war also has oil origins. When the British divided up the Ottoman Empire, they left Iraq without a port on the Persian Gulf. Basora is 20 miles away from Shatt al Arab, but they inherited the right to use the coast and Water, which gives them right of use up to a few meters out to sea. At the same time, all the oil tankers which have to leave via Abadan, Iran's main oil refinery,

have to pass by there, creating a new source of conflict. On the other hand, in this Iran-Iraq war, they fought for a strip of territory on the border between the two countries, where Iraq's most important oil reserves could be found.

In the Iran-Iraq war, the Iraqi oil industry suffered great losses, since at the start of the War, the refinery in Basara was bombed. Two oil terminals in the south: Mina al-Bakr and Khor al-Amaya, as well as the southern section of an oil pipeline which joins the terminals with the oil fields in the north; the pumping stations and petrochemical plants, all were targeted by aerial bombing. Later Syria closed the Kirkuk flow of crude to the Mediterranean, which forced Iraq to work only with a small oil pipeline that crosses Turkey.

There was also the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, on August 2, 1990. During the Ottoman dominion, Kuwait was administered from Basora and Baghdad, but this did not accord with Western imperial interests. They considered that such important oil reserves should not be just in one country (in this case Iraq), and thus they promoted the creation of Kuwait as an independent country. Iraq never accepted this division, and what they call the separation of their southern province of Kuwait.

The subsequent Gulf War in 1991, in which the United States and NATO invaded Iraq in retaliation for their invasion of Kuwait, had as its ultimate goal the weakening of OPEC. This new war is also an oil war.

b) A HIDDEN WAR

The bombing of Iraq since the Gulf War in 1991, has been more prolonged than that experienced by Vietnam. Since 1991, but especially in the last 4 years, the worst campaign of aerial bombing since the Second World War has been carried out by the United States and the United Kingdom.

Between August 1, 1992 and December 16, 1998, the United Kingdom had dropped 2.5 tons of bombs over the zone of the south of Iraq that is an average of 0.025 tons per month. In the 18 months following, between the United States and the United Kingdom, 400 tons of bombs and missiles were dropped, because Iraq had not cooperated with the United Nations inspectors, who were looking for weapons of mass destruction.

The justification has been that these two countries have a mandate from the United Nations to patrol the so-called "aerial exclusion zones", which gives them control over the majority of Iraqi air space. On this matter, the Secretary General of the United Nations, Boutros- Ghali, declared in 1992 that the subject of the exclusion zones was not covered when Resolution 688 of the UN Security Council was approved with relation to Iraq.

Tony Blair added that these exclusion zones allow the United States and the United Kingdom to accomplish a vial humanitarian function to protect the Kurds in

the north of Iraq. Ironically, both countries give immense support to Turkey, the country which serves them as the base for their military incursions into Iraq, and Turkey is the country which has most persecuted, massacred and denied the rights of the Kurdish people.

It is important to mention that the most important oil reserves being exploited at the moment in Iraq are found in Kurdish territory, including the Kirkuk field, with 10 thousand million barrels of proven reserves.

In August 1999, The New York Times reported that US airplanes have been methodically attacking Iraq. In the last few months 1100 missiles have been dropped against 359 objectives.

Bombing has increased 300%. From August to December 2002 there have been 62 attacks by US airplanes (F-16) and Tornados of the Royal Armed Forces of the United Kingdom. According to declarations by the British Ministry of Defence, 124 tons of bombs have been dropped during this period.

The sanctions laid out in the "food for oil" program, which began in 1996, permit US\$4,000 million a year in exports to Iraq, but it is calculated that the needs to cover the minimum necessities of the country reach up to US\$7,000 million. A decade of sanctions has meant the greatest mortality in a stable population. It is calculated that this has reached 2 million people. UNICEF calculates that the sanctions have meant the death of around half a million children, but this number could be higher.

Another consequence of the sanctions has been the deterioration of all the oil infrastructure.

c) THE COST OF THE WAR

In a planning report of the United Nations it is estimated that the military campaign against Iraq could put some 10 million Iraqi civilians, including population of refugees and displaced persons, at risk of hunger and epidemics and in urgent need.

