

CAD



News

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Campaign Against Depleted Uranium

Campaign Against Depleted Uranium, Bridge 5 Mill, 22a Beswick St, Ancoats, Manchester M47HR
Tel/Fax: +44 (0)161 273 8293 email: info@cadu.org.uk website [http://: www.cadu.org.uk](http://www.cadu.org.uk)

UN Resolution Passed with an Increased Majority

The United Nations General Assembly has passed, by a huge majority, a resolution requesting its agencies to update their positions on the health and environmental effects of uranium weapons. The vote was passed with 141 states voting in favour, 34 abstaining and only the US, UK, Israel and France voting against. This contrasts starkly with the official Foreign and Commonwealth Office position, which claims "there is only limited concern about DU among the international community".

The resolution calls on the three relevant UN agencies – the World Health Organisation (WHO), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to update their positions on uranium weapons. Coming one day before the signing of the Cluster Munitions treaty, the overwhelming support for the text reflects increasing international concern over the long-term impact of uranium contamination in post conflict environments and military ranges.

Mandate for Research

The resolution text requests that all three agencies work closely with countries affected by the use of uranium weapons in compiling their research. This should go some way towards redressing the focus in research on exposure in veterans and not on the civilian populations living in contaminated areas. As the body of research about US veterans is being exposed as completely unfit for purpose, this is more necessary than ever.

The text also repeats the request for states to submit reports and opinions on DU to the UN Secretary General in the process that was started by last year's resolution. Thus far, 19 states have submitted reports to the Secretary General; many of them call for action on uranium weapons and back a precautionary approach.

The list of states abstaining from the vote, while shorter than in 2007, still contains Belgium, the only state to have implemented a domestic

ban on uranium weapons, a fact that continues to anger Belgian campaigners. Many of the abstainers are recent EU/NATO accession states or ex-Soviet republics such as Kazakhstan. Australia and Canada, both of whom have extensive uranium mining interests and close ties to US foreign policy also abstained.

Future Developments

The resolution puts DU on the agenda for the General Assembly in autumn 2010. This two year period will be a crucial time for our campaign. Internationally we need to ensure that the three UN agencies take all current research into account, and that they take the scientific uncertainties as reasons for caution, not complacency. Any change by the WHO, in particular, is likely to prove decisive.

In the UK, we will continue to challenge the government politically and scientifically, and to highlight their international isolation on this issue. While their record suggests they are likely to be one of the last countries to acknowledge the dangers of DU, their position will be particularly vulnerable to any changes in the position of the three UN agencies, as they have so often been used as cover in the past.

Breakdown of the Vote

- States who changed their position since last year to vote in favour: Finland, Iceland, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Tajikistan
- Votes of the permanent members of the security council: France, US, UK - No; Russia - Abstained; China - Did not vote
- NATO or EU Abstainers: Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey

Foreign Office Respond to Your Letters

Congratulations to all our supporters who wrote to their MP, or to the Foreign Minister before the latest DU resolution. The volume was so large that in late November ICBUW received an email from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) requesting that their standard response was posted on the ICBUW website to “give visitors the opportunity to understand the UK’s position on depleted uranium munitions.”

We duly posted the letter, along with a point-by-point refutation of its argument. As this will be identical to what most of you received in answer to your letters, we have reproduced these points here, and urge you to write back. As ever, do involve your local MP in your correspondence.

‘No Significant Impact’

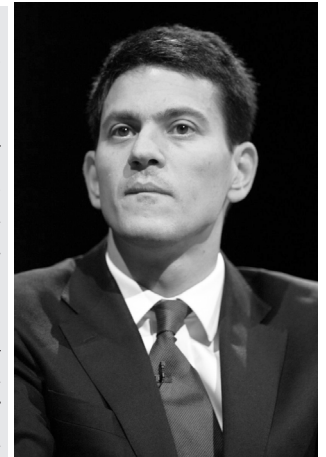
The UK’s position on the United Nations (UN) resolution on Depleted Uranium (DU) this year is the same as it was on last year’s resolution. The scientific literature contains a substantial number of reports which indicate that DU has not been shown to have, and indeed is very unlikely to have, any significant impact on the local population or on the veterans of conflicts in which these munitions are used. This includes work done by the United Nations Environment Programme and other independent expert groups. The key finding is that none of these studies have found widespread DU contamination sufficient to impact the health of the general population or deployed military personnel. The UK Government therefore opposed the resolution when the vote took place on 31 October.

