



Depleted Uranium

VIEQUES ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION
FACT SHEET

Summary

During training exercises in 1999, Marine Corps aircraft mistakenly fired 263 depleted uranium (DU) rounds (called penetrators) at the North Convoy Site of the Live Impact Area (LIA) on Vieques (see map). DU penetrators are made of solid metal, and they do not contain explosives. Other than this single incident, the Navy did not use radioactive munitions on Vieques.

Investigation and Cleanup

From 1999 to 2000, the Navy completed three DU recovery operations in accordance with work plans approved by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). The NRC also worked with the Puerto Rico Department of Health to perform radiation surveys and collect samples of soil, vegetation, water, and sediment in the nearby towns. Based on their sampling, the NRC concluded that members of the public were not exposed to radiation resulting from DU fired during Navy training (NRC 2000).

In 2018, the Navy performed additional sampling of soil, groundwater, surface water, and sediment in accordance with the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA). All work was done with the cooperation and approval of the Puerto Rico Environmental Quality Board and the US Environmental Protection Agency. The results of these investigations indicate that DU impacts are extremely localized within the LIA, and there is no unacceptable risk to human health or the environment.

What is depleted uranium?

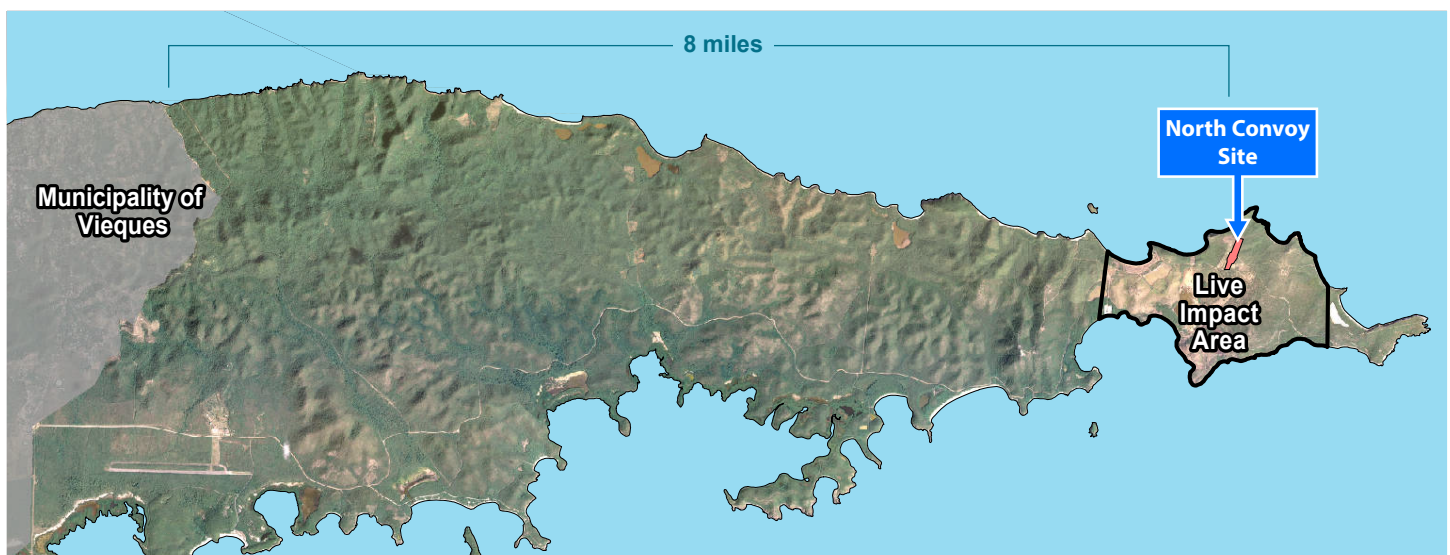
Depleted uranium (DU) is a weakly radioactive byproduct of the uranium enrichment process. Outside of the military, DU is used for counterweights in ships and aircraft, radiation shields in medical equipment, and containers for transporting radioactive materials.



DU penetrator shown next to pliers

REFERENCES

Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), 2000, NRC Inspection Report Concerning the Environmental Survey at Vieques Island, Puerto Rico.



rev. 06/25