The United Nations calculates that the number of refugees could reach 900,000 Iraqis who would be forced to migrate to neighboring countries, of which some 100,000 would need urgent medical attention. Another 2 million will be internal refugees, and would also need help.

The report says that children younger than 5 years old, pregnant and breastfeeding women will be especially vulnerable due to the collapse of the primary health system which will happen as a consequence of the war.

As for infrastructure damages, the UN believes that during the invasion, oil production will be suspended in the country, their electricity network will be

seriously damaged and the capacity of the Iraqi government to continue to distribute food rations as part of a humanitarian program supervised by the United Nations will be destroyed. It is likely that epidemics will be unleashed, including cholera and dysentery in epidemic and even pandemic proportions.

d) ANOTHER WAR FOR OIL

According to projections made for the year 2020, the United States will buy two out of every three barrels of oil which it consumes, and thus the president of the United States has declared that "energy security" is one of the principal keys of its foreign policy. Thus war and oil go hand in hand.

Vice-President Cheney warned that in 2001, the United States confronted its most serious lack of energy since the oil embargos of the 1970s, and that dependence on crude increases when foreign powers do not always have the United States in their hearts.

In the year 2000, 55% of crude imports came from just 4 countries: Canada, Saudi Arabia, Venezuela and Mexico. They see that it is therefore urgent to diversify their sources, and it is thus that world oil has become a national matter for the United States, and four strategic zones have been determined for the supply of oil and natural gas. These are: the Middle East, Africa, especially the deep sea reserves of the Atlantic coast, the Caspian and other production regions in the Western region.

In this context, an act of war against Baghdad has as its objective the taking of control over the vast oil resources of that country for the benefit of the US economy. "When a change of regime occurs in Iraq one will be able to add between three and five million barrels of production to the world supply (of oil), a successful outcome of the war would be good for the economy" declared Larry Lindsay, ex-economic adviser to George W. Bush.

e) IRAQ'S OIL RESERVES

Iraq says that its proven reserves are around 112 thousand million barrels, the second largest in the world. The Iraqi government considers that if they initiate new exploratory campaigns, these reserves could reach up to 300 thousand million barrels.

Although only very limited explorations of gas have been made, the estimated reserves are of 10 trillion cubic feet, with a probable increase up to 150 trillion cubic feet.

Cuadro No.1 PRINCIPAL OIL FIELDS IN IRAQ

FIELDS RESERVES	THOUSAND MILLION BARRELS
Abu Ghirab	1,5
Buzurgan	2,0
Halfaya	5,0
Kirkuk	10,0
Nahr Umr	6,0
Bai Hassan	2,0
East Bagdad	7,0
Khabbaz	5,0
Manjón	20,0
Nasiriyah	2,0
Rumaila	10,0
West Qurhan	15,0

Source: *Petroleum Economist*

The Iraqi government considers that it is absolutely necessary to modernize its infrastructure, and drill at least 380 new production wells, but the UN Security Council has to approve any import of equipment, so Iraq cannot count on the necessary technology to modernize its oil industry. Benon Sevan, head of the UN program on Iraq says that around 2000 contracts related to the purchase of oil equipment are waiting to be approved by the Council, these have a value of US\$5,000 million and that they have been held up by the United States.

Concerning what will happen in the future, Rosemary Hollis, director of Middle Eastern Studies at the Royal Institute of International Affairs holds the opinion that any new government in Iraq will have to also rely on international approval to finalize any contract in oil affairs.

The US State Department has met with the Iraqi opposition to discuss the future of the hydrocarbon sector of Iraq once Saddam has gone. A working group has also been established which includes ex-functionaries of Iraq's oil sector, to make recommendations to a government in transition concerning how to rehabilitate the energy sector in Iraq.

Thus, what is the true cause of this war, and what is more, do the citizens of the United States have any idea what the maintenance of their lifestyle is costing humanity?

Source: *RESISTANCE OILWATCH NETWORK BULLETIN Number 35 - February 2003*

2. IRAQ AND THE FUTURE OF THE WORLD

Ana Esther Ceceña

ALAI-AMLATINA, 20/03/2003, Mexico DF. The capitalist style of social organization and the way that reproduction processes have been acquired, as well as the impossibility of finding energy alternatives capable of efficiently substituting oil on the scale of the planet that now reaches productive systems, elevates the importance of the Middle East as a strategic point in the hegemonic world dispute and as a support for the process of capitalist domination in a greater sense.