This is attempting to fudge the issue. The question isn’t whether there have been lots of reports, the question is whether they have been able to reach reliable conclusions about whether DU is safe enough to be used in warfare. They haven’t, and their conclusions make this quite clear. It is inconceivable that the FCO are not aware of this, so their stance is completely disingenuous. UNEP reports recommend decontamination of contaminated areas precisely because of these uncertainties.

‘Only limited Concern’

Last year’s resolution tasked the UN Secretary-General with submitting a report to this year’s session of the General Assembly. The UN Report, “Effects of the use of armaments and ammunitions containing Depleted Uranium” of 24 July suggests there is only limited concern about DU among the international community. This is confirmed in the contributions from the governments

of Canada, Finland, Germany and Spain and in contributions from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the World Health Organisation that conclude that there is no definitive evidence that DU munitions have had a significant impact on the local population or veterans of conflicts in which these munitions have been used.



Foreign Secretary
David Miliband

As Finland and Germany voted for the resolution, they are an odd choice to cite as supporting the UK position. Indeed, according to their report Finland “greatly values international efforts to discuss the potential risks of the use of depleted uranium in armaments and ammunitions”. As the resolution calls for nothing more than the updating of these same UN agencies positions, with a focus on affected countries – there being “no definitive evidence” of harm is hardly a reason to oppose it. The UK voted against scientific enquiry and the furthering of knowledge, and can only have done so because it was afraid of what might be discovered.

Science ‘Adequate’

The adequacy and validity of the scientific work already carried out is demonstrated by the findings of the biological and health monitoring of UK and other veterans of conflicts in which DU munitions have been used. With the exception of a very small number of personnel in or on vehicles at the time they were attacked by DU munitions, none of the almost 1000 UK personnel monitored has been found to have any DU in their urine. Neither has any evidence of ill-health due to DU exposure been found in the 3,400 Gulf veterans who have attended the Ministry of Defence’s Medical Assessment Programme. Similar findings have been reported by other countries which have carried out this type of monitoring.

This is written with the assumption that the reader is unfamiliar with the body of scientific knowledge. The monitoring was undertaken on the basis of self-referral, which we mentioned at length in CADU News 29. The idea that this can validate any statement about the safety of DU is nonsense: it just means that there was no DU in the urine of the men tested. To pretend that this can

somehow render a body of work which is quite clear about its limitations 'adequate' would be a joke if it wasn't so serious. There is little point in squabbling over the testing of a small proportion of self-referring veterans (in total around 43,000 UK troops participated in the Gulf War). We need to address the much larger question of the health of civilians in DU-affected countries, which requires in-country research of exactly the type the UK has voted against. As for 'other countries', you may wish to refer to the Gulf War illness report mentioned in the following pages and the US research of this type.

'A Legitimate Weapon'

We believe that DU is a legitimate weapon and the use of it is not prohibited under any international agreements, including the Geneva Conventions. UK armed forces only use DU munitions in strict accordance with International Humanitarian Law.

Again, we have covered the question of legality at length in CADU News 29. It's good to see this legal opinion being referred to as a belief rather than gospel truth. CADU believes that DU breaches a number of principles of International Humanitarian Law, and will be enquiring what is meant by only using it in accordance with IHL

DU News

DU Made into Cooking Pots

In a recent lecture at York University, Prince Hassan of Jordan highlighted the danger posed by DU to neighbouring countries as a major issue in the Middle East. In the inaugural lecture of a series on post-war reconstruction, the prince spoke at across a wide range of issues from interfaith relations to the lack of human rights in the Middle East.

During the speech the prince pointed to the way the Arab-Israeli conflict had diverted attention away from other important issues

in the region: "The second largest export from Iraq is scrap metal. Our children are dying as we speak; from eating out of cooking pots that are uranium depleted; from climbing on climbing frames that are uranium depleted".

The prince was heir to the Jordanian throne until 1999, is a well-known commentator on international affairs, and sits on the boards of several international organisations such as the International Crisis Group and the Nuclear Threat Initiative.

