

[Uranium Testing for Aussie Troops - Balkans and Gulf](#)

SIMON KEARNEY, Perth Sunday Times, Edition 2, SUN 21/01/01, Page 005

THE Federal Government will take blood tests from thousands of veterans amid fears that Australian soldiers were exposed to uranium weapons. The tests will include screening blood and urine samples to detect likely kidney damage.

There are fears that depleted uranium weapons used in the Gulf War and Balkans conflicts during the 1990s may have affected Australian veterans.

Acting Defence Minister Bruce Scott announced the Government would screen any personnel who may have been exposed to these weapons.

"All current and former ADF personnel who have served in the former Yugoslavia since the Balkans conflict began will be contacted in writing and asked to complete a questionnaire and to participate in blood and urine screening," Mr Scott said.

He said veterans of the Gulf War would also be tested.

Depleted uranium is used in weapons casings and other military hardware and while it is less radioactive than uranium it has similar toxic effects to lead if its dust is breathed in or comes in contact with the skin.

"At present there is no conclusive scientific or medical evidence that exposure to depleted uranium munitions is a health risk," Mr Scott said.

There have been no claims against the Government for illnesses associated with depleted uranium weapons.

One of the main avenues for exposure is when the depleted uranium weapons hit their target and toxic substances are vaporised creating a dust which can be breathed in.

Opposition defence personnel spokesman Laurie Ferguson has been pushing for the Government to act on the issue for several weeks.

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