Iraq, with its' 15 billion tons of oil (112,5 million barrels) constitutes the second largest reserves in the world (after Saudi Arabia) and is geographically speaking the very center of the region that contains 65% of the reserves on the planet.

Because of this, and because of possible ports on the Caspian Sea, the United States has enough reason to occupy the country and from there reinforce its' control over the region.

The war against Iraq has caused many deaths. Some occurred in 1991 when the United States achieved total control of Kuwait; and more as a product of the embargo against Iraq that has left the Iraqi population without indispensable medicine, among other things. In other words, open war combines, in all scenarios, a semi-occult war that aims to undermine the moral of a population, and wipe out all of their autonomy. Twelve years after the first embargo, Iraq still hasn't fallen, and so this is why it has been deemed necessary to strike with war once again.

In reality, Iraq is at an essential stage in the territorial occupation strategy and the appropriation of resources in the Middle East, but this occupation is not an isolated initiative. This strategy has come about from little by little by a game of taking positions and can only be completed by occupying Iraq and Iran territory and the fall of Palestine.

Some of the most relevant moves or pieces of this game can be clearly identified in:

1. The Gulf War and the corresponding occupation of Kuwait in 1991 that allowed for the installation of military bases along the Eastern region of the Caspian Sea;
2. The anti-Muslim campaign initiated after September 11th;
3. The war against Afghanistan assured military occupation on the western side of the oil area, the establishment of agreements and military bases in some of the new ex - Soviet states, a closer relationship with China and a privileged position en the cultural vertices of Central Asia, where there are also rich deposits of gas, uranium, gold and other minerals essential to the process of international reproduction and competence;
4. The war against Palestine and particularly the genocide headed by Sharon with total compliance of the United States.

Since 1998, official documents of the United States Department of Defense have indicated their concern regarding the lack of position in Central Asia and the great difficulty in controlling relations between the recently constituted independent republics of the former Soviet Union, Arabic countries, and China. Bin Laden gave them the opportunity to enter with eight military bases exactly in this area - one on the border with China - interrupting contact between them and establishing control on the exit of valuable resources.

If we only consider the movements of the Gulf War it is sufficient to understand this regional project of great measure that has been active for more than a decade. The presidential styles change but the pieces fit together smoothly in this hegemonic jigsaw puzzle that does not only include the Middle East, but the entire world.

Right now the jigsaw puzzle aims to guarantee power in almost the entire oil area from the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf, but in a way that also encompasses China. On the other hand, it is not understood why the two countries with the most oil deposits in the area and who have access to the Caspian Sea (and from there to American industries) are linked to Korea, which has no oil, and is far from the Persian Gulf, but is in a position that from the other side it borders China. Iran, evidentially, would be the next step in the offensive. The justification has been the suspicion that Iraq is transferring weapons through its neighbor.

The United States does not seem to want to wait for China or the European Union to gain presence in the region - a question that France and Germany seem to have very clear - and, responding to the criteria of prevention that seems to be contaminating all of its politics, they prefer to sacrifice legitimacy in the short term, launching themselves into unilateral action that almost the entire world disagrees with, in order to assure a "highly potent" position "unique and undisputed", as they themselves define.

War in Iraq, imposition in Palestine, occupation in Afghanistan and strengthening Plan Colombia and the control of all of the tropical area of Latin America where the majority of strategic resources are found on the American Continent, including of course oil, which will allow the United States to maintain the attack on Iraq.

These are the main scenarios in the new adventure of "civilization" in order to wipe out all other civilizations different from the American way of life.

Plan Colombia and Plan Puebla Panama, as well as the Free Trade Area of the Americas, are other important pieces of the game of reterritorialization of United States hegemonic power. After the Middle East, the biggest concentrations of oil are found in America and there is no doubt that the control of these two regions will convert the United States into the biggest power known.

The game of power is a dangerous one. The struggle for hegemony, internally, is a struggle for civilization. While more power, richness and capacity is concentrated within the main power, a liberal system declines, incapable of proportioning life. A

population damned by the system abandons the "universal" values proposed by capitalism.