Doctor Convicted of Terrorism: DU Effects Were Motivation

A doctor convicted of planting car bombs in the West End of London, and of participating in an attack on Glasgow airport, told Woolwich crown court that the experience of working in Iraq with child victims of DU radicalised him. British-born Iraqi Bilal Abdulla, who claimed that his intention was not to kill anyone but to make a statement by causing fear, said that the high incidence of childhood leukaemia and the lack of medical supplies turned him against Britain, his 'second home' and question the 'civilisation' of the West.

While working as a doctor in Iraq, Abdulla said he witnessed increasing rates of leukaemia in young children caused by DU fired in the first Gulf War, whilst doctors had to work without antibiotics and painkillers. During this part of his testimony he broke down in the dock and wept. The intercommunal violence following the 2003 Iraq war completed his transition from a

young man who contemplated joining the British army to help with his medical school costs, to supporting the Sunni insurgency against occupying coalition forces.

From BBC Coverage of the Trial:

Fighting back tears in the witness box, he described seeing more and more children diagnosed with leukaemia. This had been caused, he said, by depleted uranium shells fired by US forces during the first Gulf War.

"What I have seen is children aged three, four, five and six with leukaemia, but without treatment," he said.

"Why were they not treatable?" asked James Sturman QC, for the defence.

"No medication."

"Why was there no medication?"

"Sanctions," said Dr Abdulla.

Dr Abdulla said highly-trained Iraqi clinicians, many of whom had studied and worked in the UK, were struggling without antibiotics and pain-killers. The rate of malformed babies went up, he said, as did the rate of post-operation infections.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7722174.stm>

Gulf War Illness Report Shows Cancers Ignored by US Government Scientists

In mid November, a committee set up by the US Congress released a report on Gulf War Illness (GWI), an event widely reported by the media. It was considered a landmark study, as it stated categorically that the ill effects suffered by veterans of the 1990-1991 Gulf War were real, and amounted to a distinct medical condition.

The report identified two probable causes of this illness - pyridostigmine bromide (PB) pills which were given to troops to protect them from nerve agents, and pesticides which were liberally used to protect troops from insects.

However, amidst all the fuss, some damning information on the US government's response to the use of uranium weapons was completely ignored by the media. The section on DU supported ICBUW's finding that a touchstone study on US veterans affected by DU shrapnel ignored an incidence of cancer in the group.

McDiarmid study

Melissa McDiarmid's Baltimore study, which looks at the long-term health of friendly fire victims, many of whom have DU fragments in their bodies, drew particular criticism. This study is frequently referred to by the UK and US governments when they seek to defend DU, and has been repeatedly attacked by campaigners.

Amongst the problems the report highlights with the study are the small numbers of veterans studied, the lack of a control group, and a failure to follow up significant findings.



The report contains extensive criticism of the Department for Veterans Affairs

The RAC report found that McDiarmid apparently chose to ignore two veterans with tumours in her study group. That one veteran developed Hodgkin's lymphoma is mentioned in passing in one write-up in 1999, but omitted from subsequent reports, and the occurrence of a non-malignant bone tumour in another is not mentioned at all.

This was first exposed by US veteran and DU researcher Dan Fahey, and was mentioned in his presentation during ICBUW's workshop at the United Nations in April 2008, but the

fact that the committee confirmed it is a huge vindication. The omission is described as 'puzzling', and the committee questioned the study director about it, who apparently replied that: "these cases were not included because they were not believed to be the result of DU exposure."

McDiarmid's team maintain that none of the veterans in their cohort are suffering from DU exposure, and are in good health. Most of these Department for Veterans Affairs (VA) studies do not have an un-exposed control group, thereby lessening their potential for extrapolating the effects of exposure. There can be little doubt that these studies have retarded research on DU and any serious health effects in humans.

Knowledge Gaps

In comparison to the evidence for PB and pesticides being a possible cause of Gulf War illness, the information on other possible causes is much less clear, and DU falls into this category. The report observes that there are huge gaps in our knowledge concerning the impact of the use of uranium munitions, and leaves open the possibility that it may be found to have played a factor in the health problems of some veterans.

