

Korea and Okinawa store 3,000,000 of DU munitions

si woo LEE

I received an airmail letter from my friend, Mr. Kyle Kajihiro. There were declassified documents under the FOIA(Freedom of Information Act). They confirmed a clear fact that U.S Air bases in Korea and Okinawa stored DU munitions.

On February 20, 2001 Mr. Kyle Kajihiro, who is a member of AFSC(American Friends Service Committee), also serving as Hawaii Area Program Director, made a request to Admiral Dennis C. Blair who was Commander in Chief, of the US Pacific Command(CINCPAC), that all DU records of U.S military bases should be released under the Pacific Command(PACOM).

On August 1, 2003 Nurbert A. Hughes, Lt Col., who was Chief of the Information Assurance Division Directorate of Communications and Information, replied.

He confirmed that the Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) had no records of storing DU munitions at their Hawaii bases, but their records showed that at Kadena airbase in Okinawa(Japan), Osan airbase, Suwon airbase and Cheong ju airbase in South Korea DU munitions were stored.

The records provided by the 18th Munitions squadron at Kadena airbase(Okinawa, Japan) and the 51st Maintenance Squadron Munitions Flight at Osan airbase (Korea) stated that the number of munitions stored at Suwon airbase amounted to 1,360,181EA, one milion three hundred sixty thousand, 933,669EA nine hundred thirty three thousand at Cheong-ju airbase, 474,576EA at Osan airbase and **398,768EA** at Kadena airbase.

The information showed that these four US airbases both in Korea and Okinawa stored DU munitions totaling about 3,000,000EA. This is an average of one munition per 12 **Korean** people.

Besides, the amount of munitions stored at Osan airbase differed from the numbers described in the document by 20,353EA of DU munitions. At Cheong ju and Suwon airbases by 9,408EA. In addition, at Osan airbase, 24,696EA of DU munitions has actually been lost.

This situation indicates a serious problem about the storage and management of DU munitions. In the airbases of Korea, 2,800,000EA of DU munitions were stored, which was about nine times as much as that was stored in Okinawa in comparison.

During the Gulf war, US Forces used 940,000EA of DU munitions (A-10 30mm DU rounds).

This means that the amounts stored at US bases in both Korea and Japan, according to the document, was about three times more than what was used in the Gulf war. It is a remarkable fact!

In 1997, the USFK announced that Yeonchon explosive disposal facility in Gyeonggi Province had detonated 1EA of 120mm DU munitions by mistake. This confirmed that DU munitions for tanks were stored at the base. The M829 series tanks use a 120mm round of DU munitions. A 120mm round contains 4.74kg of depleted uranium.

If you compare this tank round with a 30mm DU round (0.3kg), it is almost 16 times more in the amount of DU contained. Now I think Camp Kwangsari in Uijeongbu (Gyeonggi Province, Korea) is the most likely base where they store the DU munitions.

From their declassified documents, a very serious matter has come to light. That is, of missing DU munitions. Records show that 24,696EA are missing. Where are they now?

USFK kept silent when I made enquiries to them about these figures. Generally silence means acknowledgement. We must keep an eye on these conditions and we must also continue the fight against the storage and use of DU munitions.