To occupy Iraq means to openly face the Muslim world, which has during history resisted occupation. The Middle East has historically been a western cultural dyke. Today could begin the end not of the hegemony of the United States, but of capital hegemony, of unique thinking and of universal civilization. Persians, Kurds, Chinese, Arabs, the indigenous of America, and many others of the West have risen up to say "no more".

Source: *RESISTANCE OILWATCH NETWORK BULLETIN Number 37 – April 2003*

3. POSTWAR PROFITS. HOW A HANDFUL OF CONSTRUCTION FIRMS GOT AN EARLY INVITATION TO REBUILD IRAQ

By Sheryl Fred

March 12, 2003. A select group of U.S. construction firms now bidding on a lucrative government contract to rebuild a post-war Iraq contributed a combined \$2.8 million-68 percent to Republicans-over the past two election cycles.

The U.S. Agency for International Development asked Bechtel Group Inc., Fluor Corp., Halliburton Co. subsidiary Kellogg, Brown & Root, Louis Berger Group Inc., and Parsons Corp. to submit bids last week for the \$900-million contract. This initial estimate for repairing and building water systems, roads, bridges, schools and hospitals in the country is just the first step in what the Wall Street Journal called "the largest government reconstruction effort since Americans helped to rebuild Germany and Japan after World War II." The firms that land the contract are also likely to make the short list for future projects in Iraq, which include plans to develop the country's oil industry.

Bechtel, the engineering giant that employed the likes of former Defence Secretary Caspar Weinberger, former Secretary of State George Schultz and former CIA Director William Casey before they took their government posts, gave \$1.3 million in individual, PAC and soft money contributions between 1999 and 2002. As it prepares its bid for the post-war project, Bechtel is facing allegations that it contributed to Iraq's military build-up nearly two decades ago. The San Francisco Chronicle has reported that a German journalist uncovered a document prepared for the United Nations by Iraq that says Bechtel was among 24 U.S. companies that supplied the country with weapons during the '80s.

Kellogg, Brown & Root and parent company Halliburton-which was headed by Vice President Dick Cheney until 2000-was the second-largest donor of the group, with

more than \$709,000 in contributions. Halliburton also gave more to Bush's presidential campaign-\$17,677-than any of the other bidders combined.

Fluor, which gave more than \$483,000 in individual, PAC and soft money contributions in the previous two election cycles, also has ties to the Defence Department. Kenneth Oscar, the company's vice president of strategy and government services, recently served as the acting assistant secretary of the Army, where he directed its \$35 billion-a-year procurement budget.

Representatives from Bechtel and Halliburton told reporters this week that they were asked to submit a bid because they've done similar work with USAID in the past. Both companies participated in the rebuilding of Kuwait, particularly its oil fields, after the Gulf War.

Source: RESISTANCE OILWATCH NETWORK BULLETIN Number 37 – April 2003

4. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF THE WAR

- More than 168 million gallons of oil have spilt into the Persian Gulf.
- 200 miles of Saudi Arabian coast have been DEPLETED by oil, destroying mangroves all along the coast and killing thousands of birds and aquatic wildlife.
- Massive uncontrolled fires from some 600 oil wells have emitted five hundred million tons of carbon dioxide into the air; this air contamination has reached India.
- The movement of heavy equipment has caused devastation of desert ecosystems.
- Formation of giant lakes of oil.

Other statistics regarding the impact of war:

A US-led attack on Iraq could kill between 48,000 and 260,000 civilians and combatants in just the first three months of conflict, according to a study by medical and public health experts.

Post-war health effects could take an additional 200,000 lives. (International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War PPNW) <http://www.ippnw.org/CollateralDamage.html> The impacts of the Gulf War of 1991 on the health of United States troops were enormous, with 160,000 of the 573,000 participants in the Gulf War diagnosed with medical problems related to the war, many of these due to exposure to chemical toxins, uranium waste, biological agents, or nerve gas. This constitutes 28% of the total, much worse than American

troops were exposed to in the Second World War (6,6%), the Korean war (5%) and the American war against Vietnam (9.6%). (Washington Post, December 30, 2002). The Pentagon has denied for years that there was a Gulf War Syndrome that affected soldiers, but new statistics reveal the magnitude of impact on health.

