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It runs parallel with the ground offensive

In Gaza, Genocide by Depleted Uranium has begun

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January 3, 2009, the Israeli Army launched a ground offensive against Gaza - against Hamas and what the Israeli government calls its "jihad". The international media are focusing on this event, which is provoking indignation or concern in world opinion, and these reactions will be even stronger when people know of the parallel drama - it began on 27 December 2008 with the first Israeli bombardments of Gaza and is continuing less visibly with the use by Israel's Air Force of "GBU-39" bombs. This weapon is an "intelligent weapon" created by American "military genius" - a genocidal weapon.

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Characteristics of the GBU-39

Unlike a "gravitational" bomb that falls with its own weight and therefore needs a precise estimate of the plane's altitude, distance and position relative to the target, the "GBU-39 intelligent bomb" is in fact a self-propelled missile that can reach a target by its own power and with incredible precision, even a target 110 km ahead and 75 km on either side of the aircraft that drops it. The missile can fly in all weathers and can even circle back and hit a target behind the plane. It is guided to its target by GPS positioning and trajectory calculation. This system is preprogrammed, but can be reprogrammed at any time from any distance by instructions from ground installations.

Back in 2001, in response to a tendering process launched in 2001, the Boeing company (after strong competition from Raytheon) gained a contract to develop this "small diameter bomb" (SDB).

The SDB-1 or GBU-39 received its certification in September 2005; its series production began in April 2006; and the first examples were delivered to the US Air Force in early September 2006, ahead of schedule and at a lower price than predicted (research costs would be paid off by a hoped-for final order of 24000 units). On that occasion, Major-General Jeffrey Riemer, in charge of programme coordination between different civilian and military laboratories and suppliers, declared:

"We are excited about the successful deployment of this weapon, and the addition of SDB I to the lethal options the F-15E (Strike Eagle) can now employ in the war on terrorism."

According to him, the margin of error at point of impact was no greater than 1.2 meter.

The SDB-1 or GBU-39/B is a tube of about 1.8 metres long and 19cm in diameter. Once launched, it uses rear and lateral fins to stabilize its trajectory. It weighs 130kg, of which 93kg are the warhead.

A F-15E aircraft can carry four of these under its fuselage, with a BRU-61 undercarriage giving a total loaded charge of 664kg, instead of a single missile that would usually be much heavier. Each missile is launched pneumatically and not by explosive cartridge - this requires no regular maintenance, facilitates handling and speeds up the plane's reloading when it completes its mission. So the plane can carry out multiple strikes with faster rotation.

The GBU-39's precision, reliability and limited explosive charge - therefore also its lower "lethality" (or killing capacity) - greatly reduce the risks of "collateral damage". This makes possible certain hitherto forbidden uses: against enemy

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combatants located close to "friendly troops" or in the middle of a civilian population, be it friendly, neutral or hostile, since such populations are supposed to be spared according to the "rules of war" and international law. Thus these missiles are ideal for "anti-guerilla" or "anti-terrorist" war.

As early as 5 October 2006, one month after delivery in the USA, they were used for the first time against real targets - by two F-15E "Strike Eagles" of the 494th Combat Squadron in South-East Asia, supporting ground troops in Iraq. Lt. Gen. Gary L. North, the Combined Forces Air Component commander, celebrated the event in these terms:

"Today, we added an extraordinary capability to our warfighter's arsenal. The GBU-39/B (small diameter bomb) provides the Air Force with the ability to reduce collateral damage, while providing joint terminal attack controllers another option to prosecute targets. It is a significant milestone for our coalition forces fighting the global war on terror.

"This new air-to-ground munition gives our warfighters the explosive power of a conventional bomb without the fragmentation and blast area of other weapons in our inventory.

"Obviously, because of its size, our aircraft are able to carry more individual weapons into battle, benefiting the Soldiers on the ground with more opportunities to defend their positions, while precisely destroying targets that would threaten American, coalition and Iraqi lives.

"The SDB is uniquely qualified for urban targets that call for precision accuracy and reduced collateral damage and in close-air-support missions that our aircrews find themselves in during Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.

"We now have the ability to put ordnance in places where collateral damage might be a concern."

The SDB-1 has another feature that Boeing's technical dossier and the Israeli press are careful not to specify. In fact, out of the 93kg attributed by Boeing to the warhead, 23kg consists of real high-performance explosive (of which we will speak in a later article). About 50kg is none other than Depleted Uranium (DU). This substance has an extra advantage: its high penetration capacity. It enables the GDU-39 to pierce at least 90cm of reinforced concrete (or several meters of earth) before exploding.

A version capable of hitting mobile targets (SDB2) has been ordered from Boeing, associated this time with Lockheed. It was planned to complete development at the end of 2009. Some of its announced features correspond to those given in the *Jerusalem Post* of 28 December 2008. However, nothing allows us to think that Israel already possesses such things... unless the Gaza offensive is being used as a testing ground.

