

Washington DC-WILPF Branch August Update Depleted Uranium Project 2012

For Coralie Farlee and members WILPF DC Branch
Members of DISARM/Stop the Wars Committee

From Isabel Macdonald, WILPF DC Branch

Latest developments in outreach towards challenging the United State's Government's position on Depleted Uranium (DU) leading to the UN General Assembly Fourth Resolution on uranium weapons.

The project invited U.S WILPF Branches to support two efforts:

1. Promote viewings of the documentary URANIO 238 in their branches and reading materials related to international campaign, encouraging follow up with a larger viewing to spread information.
2. Join a letter writing campaign involving outreach to the U.S. Congress, Department of State, U.S. UN Representatives, among others.

Most active involvement/feedback from branches to this date has been from Monterey-Calif., Cleveland- OHIO, Phila/Delco, Ashland, OR and Madison, WI. Other Branches are beginning outreach with online petition letter at this moment, others will be screening documentary this Fall.

As a complement to initial outreach to Branches, DC Branch submitted 2 articles for WILPF Enews (report from meeting in Manchester, England of meeting of Steering Committee of the International Coalition to Ban Uranium Weapons (ICBUW), report informing of participation in Miami, August 27th Annual Convention of Veterans for Peace.

For the Miami Convention (August 8-12) a full page add with a call from WILPF and ICBUW to support campaigning in the build up to the vote was included in the Conventions 73 page booklet (see flyer attached). During three days, WILPF and ICBUW had a table with information sent by National WILPF to pass out and display (brochures and Peace and Freedom magazine) along with photographs, scientific and campaigning materials produced by ICBUW. A cloth banner with WILPF and ICBUW logo was on display at table.

The screening of URANIO 238 on Friday the 10th went well with approximately 35 people in attendance, including the president of Veterans for Peace, Leah Bolger, who in a follow up email expressed the following *"I thank you again for making the time to come and be*

*a part of our event. Absolutely, VFP wants to work with ICBUW and WILPF to try to end the use of uranium weapons. I have cc'd Mike Felker who is the chair of our DU working group, and Gerry Condon who is the coordinator for all of the VFP working groups. I would like to ask our working group to connect with the folks at ICBUW and WILPF to develop action alerts for VFP as well as anything else we can do to bring an end to the use of uranium weapons. Gerry can coordinate with the office to help make sure that whatever you all come up with is sent out to our membership. **Isabel, can you add VFP now as a partner with ICBUW and WILPF?**"*

This positive response coincided with our launching of an online petition directed to Hillary Clinton with copies to Ambassador Susan Rice and President B. Obama, which to this date has received 1,071 signatures from people the world over. Please open link and sign it if you have not had the chance to do so yet:

<http://www.change.org/petitions/change-the-us-un-vote-on-depleted-uranium-weapons-this-fall>

This link has also been included on the following websites:

- a. **the Quaker Friends Peace Center, Costa Rica** <http://www.amigosparalapaz.org>
- b. **WILPF Costa Rica** <http://www.limpalcr.org>. I have translated the petition into Spanish – soon to be uploaded onto the above mentioned sites, and through Adilia Caravaca we will contact WILPF Spain for petition to be distributed in Spain shortly. (Spain is one of the “abstainers” on this issue at the UN and needs to be pressured by human rights advocates).
- c. Laura Roskos, President U.S WILPF, has posted petition on **WILPF Facebook page** and sent out the following message to Branches: *“The issue is a simple one on which we can all agree: the US should support UN resolutions banning the use of weapons containing depleted uranium. But, the petition will only gain momentum if you sign it and push it out to your friends using email and social media. If this link doesn't work for you, the petition has been posted to WILPF U.S.'s facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Womens-International-League-for-Peace-and-Freedom-US-Section/96028865628>”*
- d. **Veterans for Peace** posting is pending on their main page; currently have posted petition on their DU section <http://www.vets4peacephila.org/du.html>.
- e. Adilia Caravaca, WILPF International President has made **contacts with Geneva office** to get petition out from Europe...”*I am copying Nina, the communication officer, based in Geneva, so that she can find the way to put this in the official facebook page and the next Newsletter”*.

- f. Responses are pending from Friends of the Earth International, the Friends Committee on National Legislation and upcoming contacts with Physicians for Social Responsibility. Any ideas on any other websites or Facebook pages we can access through friends and contacts are most welcome.
- g. A contact made with a Veteran in Miami, led to connecting with Kimberley Schisler, mother of Aaron Barnes who died last year, who included the petition in a very moving write up that came out in the Journal **Star State of Illinois** on August 25th, Page A04 under the title “**Depleted uranium is this generation’s Agent Orange**” and begins with these words “*Friday, Aug. 24, marked one year since my son’s death. Aaron Barnes died from a rare cancer caused by exposure to depleted uranium (DU) during his 26 months in Iraq. Four others in his platoon — that we know of — also have died, three from rare cancers and one from ALS*”. (See full article at bottom of this report).

