

Study Confirms Depleted Uranium (DU) Munitions Usage

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Big Island, Hawaii A study and survey conducted by the Army at the Pohakuloa Training Area confirmed the use of depleted uranium (DU) munitions on the ranges. The DU usage was suspected to occur during the 1960s when Davy Crockett guns were reportedly fired on the ranges.

Although the study confirmed that DU was used on the ranges, air sampling tests conducted did not find any elevated levels of radiation in the area. This is not a surprise to scientists and engineers as DU itself only gives off low levels of radiation and unless the DU munitions themselves are handled and broken (i.e. causing tiny fragments to be dispersed into the air), the chances for a substantial release of radiation is minimal. Although still an environmental concern, a few DU rounds sitting undisturbed or buried on a range for over 45 years poses minimal hazard to the public or trespassers compared to the acute explosive safety risk caused by UXO on a range. DU is more of a hazard to UXO Technicians who handle or come into direct contact with the items during range clearance operations. This hazard is minimized or managed by the use of proper personnel protection equipment (e.g. gloves, long sleeve shirts).

This is not the only case of DU usage by DoD in Hawaii. As reported by UXOInfo.com last year, remnants of DU rounds were found by the Army during the range clearance and cleanup of Scholfield Barracks in O'ahu.