Unlike oil well fires and possible nerve agent exposure, the US government has not provided reports into the areas where DU was used, and the units most likely to be affected. Although a map exists, it appears the committee was not shown it. Instead they have to fall back on the estimates by Dan Fahey that several hundred thousand veterans may have been exposed to DU.

Other knowledge gaps highlighted by the committee are that most of the models used to estimate the dangers of DU are based around the scenario of friendly fire incidents, which are not typical of the majority of exposures, and that self-reporting – the main source of information for studies which track exposure to health problems – will be even less reliable for Gulf War veterans as most soldiers knew nothing about DU during deployment.

Institute of Medicine

When considering Gulf War illness overall, the RAC report criticized Gulf War and Health, a series of reports put out by the Institute of Medicine, saying that they "provided little information that is directly relevant to health conditions that affect Gulf War veterans at excess rates or their association with Gulf War

exposures.” This was due to the focus on well understood diagnosable conditions rather than the undiagnosed symptoms that make up GWI. Their report on DU was not singled out for particular criticism, but other reports in the series had omitted important research, and overall these reports were said to have delayed research on Gulf War illness.

This led the RAC to declare that the reports did not fulfil their legal requirements, and it recommended that the government office that commissioned them should be stripped of responsibility for future research.

Potential Dangers of DU

In finding that DU was not the main cause of GWI for most veterans, the RAC were not absolving it of any role in veterans’ illnesses. Because of the differences between the main symptoms of GWI and the health problems associated with DU, and the lack of mass symptoms in the veterans of other conflicts, they thought it unlikely that DU is a major factor in GWI.

Despite this the report does raise concerns about the potential dangers from DU exposure. It cites preliminary evidence from animal studies of its damaging effects on the brain as “potentially of great importance”, but states that more research is required before recommendations could be made on the basis of this evidence. It also points out that health concerns about DU are much broader than GWI, and there is scant evidence upon which to judge its links with cancers and birth defects. Indeed, it implies that the VA has not released all the information it has on the health of veterans’ families.

Criticisms of the McDiarmid Study

- Only studied 70 out of 900 veterans involved in incidents that could cause high level DU exposure
- Only 30 veterans studied in any one year
- Used crude categories to classify medical problems, making analysis difficult
- Only used a control group in one of the studies
- Did not follow up all significant findings, including detectable levels of uranium in sperm
- Failed to mention incidence of benign bone tumour in any write up
- Case of Hodgkin’s Lymphoma only referred to briefly in one write-up
- Tumours were ignored because they were not believed to be caused by DU

Recommendations

The recommendations that follow are very simple – suitably broad epidemiological studies of veterans to establish links between DU exposure and health outcomes, better attempts to establish exposure rather than self-reporting, and monitoring of cancer and mortality amongst veterans thought to be active in areas where DU has been used. As this is the kind of recommendation which could have been made by a first year medical student when the DU issue came to prominence, it is a genuine indictment of the last 17 years of US government sponsored research since 1991.

Celebrating Richard Crump

It was with heavy hearts that we read of the death of Richard Crump on Boxing Day. He was one of the most committed campaigners against DU that we knew of.

Such was Richard’s dedication; it is hard to imagine his not being around. I cannot think of any other activist who has had such an appetite for bunches of leaflets and posters to distribute. Having moved out of London, Richard had not been in Hastings for long and yet as we read of his death, a letter from his local MP arrived at the CADU office.

In it his MP pledges to write to Defence Secretary John Hutton about the UK’s position on uranium weapons. You will be sorely missed Richard.

Doug Weir



photo by anonymous-bosch (<http://tinyurl.com/9vrlny>)

Campaign News

October

Despite the glum weather, we have been enjoying the last few months at the CADU office. As the last CADU News went off to print, we were busy putting out the word to everyone to write to the Foreign Office asking them to support the UN Resolution. This effort was well rewarded when the volume of correspondence prompted the FCO to ask for their standard response to be posted on the ICBUW website.