Since 1945, 84% of people who have died in the war have been civilians (Grossrieder, 2002. Human costs of war. Conference at the University of Lancaster, July 13. www.preparingforpeace.org) According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Issues, 80% of displaced persons are women and children (Grossreider, 2002).

Perhaps the most significant environmental concern with respect to military technology is the projectiles of uranium waste. According to a report from the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) on Kuwait, 50 tons of uranium waste inhaled could cause 500.000 additional deaths from cancer in several decades, according to risk factors established by the International Committee for Radiology Protection (Fisk, 1998).

Summarized from the ELECTRONIC BULLETIN ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITY. AmbienteNews Special Edition. February 20, 2003. More information: amigosdelatierra@argentina.com

Source: RESISTANCE OILWATCH NETWORK BULLETIN Number 37 – April 2003

5. DEPLETED URANIUM / SILVER BULLETS

By Cristina Hernández-Espinoza. Tierramérica

The hundreds of tanks that are paving the way into Iraq in the biggest war adventure by the United States since Vietnam that initiated Thursday, carry deadly metal that has sounded the alarm for environmentalists around the world: DEPLETED uranium. During the Golf War in 1991, the United States introduced this metal as the champion of ammunitions. Known has the "silver bullet", because of its high density and low cost, it permits tanks to fire from far away with impotent power for penetration, while maintaining a safe distance from enemy fire.

But while having formidable capacity for combat purposes, it is also responsible for terrible environmental effects. The Iraqis blame this metal for the infertility of their soils and the increase in indices of cancer, child leukemia, abortions and malformations among the population, while American war veterans consider it to be the cause of the Gulf Syndrome, a mysterious series of chronic sicknesses.

According to the Pentagon (Department of Defense of the United States), United States forces in Desert Storm used 320 tons of munitions from their A-10 planes, 50 tons from M1-Abrams tanks and eleven tons from AV-8 tanks and planes, the same type of military equipment now present in Iraq, but with much more firing power.

The Pentagon recognizes that DEPLETED Uranium was key during the prolonged land battle against Iraqi forces and ended with victory with the coalition of 33 nations on February 27, 1991.

This could happen again, 12 years afterwards. "The principal characteristic of DEPLETED uranium is its extreme density, much higher than iron, which is key for penetration of enemy targets", explained Tierramerica Richard Muller, professor of the Physics Department at the University of Berkeley, California.

On impact, this metal doesn't just explode such as in the case of tungsten (also used in projectiles), but also explodes after passing its target and therefore increases its destructive power.

In its natural state, uranium is a radioactive element, chemically toxic and abundant in the environment. It is in water, soil, air and food.

"DEPLETED" or used uranium is a sub-product of the process by which the meal passes in order to produce fuel for nuclear reactors and components of atomic weapons.

It is considered to be 40% less radioactive than natural uranium, but with similar chemical toxicity.

"The risk is exposure to the chemical toxicity, no to the radiation", stated Tierramerica Steve Fetter, professor at the University of Maryland and expert in nuclear weapons and radiology.

When the metal burns, after penetrating its target object, it produces uranium oxides, which are not soluble in water or in bodily fluids, indicated Fetter. These can remain in the air in high concentrations and be inhaled by people at the site of the attack. They also remain in the soil and contaminate by way of ingestion (children playing with dirt or sand, for example).

DEPLETED uranium was used in the Balkans in the last decade. A report from the European Parliament estimates that around three tons of DEPLETED uranium was fired in Bosnia and 10 tons in Kosovo in air-land attacks.

The United Nations Environment Program investigated the presence of uranium in Kosovo in 2000, in Serbia in 2001 and in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 2002.

The first two missions "identified DEPLETED uranium and the presence of metal in

bioindicators, such as lichen, and in the air, but in levels so low that we could not identify any significant risk for the population," said Tierramérica Pekka Haavisto, director of the Evaluation Program of DEPLETED Uranium of the United Nations Environment Program.

The results of the Bosnia-Herzegovina mission will be available in a few days. However, Haavisto alerted that "there is still a lot of scientific uncertainty around the possible contamination of water sources".

Not all of the left over metal has been removed, as he explained, a lot still remains several meters below the soil, and because of this there is risk of contamination of water tables and superficial water.