As part of this work, we are in the process of defining this coming week our strategy vis a vis the U.S Congress. In the past months we have approached the offices of Rep. Jose Serrano (D-NY), Jim McDermott (D-WA) and in coordination with VFPeace and people involved in this issue such as Kim Schisler (please read her article below) we hope to gather support for a Dear Colleague Letter before the U.N vote and U.S Presidential elections. We will keep you posted.

We will be presenting shortly a proposal to the National Office regarding remaining funds to be used before October, coinciding with our strategy with petition and presentation of signatures in New York.

Thank you,
Isabel Macdonald

Examples of feedback from several Branches:

Monterey, CA

Judy Karas judithkaras21@gmail.com - Co Chair Monterey Co Branch (cc.MacGregor, Hebard)

Informed of Aug. 4th—event at Pacific Grove, CA with table and materials (aprox. 200 people attended). Asked for an attachment with a postcard or action sheet for people to sign. Screened URANIO-238 doc. at July WILPF meeting. Thanked us for sending brochures and emailing the letter. Used part of information sent in talk at their

Hiroshima-Nagasaki Remembrance Day Memorial, as well as copies of the letter for people to sign or take copies of home, to use in composing their own letters.

Willing to write letters to State Department, UN rep, etc. and continue to get more signatures on petitions and raise awareness about this issue. Sent in signatures on International Petition for me to forward to ICBUW.

Cleveland, OH

Jean Kosmac kosmac.jean@gmail.com -

Our group has watched URANIO-238 and is planning on gathering signatures to the petition. Is there a timeline for submitting the petitions?

Phila/Delco Branch

Hello from Phila/Delco Branch! We are very interested in following up with you and other WILPF Branches in this endeavor. Will be discussing this at our next meeting in Aug. The U.S. must get on board in support. Can always send letters and make calls where needed. Want to be in the loop to help! Dory Loder and Judy Elson, Co-Chairs (outgoing), Fran Folkrod and Tina Shelton (incoming in Sept.)

Ashland OR

Jill Mackie jmackie@mind.net

We thank you and Washington DC Branch for your leadership in banning use of DU. We showed URANIO- 238 at our June monthly meeting, have passed it on to another local group to view and are in planning stages for our annual Hiroshima/Nagasaki Vigil in early August.

The past 2 years we have included information about DU and ICBUW on a public display we created that stands round the clock for 3 days in our downtown plaza during the vigil. We have talked with many local residents and visitors, and collected petition signatures both years. Have you finalized the plans to coordinate a letter-writing campaign you mentioned in your letter? We would like to join in and take advantage of the Aug 6-9 timeframe that we have. Also, if you have other materials you are preparing, please let us know so we can integrate them into our plans.

Madison, WI

A group of women from our branch watched the video together several weeks ago. Since then it has been traveling around to individuals to watch. We are looking for a larger venue to show it. Nancy Graham is thinking about putting together a film series. Your upcoming showing in Miami sounds very exciting. Look forward to hearing from you soon. Susan Freiss

ARTICLE in Journal Star State 08/25/2012, Page A04 (mentioned above)

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Depleted uranium is this generation's Agent Orange

Friday, Aug. 24, marked one year since my son's death. Aaron Barnes died from a rare cancer caused by exposure to depleted uranium (DU) during his 26 months in Iraq. Four others in his platoon — that we know of — also have died, three from rare cancers and one from ALS.

When Aaron first became ill, he went to the Iowa City VA Hospital. He repeatedly told the doctors he thought he was sick from toxic exposure. They said he had a cyst on his kidney, not to worry about it, and sent him home. His health continued to decline. He finally went to a doctor who removed his kidney, but diagnosed the wrong type of cancer. Five months later, he was dead.

After his death, I was told that the Illinois American Legion commander was giving a speech on DU. He used Aaron as an example. I contacted him and was told that he was informed by the Iowa City VA that a veteran had been treated for DU and subsequently died. The Illinois American Legion has passed a resolution recognizing DU. It passed the Illinois Convention and will go to the National Convention soon. It will then be presented to Congress.

Since Aaron's death, I have made it my mission to make the public, especially veterans of the Balkan and Gulf wars, aware of DU and its dangers. I have written countless letters to our elected officials and gotten nowhere. The House Armed Services Committee has had a bill in sub-committee for almost two years. It calls for mandatory testing of returning veterans and follow-up. My congressman, Bobby Schilling, is on that committee and I have contacted him many times. All I received was a bunch of excuses.

The Senate is not addressing the matter. When I asked why not, I was told there was not enough proof that DU is carcinogenic. This is not true. It has been known since 1991 that DU causes cancer, and it's been known for a very long time that radiation kills.

Depleted uranium is this generation's Agent Orange. However, today's new veterans are showing symptoms and dying sooner than the victims of Agent Orange. There were WMDs in Iraq and the United States put them there. To paraphrase Vietnam-era musician Country Joe McDonald, "They killed him in Iraq and he didn't even know it."

There are only four countries that refuse to sign the United Nations ban on depleted uranium weapons. They are the United States, the United Kingdom, France and Israel. Please sign the petition at <http://www.bandepleteduranium.org/en/us-campaigners-need-your-help-to-lobby-clinton-ah>

KIMBERLEY J. SCHISLER is Aaron Barnes' mother. She lives in Canton.