
SERBIA TO BEGIN PROBE OF NATO BOMBING CONSEQUENCES SOON

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Chairman of the Serbian parliamentary commission, Darko Laketic, told the daily newspaper Politika on Monday that the probe of the alleged impact on public health of the NATO bombing will begin in the southern town of Vranje, where it will work to examine the effects of the use of depleted uranium ammunition.

"If uranium is not harmful, why is so much money spent on storing it, why is it not just thrown away into the environment?" Laketic asked rhetorically.

Asked if the commission will include experts who disagree that depleted uranium caused damage in Serbia, Laketic responded that its harmfulness is "beyond doubt".

He added that the commission's first preliminary report might be finished by the end of 2020.

Serbian media widely blame an alleged increase in tumour patients on the NATO bombing, while ignoring the fact that depleted uranium was used almost exclusively in Kosovo.

Experts have disputed claims that depleted uranium harmed Serbians, and denied that there is a cancer epidemic in Serbia.

Every year we use phosphate fertilisers with more uranium than what was dropped in 1999 [by NATO], epidemiologist Zoran Radovanovic said in a debate aired by the Serbian national broadcaster, RTS, in May.

The Serbian commission, established in May, was modeled after an Italian parliamentary probe which determined that depleted uranium caused cancer in some Italian soldiers serving in missions abroad.

But the doctor who was cited in the Italian parliamentary commissions report later said that he was misquoted, and denied ever claiming there is a correlation between cancer and depleted uranium.

NATO launched air strikes in Serbia on March 24, 1999, without the backing of the UN Security Council, after Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic refused to sign a peace deal to end his forces crackdown on Kosovo Albanian rebels seeking independence.

By the time Milosevic eventually conceded 78 days later, the civilian death toll from the bombing campaign was put at around 500 by Human Rights Watch.

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