The United Nations Environment Program took preventative measures and intensified the clean up of the areas affected by the war.

a) "I WAS NOT WARNED"

Investigations of DEPLETED uranium in the Gulf have been few. The International Agency for Atomic Energy studied the area in 2002, but has not disclosed the results of the mission.

Meanwhile, non-governmental organizations intensified global campaigns to denounce the effects on the Iraqi population, and in the United States the number of complaints from Gulf veterans.

"I wasn't warned about DEPLETED uranium, nor of its potential risks", said Tierramérica Doug Rokke, a doctor, who is a victim of the Gulf Syndrome, expressed by damage to renal and respiratory systems, as well as problems with vision.

Rokke, member of the Preventative Medicine of the United States Army, was sent to the Persian Gulf in 1991 with one mission: that the troops come back alive. He had the task of preparing soldiers for possible nuclear, biological and chemical attacks. However, his own health was compromised.

Being director of the Pentagon's DEPLETED Uranium Project between 1994 and 1995, Rokke directed the cleaning of contaminated vehicles. He assures that authorities had knowledge of the possible health effects, but only used surgery masks and gloves as protection.

The Pentagon has systematically denied accusations, and specialized organisms, such as the World Health Organization (WHO) assure that they have not encountered proof of significant health effects.

The Pentagon recognizes that during the Gulf War, DEPLETED uranium could have entered into the bodies of soldiers that were exposed and inhaled oxides, dust or if they had wounds caused by bits of metal.

However, a report from the Institute of Medicine from the National Academy of Science of the United States, concluded that there exists only limited evidence regarding the association between exposure to uranium and kidney dysfunctions or lung cancer.

There is still insufficient available information. According to Fetter from the University of Maryland, "it wasn't until 1994-5 that the veterans underwent medical examination.

After taking urine samples 24 hours after exposure, these debates will be resolved ". The Pentagon concluded that DEPLETED uranium has not caused health effects in Gulf veterans but those who were inflicted with fragments difficult to extract because of size of risk, should remain under observation.

According to Fetter, of the more than 100 who have suffered direct exposition, only 50% are still alive.

Twelve years later, United States soldiers as well as Iraqi soldiers and civilians have reason to fear the effects of these formidable "silver bullets".

b) WHAT IS DEPLETED URANIUM

DEPLETED uranium is a residue obtained by the production of fuel destined for nuclear reactors and atomic bombs. The material used in civil industry and nuclear military industry is uranium U-235, which is the isotope that can be fissured.

As this isotope is found in very low proportions in the environment, mineral uranium must be enriched, in other words, industrially increase its proportion of isotope U-235. This process produces enormous quantities of radioactive waste, DEPLETED uranium, which is composed principally of another isotope of non-fissurable uranium, U-238 and a smaller proportion of U-235.

Since 1977 the United States military industry has used DEPLETED uranium to revamp conventional ammunition (artillery, tanks and planes), to protect their own tanks and as a counterweight in planes and Tomahawk missiles, and as a component in navigation apparatus. DEPLETED uranium possess certain characteristics that makes it very attractive for military technology: in the first place, it is extremely dense and heavy (1 cm³, weighs almost 19 grams), so that projectiles with heads of DEPLETED uranium can perforate the steel used in military vehicles and buildings; in second place, it is a material that explodes when it hits its target.

After almost 50 years of production of atomic weapons and nuclear energy, the United States has almost 500.000 tons of DEPLETED uranium stored, according to official sources. It is also radioactive and has a half-life of around 4,5 billion years. Because of this, it needs to be carefully stored for an indefinite period of time, an extremely expensive procedure. To save money and clear deposits, the Department of Defense and Energy grant free DEPLETED uranium to radioactive weapon companies that could have already affected 250.000 Iraqis.

Source: RESISTANCE OILWATCH NETWORK BULLETIN Number 37 – April 2003

6. SURVIVING IN IRAQ

By Barbara Nimri Aziz

WHO among us can possibly imagine what being an Iraqi, living anywhere in that doomed nation, must feel like? Should each resident of Basra, Baghdad, and Mosel build a bomb shelter? Should you abandon your home in the city and flee to a village where your cousins live? Should you get out garden tools and be prepared to fight in the street? And if so, against what and whom?