Apart from its "reduced" cost (of the order of \$100 000 each, all things being relative), the GBU-39, SDB-1 version, has a group of features that made it the ideal choice for the offensive against Gaza. Its precision enabled it to hit predetermined targets while reducing "collateral damage" among civilians (who besides were warned by leaflets and mobile phones to evacuate the targets, i.e. the houses and sites linked to Hamas and to the fabrication, stocking or launching of Qassam rockets against southern Israel). This limits also the political and diplomatic risk of being accused of committing massacres and war crimes. Furthermore, the GBU-39's penetration capacity made possible the destruction both of the underground rocket launching sites and the 40 underground tunnels on the Gaza-Egyptian border which have been making the Israeli blockade porous and which were struck on the first day of the air offensive.

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In September 2008 the US Congress authorized the sale of 1000 units to Israel, and these were delivered in early December. The 6-month truce accepted by Hamas in June expired on 19 December. On December 27 the Israeli attack began.

But the big problem is this: the GBU-39, although it limits the risk of war crimes, carries the certainty of a crime against humanity.

The genocide in Gaza has begun

Gaza is a narrow strip of land totalling 360 square kilometers, yet home to nearly 1.5 million people - a density of 3823 people per square kilometer.

The tips of GBU-38 are made of Depleted Uranium (DU), we said. But depleted of U235 means enriched in U238, and this has a radioactive half-life of 4.5 billion years.

DU is a frightening chemical and radiological poison which burns spontaneously on impact and which turns into extremely tiny radioactive particles (nanometric particles of the order of a millionth of the millimeter). These pass through all types of barriers, including gas-masks. The products of all these uranium combustions travel on the air, contaminate the atmosphere and enter organisms via respiration, ingestion or wounds of any size. This means that the greater part of the uranium remains as invisible uranium oxide in the atmosphere which the populations breathe, while another fraction contaminates the soil, the subsoil and the groundwater.

The consequences of use of DU bombs in Afghanistan and [Iraq](#) are very well known. They have been [shown and denounced by numerous scientists](#)- in fact all except those whose salaries are drawn from the military budgets of the USA, France, Israel... and others. They have been made dramatically visible by the [unbearable photos of deformed new-born babies](#).

It is not hard to imagine the catastrophic consequences of such bombings on Gaza's population: cancers, congenital deformities, illnesses of the immune system... all the more seriously since this population already suffers from chronic malnutrition and limited medical care on account of the Israeli blockade.

The Israeli government, in deciding to drop DU bombs on densely populated zones of Gaza, could not fail to know the effects they would have. But what of the Israeli people, whose lassitude and exasperation in the face of the Qassam rockets and the mortar shells is understandable? Do they know these effects, even today? Do they suspect that their government, while declaring that it is targeting the Hamas leaders, militants and installations, is proceeding, deliberately or not, to a slow "ethnic cleansing" of the Palestinian population and the destruction of its environment? Do they know at all the risks that they run of being victims themselves? For it is obvious that atmospheric movements don't stop at the borders of Gaza. Do they know that the soldiers of the Israeli Army, even if they survive unscarred or lightly wounded from this ground offensive (which we are told will be long and bloody), will be scarred for life in their lungs, their blood or their genes, as a result of these perverse weapons? Remember: no mask can give protection against the nanoparticles of DU.

A real crime against humanity is being committed as we watch

Back in 2003, when the focus was on Iraq, ACDN wrote [to President Jacques Chirac on 6 April 2003](#):

"In the "War of Liberation" which they claim they are waging, the Americans must not behave like the evil dictators of

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past and present, or else they will become unacceptable allies and will incite terrorists to mass atrocities that will make 11 September 2001 appear just a modest foretaste.

All the more reason for France to do all she can to stop the Crime against Humanity currently under way: the use of Depleted Uranium munitions by the forces of the US and UK, as has been admitted at least at Bassora and is almost certainly occurring in other battle-zones. Since the 1991 Gulf War, the various components of Depleted Uranium have caused a humanitarian catastrophe which Western leaders have systematically underestimated or denied (France is included, since the French soldiers suffering from "Gulf War syndrome" have been denied their rights, as were the veterans of French nuclear testing). Billions of radioactive particles created by Depleted Uranium impacts will transform Iraq into a land forever uninhabitable, and will be dispersed over all the Northern Hemisphere where they will add to background radiation and increase the "anonymous" statistics of cancer victims. What's the point of launching a "Nationwide Campaign against Cancer" if we fail to intervene in time to stop the expansion of a major cause of cancer?"

Today the focus is on Gaza, Palestine and Israel.

Today the President is not Jacques Chirac but Nicolas Sarkozy. Tomorrow he will be in the region trying to bring about calm if not true peace.

Today again we are saying:

"France must stop this crime against humanity."

To make herself understood, France must also commit to ceasing the production, sale, transfer and use of any DU weapon by her own army... instead of voting, as she did recently (accompanied only by the USA and Israel) against any UN resolution trying to set up an inquiry commission into the effects of DU,

France must finally start working for a universal ban on DU weaponry.

In addition, of course, to work for an immediate and general ceasefire in Gaza, and the establishment of a just and sustainable peace in the region, since this is the only means of defusing hatreds, of ensuring the cohabitation of peoples, beliefs, states and cultures, and of saving human lives.

Action des Citoyens pour le Désarmement Nucléaire / Action of Citizens for Nuclear Disarmament (ACDN), 4 January 2009

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PETITION

[To sign the petition for the abandonment by France and other countries of DU weapons and for a universal ban on radioactive weapons](#)