Not long after that War on Want released a report on UK banks investment in the arms trade, with a particular section on DU manufacturers that showed that Lloyds TSB was involved in lending money to General Dynamics in 2005, and that HSBC holds shares in General Dynamics worth around £27 million and £800,000 in GenCorp. Coming hot on the heels of the banking crisis, with HBOS due merge with Lloyds TSB, this news means that none of the major UK banks will have clean hands. This is even more reason to put your money in an ethically sound institution. We recommend either the Cooperative, or Triodos bank. There are details and links on the CADU website, as well as a flyer to download with all the details about the banks and the DU manufacturing companies.

We were pleasantly surprised by the margin of the vote in the UN First Committee on Halloween - 127 in favour, 34 abstentions and four against. While this was going on we were continuing to ring the changes. We have now updated our main CADU leaflet for UK campaigning. It's called 'Depleted Uranium: The Facts' and we've included one inside each copy of CADU News. The text is available at: www.cadu.org.uk/intro.htm, where you can also download a pdf version. Let us know if you require further copies for your local campaigning and we can post them out to you.

November

November saw the release of the Research Advisory Committee report on Gulf War Illness. On the basis of the media reports we thought it would have little relevance to our campaign, so were very surprised when we read it that it so decisively knocked holes in the McDairmid study.

One thing that really stood out in the report was the shocking bad faith of the US government in dealing with the issue of Gulf War illness. For example, the Department of

Defence spent a full five years denying that troops had been exposed to chemical agents, until 1996 when it admitted that when a large cache of munitions were detonated troops downwind would have been exposed to the chemical agents.

While the mendacity of the Pentagon will not come as a surprise to any of our supporters, it is unusual to see it admitted by a committee set up by the US congress. Moreover, the report shows that for all the US political elite makes a fetish of armed combat and the myth of the soldier, it is perfectly happy to subject the real young men involved to a cocktail of toxic substances and then seek to deny the effects for the best part of two decades. As campaigners, we need to keep posing the question - if this is how the US treats its soldiers, what concern should we expect it to show towards civilians?

December

In early December the main event was the passing of the UN resolution, which inevitably brought our attention to the future and the two year period we have before the General Assembly reconsiders the DU issue. The vote came one day before the signing of the Cluster Munitions Treaty, giving us a timely reminder of what is possible. Our main focus internationally will be to try to ensure that the new positions of the three international organisations take all current research into account, and that they see the scientific uncertainties as reasons for caution, not complacency.

In the UK we will be looking to raise the profile DU issue again, and to challenge the widespread misconception that the science is settled and that the Royal Society Report was the end of the matter. Look out for both the CADU and ICBUW websites, which will be getting an overhaul shortly.

Plans are continuing apace for the photo exhibition which will be visiting the Scottish parliament in early February, and London some time thereafter. Closer to the time we will be asking supporters to request that their local MP/MSP attend - another good reason to make sure yours is up to speed on DU.

Best wishes for 2009

Dave Cullen

Doug Weir

CADU/ICBUW

A New Year Message for CADU Supporters

The year end was a very sad time, learning as we did of the deaths of such strong supporters for peace and social justice as Adrian Mitchell and Harold Pinter - as well as stalwart CADU supporter Richard Crump - because we do need support both in goodwill and funding.

Campaigning against weapons which can bring wide scale suffering to innocent civilians is not easy. Regrettably, it is much easier in this world to raise huge amounts of money, that is billions of dollars and pounds, for the development of high tech weaponry. The whole vast structure of the arms industry takes unbelievable amounts of the world's resources: for research, staffing, IT, and not to mention marketing and publicity.

Despite all of the above CADU has made progress because of a handful of committed workers who are mainly volunteers. At the moment CADU urgently needs extra funds to help pay for our tiny office, administrative and campaigning costs.

We have the energy to continue campaigning; we hope you can assist with the means.

*We send very best wishes to you all for the New Year,
In peace,*

*Rae Street
CADU Coordinator*

Harold Pinter

Over Christmas we learned of the death of the English writer and Nobel Prize Winner for Literature, Harold Pinter. He had been ill for some time with cancer.

He was a great champion for the causes of peace and social justice. When CADU was first formed in the UK, Harold sent a generous donation and his best wishes for our success.

This meant a great deal to us as it was at a time when we had very little support in the UK, even from other peace activists. I can remember clearly when one peace activist accosted me and said, "You will discredit the peace movement with this campaign".