Perhaps you could head for the border to a neighbouring land. But which one - Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey, or Jordan? Will any of them let you in? And how will you reach the border? Should everyone in the family flee together? What about your 82-year-old father? What about your sister in the hospital? Do you abandon them? Your son is in the army; you'll have no choice but to leave him behind. On the other hand, if you decide to stand firm and defend yourself, who will be your enemy? The neighbours whose religion is classed as Shi'a, or other neighbours who are Kurds? Will you fight the local police, or an invading army, or the Iraqi army in which your own sons stand?

In the West, with imperial power so energetically consolidating its grip over the entire world, legislators, academics, media specialists and military leaders publicly discuss their strategies as if there is a real debate going on.

Most US citizens, as poorly informed as they are, eagerly embrace the call for a war against Iraq. Meanwhile, what are the Iraqis debating? The defiance we hear from the country's leadership is a totally reasonable response, as is Iraq's attempt to reach some compromise with the UN over the call for weapons inspections to resume. Iraqi military strategists are doubtless reviewing how they might defend their nation. But surely the majority of Iraqis, the civilians, face the most difficulty and the greatest danger.

No choice The enemy, Washington, says there must be a regime change. But the Iraqi public cannot possibly revolt. Outsiders say it's up to officers within the military

to spark a rebellion. But even if they do, what choices would the Iraqi public have? Bloody purges would invariably follow a coup, and the authoritarian military style of new leadership may well continue under US oversight.

Then again, if Sadaam Hussein is removed, would all Baathists have to go? Many more ordinary Iraqis have joined the Ba'ath Party in recent years, not for ideological reasons, but as a tactic - to escape the crush of sanctions. Party membership has become a form of insurance against hunger, a way to keep the secret police at bay, secure a job in a ministry, or extract bribes.

Once an exclusive elite, Ba'ath Party members now number many hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, although power still lies in the hands of a few. In a war, what side will they be on, and does it matter? During the past 12 years, as many as five million Iraqis (one in every four) have fled their country. Most of them are trained middle-class professionals who expected to secure employment; their educational skills are prized in Europe, Australia, and the US. Many others want to follow; among them the thousands of young Iraqis still entering college. Despite their despair and hardships, these students work hard to win good marks, hoping Iraq's reputed high educational standard (although declining) will increase their chances of getting a visa to another country. But perhaps an equal number of young people attend college because they still believe in their country, and are determined to stay and rebuild it.

For many US citizens, it isn't easy to comprehend how any Iraqi can possibly want to remain in a place that is so devastated, led by a person who seems so brutal and autocratic. Yet, abandoning one's country, whatever the hardships, is not an option for most people. If you endured overwhelming difficulties, managing to restore your dignity, take care of your family, and keep your country from total collapse and chaos, would you want to leave?

Some meaning to life Many millions, perhaps more than 25% of the population, have rallied. They have managed to give their life some meaning despite the pressures from inside, plus the deprivations and isolation.

One is Mohammed Mehdi, a psychiatrist at the Ibn Rushd government psychiatric hospital. The number of patients there increased 10-fold after the war, a time when the hospital lacked medicines to treat them and the facilities were deteriorating.

Mehdi's patients come from all classes; some are civil servants, others are farmers who arrive from villages near Baghdad. Few are admitted as inpatients because space is insufficient. Mehdi was able to restore the garden in the courtyard of the 70-bed hospital 'just to help our patients find some calm'.

The increased demands on the hospital are almost all a direct result of the 1991 war and 12 years of sanctions. Fortunately, extended families, although not as stable as before, are still strong enough to help mentally ill members, he points out.

Only with the comfort available from loved ones have 'many of my patients survived these hard, hard times.'

Dr Huda Ammash is another Iraqi dedicated to staying and helping her people. A university professor and researcher, she is handicapped by the lack of books, but carries on nonetheless.

'We cannot plan,' she says. 'No one can plan beyond the next day. It is hard for my students to imagine a career and move toward a goal. We proceed from day to day, just as I do with my own children.' A biochemist whose research quantifies the toxicity in the environment resulting from the last war, Ammash has published the results of her work, but can no longer place her articles in US or British medical and scientific journals because communications have been banned by the embargo.

