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10:50-12:20

DU (depleted uranium) Weapons As the Nuclear Shadow: The Challenge
of ICBUW's International Campaign

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[Course Material]

an excerpt from Akira, Tashiro, *Discounted Casualties: The Human Cost of Depleted Uranium*, The Chugoku Shimbun, 2001 (田城明著『知られざるヒバクシャ劣化ウラン弾の実態』(大学教育出版、2002: 日本語・英語版原文は、中国新聞社ホームページにも掲載)

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4. Gulf War Veterans

"If I didn't have this pain in my joints and abdomen..." Basim Abd Al-Sada is receiving a transfusion in hopes of recovery. (Basra)

A destroyed beverage plant...houses turned to rubble...a bridge broken at the center...

After touring the scars of the bombing by the multinational forces during the Gulf War, I went back to Saddam Teaching Hospital in Basra. I was given permission to talk to some of the Gulf War veterans in the oncology ward "as long as you don't talk too long."

An unpredictable condition

"We have two here now, but both are in serious condition." We received a briefing from attending physician Wisam Nafie (32) as we took the elevator to the fifth floor. "We just lost another veteran to malignant lymphoma ten days ago."

In this room for four, Basim Abd Al-Sada (29) was lying in a bed by the window. Three years after the Gulf War, in 1994, he was diagnosed with chronic myeloid leukemia and has been in and out of the hospital ever since. As we talked, he was receiving a transfusion in his left arm.

"I was driving a truck for the army. Before the war, I was carrying cargo from Basra to Kuwait City twice a day. I was using the highway." Al-Sada spoke in Arabic to Wisam, who served as my interpreter. "It was right after the American bombing began (January 17, 1991). I was hit when I was in Kuwait. Two guys in the bed of my truck were killed. Another was injured very badly. I was blown out of the driver's seat but had no serious injury at all."

Inhaled with dust

Basin's abdomen was swollen enough to be obvious even through his black shirt. According to Wisam, his liver and spleen were both swollen and water was collecting in his abdomen.

"During the war, the dust and smoke from the oil fields was incredible. That's all these tanks and other huge things were moving around in the desert. Even without a sandstorm, sometimes you could hardly see where you were going. The toughest part was losing so many of my friends."

The road that Al-Sada drove was what the Americans called the Highway of Death. Tremendous numbers of Iraqi troops were killed along that road, and vast quantities of depleted uranium (DU) munitions were used there. Wisam believes that Sada breathed DU particles into his body along with the dust.

However, Al-Sada knows only that he has "anemia." He has never heard the word "depleted uranium" and knows nothing of its effects. Al-Sada, who left the military in 1994 because of illness, got married that year. He has a four year old son. "Before I got sick, I could work forever and never get tired. But afterwards, I've had joint pain and have not been able to work at all. I'm not worried because my father is taking care of us financially. I'm looking forward to getting well and going home."

Al-Sada smiles, his beautiful white teeth gleaming through a thin dark beard. He does not know that his diagnosis was changed during this visit from chronic to acute.

Patients Continually Increasing

"The veteran in the next bed is Malik Kadhim Zamil. He's 36 years of age. He was diagnosed with acute leukemia one week ago and is already bleeding from the gums. He is in dangerous condition." So saying, Wisam takes Malik's pulse.

As a truck driver drafted for the infantry, Malik was stationed in northern Saudi Arabia, close to Kuwait. "While we were retreating, we were continually being bombed and strafed. Lots of my friends all around me got killed." He spoke to the doctor with difficulty because of his bleeding.

During the war, he was never injured or sick. In 1992, after getting out of the military, he was a middleman selling tomatoes and vegetables to raise his six children. "Until a week ago, I was in perfect health. Then suddenly, this..."

Malik seemed unable to believe the sudden, intense change in his body.

"Gulf War veteran cancer patients have increased steadily during this past four or five years. Furthermore, the vast majority of the cancers we see are leukemia and lymphoma, which are known to be related to radiation." Wisam insists that the situation is impossible to explain without blaming it on DU.