Rae Street

CADU Resources

CADU has a wide range of resources available for DU activists, researchers and the public, materials can be ordered by post or bought online via Paypal at www.cadu.org.uk/resources.

For orders outside the UK, individual postage and packing rates apply, available on request.

DU Education

DU Book
Now £5

Depleted Uranium - Deadly, Dangerous and Indiscriminate. The Full Picture

By Anne Gut and Bruno Vitale
£5 inc UK postage and packing.

Targeting IRAQ - Sanctions & Bombing in US Policy

By Geoff Simons
£14.99 UK from the CADU office or £16.99 worldwide. Includes postage & packing.

In the Spirit of Wilfred Owen

Anthology of poems inspired by Wilfred Owen or the Great War. Contains work by 53 poets, inc. Tony Harrison, Seamus Heaney, Ted Hughes. £5.60 inc. UK P+P



T-Shirts
Now £7.50

CADU 'banuraniumweapons' t-shirts

Ladies and gents fit shirts available in a variety of colours and sizes, all with the stylish CADU tank on the front. The shirts are made of 100% heavy-weight cotton and retail for a reasonable £7.50. Payment is currently by cheque or online via Paypal (www.cadu.org.uk/resources), please include £1 for UK postage and packing.

Ladies: Extra Small to Extra Large - Colours: Lilac/Navy.
Gents: Small to Large - Colours: Purple/Charcoal.

Campaign Tools

CADU Leaflets

£2.50 plus postage for a bundle of 100.

CADU Posters

A3 'BAN DU' posters,
£1 donation each or £8 for 10.

CADU Lobby Pack

An 8 page booklet introducing the issue.
Contact us for postage costs.

CADU Display

A three panel A1 display on DU and CADU. Comes with a CADU worker.



What is CADU?

The Campaign Against Depleted Uranium is a small volunteer run group, based in Manchester which was set up in January 1999 to campaign for a ban on depleted uranium weapons. We produce a briefing pack, leaflets, and other resources. Groups and individuals can affiliate to CADU, and become part of this worldwide movement to stop DU.

CADU's aims are:

- to fight for a global ban on the manufacture, export, and use of uranium weapons
- to fight for recognition by the MoD that these weapons are connected with illnesses among Gulf War veterans and civilians in Iraq and elsewhere
- to put pressure on governments who use them to take responsibility for environmental decontamination or areas where it has been used

What is ICBUW?

In 2003, along with 14 other NGOs we founded the International Coalition to Ban Uranium Weapons (ICBUW). ICBUW now has over 100 member organisations, and a presence in 29 countries.

ICBUW is managed by an international steering committee comprising activists from member organisations. The ICBUW mission statement calls for a halt to the production, testing, sale, stockpiling, transport and export of uranium weapons and a decommissioning of all existing stockpiles. It also calls for full disclosure of the locations where these weapons have been used, the amounts involved, and for investigations into the environmental and medical effects.

Candle Message from Hiroshima

On the evening of Nov. 16 the message 'Ban DU Next' was formed with 1000 candles at the plaza by the A-Bomb Dome in Hiroshima. The event was one of a series of events by ICBUW Japan related to the International Joint Action Day organized by ICBUW. The event included musical performances and appeals from Mayor Akiba of Hiroshima and Kasim Turki, an Iraqi humanitarian worker

Nordic Network Against Uranium Weapons established in Oslo

On November 9th 2008 a Nordic Network Against Uranium Weapons was formed in Oslo. The network aims to coordinate campaigns against uranium weapons in all five Nordic countries and share skills and experience. Comprising members from Norway, Finland, Sweden and Iceland, the coalition is contacting possible partners in Denmark and planning a Nordic Conference on Uranium Weapons in April or May 2009.

ICBUW Group Hopes for DU Ban in New Zealand

Inspired by the achievement of activists and politicians in Belgium, the Depleted Uranium Education Team [DUET] in Christchurch have launched a petition to the New Zealand Parliament requesting a similar ban. Following receipt of the petition, they presented evidence to the parliamentary committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade. The committee also took evidence by telephone from Belgian MP Dirk Van der Maelen, and renowned campaigner Dr. Rosie Bertell.

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Signed _____

Date _____