



Foreign &
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From The Minister of State

Dear Caroline

Thank you for your letter of 10 November to the Foreign Secretary, about the UK's policy on Depleted Uranium (DU) Munitions. I am replying as Minister responsible for security policy issues.

Our position on the United Nations resolution on DU this year is the same as it was on last year's resolution. The scientific literature contains a substantial number of reports which indicate that DU has not been shown to have, and indeed is very unlikely to have, any significant impact on the local population or on the veterans of conflicts in which these munitions are used. This includes work done by the United Nations Environment Programme and other independent expert groups. The key finding is that none of these studies have found widespread DU contamination sufficient to impact the health of the general population or deployed military personnel. The UK Government therefore opposed the resolution when the vote took place on 31 October.

Last year's resolution tasked the UN Secretary-General with submitting a report to this year's session of the General Assembly. The UN Report, "Effects of the use of armaments and ammunitions containing Depleted Uranium" of 24 July suggests there is only limited concern about DU among the international community. This is confirmed in the contributions from the governments of Canada, Finland, Germany and Spain and in contributions from the International Atomic Energy Agency and the World Health Organisation that conclude that there is no definitive evidence that DU munitions have had a significant impact on the local population or veterans of conflicts in which these munitions have been used.

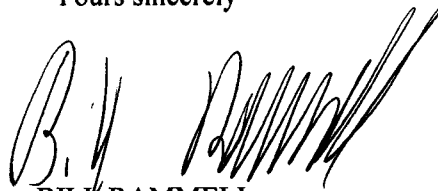
The adequacy and validity of the scientific work already carried out is demonstrated by the findings of the biological and health monitoring of UK and other veterans of conflicts in which DU munitions have been used. With the exception of a very small number of personnel in or on vehicles at the time they were attacked by DU munitions, none of the almost 1000 UK personnel monitored has been found to have any DU in their urine. Neither has any evidence of ill-health due to DU exposure been found in the 3,400 Gulf veterans who



have attended the MoD's Medical Assessment Programme. Similar findings have been reported by other countries which have carried out this type of monitoring.

We believe that DU is a legitimate weapon and the use of it is not prohibited under any international agreements, including the Geneva Conventions. UK armed forces only use DU munitions in strict accordance with International Humanitarian Law.

Yours sincerely



BILL RAMMELL