

# Depleted Uranium Update

## Lawmakers Consider DU Tests for Vets

State legislatures in Connecticut and Louisiana are considering bills requiring testing of state National Guard troops who believe they've been contaminated with "depleted" uranium (DU).

Internal exposure to DU's toxic, radioactive uranium-238 may be the cause of the documented increase in birth defects among children of recent U.S. vets, as well as a major factor in the combination of undiagnosed illnesses plaguing thousands of veterans returning from wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo and Bosnia, known collectively as Gulf War syndrome.

The Louisiana bill, No. 570, would require National Guard and Reserve vets returning from Iraq to be tested for DU contamination. But the bill's wording doesn't spell out who would provide or pay for the tests. The bill's supporters say the legislation would allow the Governor to request DU testing as part of the state National Guard's yearly funding request to the Pentagon.

The far stronger Connecticut bill, No. 6008, requires the use of "a bioassay procedure involving sensitive methods capable of detecting DU at low levels and the use of equipment with the capacity to discriminate between different radioisotopes." The act also requires the preparation of a report on whether the troops are adequately trained in protecting against DU exposure.

The Louisiana bill has passed the House but needs Senate approval and the Governor's signature. The Connecticut bill was passed in committee and is headed to the House floor.

In Washington, DC, U.S. Rep. Maurice Hinchey, Democrat from New York's 22nd District, has promised to hold an informal House panel on DU in mid-June.

## Iraqi Doctors See Increased Numbers of Deformities in Newborns

The UN's news and information service IRIN reported April 27 that doctors in Baghdad are seeing a significant increase in deformities among newborn babies.

Dr. Nawar Ali, of the University of Baghdad, said that in the south of the county, especially around Basra and Najaf, there has been a 20 percent jump in birth abnormalities since 2002. The most frequently observed abnormalities include multiple fingers, unusually large heads, unilateral lips and missing limbs.

"In my experiments we have found some cases where the mother or father were suffering from pollution from weapons used in the south and we believe that it is affecting newborn babies in the county," said Dr. Ibraheem al-Jabouri, a scientist at Baghdad University.

According to Dr. Lamia'a Amrad, a pediatrician at the Iraqi Red Crescent Society hospital in the capital, 60 percent of the birth defects resulted from radiation and pollution.

The grim reality of life in occupied Iraq is made all the more painful by the fact that—according to Dr. Wathiq Ibrahim, director of the Central Teaching Hospital for Pediatrics—90 percent of newborns with birth abnormalities do not survive.

# Goodbye To Project ELF!

Anti-war campaigners from all over the region and as far away as Oak Ridge, Tenn., gathered May 7 to celebrate the end of a long and hard-fought struggle. Almost 150 activists -- who shared involvement in the ELF shut-down effort for over 35 years -- enjoyed good food and great music, thoughtful words and comic lightheartedness.

Kathy Kelly, a founder of Voices in the Wilderness and an organizer of the 450-mile Chicago-to-ELF walk in 1995, presented the keynote address. She reminded everyone that steadfastness is more important than victory and that nonviolence, practiced not only in confrontations with authority but in our day-to-day lives, is the very success we seek in the wider world.

Anathoth Community's family band Relative Minor came out of semi-retirement for the event, working up a set of old and new tunes that ranged from political parody to sweet home harmonizing. The band's members Barb Kass and Mike, Jim and Linda Miles were joined by Chris LaForge on his mandolin. Chris and Donna Howard were emcees for the event.

A high point was the 20-minute slide show of ELF action photos produced by Molly Mechtenberg with help from Anathoth Community intern Xong Xiong. Bonnie Urfer and John LaForge helped identify faces found in the 30-year archive of photos. Singer/songwriter Sara Thomsen and Rachel Kilgour,



**Relative Minor**, the family band from Anathoth Community Farm made up (L to R) of long-time ELF resisters Jim, Mike and Linda Miles and Barb Kass, performed at the Shutdown Celebration May 7.

both of Duluth, performed during the slide show. The photos and captions seemed to draw people into a trance: all those actions taken; miles walked; courtrooms entered; and sentences endured. Looking across so many years, it was easy to feel a load of relief and to cheer all the breakthroughs along the way.