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Our ref: D/Min(AF)/NH MC04862/2011
Your ref: JP/URAN16001/16110868

26 October 2011

RECEIVED
28 OCT 2011

Dear Katy,

You wrote to the Secretary of State for Defence on 22 September regarding CHARM 3, the UK's current round of depleted uranium (DU) ammunition and its legal weapons review. You have since submitted a Written Question in Parliament (73432) asking for a copy of the legal weapons review to be placed in the Library.

In my 10 October reply to your letter, I mentioned the legal weapons review. However, a subsequent search of Departmental records has failed to find any such review. A formal legal review was not required for munitions and equipment entering service before the date on which the UK ratified Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions. Though incorrect, the statement in my letter was made in good faith, on the advice of officials, and I apologise for the error.

In the circumstances, and given the concerns that have been expressed over DU, I have directed that a legal review should be carried out to establish the position clearly.

Ever since the first proposals for the use of DU in anti-armour munitions, the Ministry of Defence has maintained a watching brief on related worldwide research activities. The MOD website is being updated to provide information on these activities and to further explain why we believe our use of DU munitions does not present the extreme health and environmental risks suggested in some quarters.

I will write to you again, once the legal review is complete.

Yours ever

Nick

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