Lena Khalaf also will not leave her country. She lost her job during the war. Since then, although certain she could easily secure employment abroad, she has been unable to find work at one of the UN offices in Iraq. Her older sister left for Libya several years ago and works there, sending cash home to help Lena take care of their elderly parents, both over 80, and their brother and his family. Their brother, a physician, is so emotionally depressed that he's unable to function.

Managing to survive Kerbala General Hospital, located south of Baghdad, has lost many staff over the years. But those who remain say they are there for the long haul. At one point, despite rising needs, the hospital had to halt surgical procedures altogether. It closed down two floors of patients' wards because conditions were so bad and they had no medicine.

Since 1997, they have begun to rebuild with their own resources and some equipment supplied through the food-for-oil programme. After years of decline, the remaining medical staff formed a committee and, collecting donations from pilgrims to al-Hussieni Mosque in Kerbala City, managed to reverse the slide. Last year they opened a new dialysis wing, as well as a cardiac ward.

Consumed with daily problems - illnesses, breakdowns, depression, and fear - most Iraqis will tell you they can't even think for a moment, if they dared, of joining any effort to change their government or protest Baathist policies.

Whatever their opinions of their current leadership, Iraqis have grown disdainful of the Western democracies and the US in particular, because of the sanctions they have imposed and the suffering they have caused.

At this point, they can't imagine a war resulting in anything other than further deaths and more hardships. Thus, in whatever way they have managed to survive and rebuild a school, a shop, or a garden, they feel they have succeeded in defying the US-led agenda to destroy them and their civilisation.

Barbara Nimri Aziz is a frequent commentator on Arab issues, and author of *Heir to a Silent Song: Two Rebel Women of Nepal*, available from Barnes and Noble.com. She is a regular contributor to *Toward Freedom*, from which the above article is reproduced (Vol. 51, No. 1, Fall 2002)

Source: *RESISTANCE OILWATCH NETWORK BULLETIN Number 37 – April 2003*

7. COMUNIQUE FROM BAGDAD FROM BRIGADES AGAINST THE WAR TO THE MANIFESTATIONS SATURDAY MARCH 22

Friends:

From Baghdad: we maintain the theme of the mobilizations from the past months: "STOP THE WAR AGAINST IRAQ".

Two days ago, along with 5 million men and women, children, youth and the elderly, we lived through the first attack perpetrated by what is considered the new Fascist Regime of this first war of the XXI century, comprised of the governments of the United States, Britain and Spain. This is a Fascist Regime because it is attacking open cities, which are densely populated, with little defense capacity.

And it is a new Fascist Regime because it is attacking this country against the will of the world's citizens, violating all laws and all rights, falling back on the ways of a colonial era, and converting democracy, which is supposed to represent human beings, into a farce.

We know that Basora is being heavily bombed, and here, in Baghdad, we have been able to put names and faces to the victims of the first attacks launched on Thursday on the capital: a young girl, only 14 years old, both legs and abdomen hurt, while she had breakfast in her house on Thursday morning. Her sister and niece of 14 months were also hurt in the same house, while the first was breastfeeding her daughter.

Five brothers - - two adults, one adolescent, and two boys - all hugging each other while they watched the missiles fall over their city on Thursday evening. 36 victims in one hospital: all of them citizens; not one single one of them was even close to a military or government center.

You cannot imagine the impact these cruise missiles have on this large open city. It is difficult to describe the sinister sound of the planes when they fly above our heads launching their bombs. This aggressive army is determined that the people of Baghdad suffer from hunger and sickness, on top of the effects of the 12-year embargo.

Their brutality can only be compared to their own cowardness. Relying only on their military technology, without reason, without dignity, without honor, they try to wipe out a country that was the birthplace of our civilization, with beautiful and admirable people. Every morning, after each attack, people go out into the street and keep smiling, thankful for our presence, raising their fists or giving the victory sign, kind and confident in spite of everything.

These people cannot stop the war without help: the unequal balance of forces is unimaginable. They can only resist the rain of steel and fire that falls on their heads each night. Please, with all of our means, and without rest, we must help the Iraqi people to win this war by stopping it and the fascist governments that are leading it - including the Spanish government - who are going against moral, rights, solidarity and fraternity among people.

Warm regards from Baghdad, Iraq against the War Brigades Baghdad, March 21, 2003

Source: *RESISTANCE OILWATCH NETWORK BULLETIN Number 37 – April 2003*