

EUROPEAN COUNTRIES' REPORT

ICBUW International Conference, August 2006.

THE EUROPEAN UNION – THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

The European Parliament represents the peoples of the 25 countries of the European Union.

On Jan. 17, 2001 the European Parliament resolved to call on the Member States that are also NATO members to propose that a moratorium be placed on the use of depleted uranium weapons in accordance with the precautionary principle as defined in the Council resolution adopted at the European Council meeting in Nice.

On 13 February 2003 * the **European Parliament adopted a resolution for a moratorium on 'the harmful effects of unexploded ordnance (landmines and cluster sub-munitions) and DU AMMUNITION.**

Likewise on Feb. 13, 2003, the EP called on its executive body the European Council, "to support **independent and thorough investigations into the possible harmful effects of the use of depleted uranium ammunition** (and other types of uranium warheads) in military operations in areas such as the Balkans, Afghanistan and other regions; [especially] on military personnel serving in affected areas and the effects on civilians and their land; [and called] for the results of these investigations to be presented to Parliament.

On Nov. 17, 2005** the European Parliament issued **for the third time a call for a moratorium on the use of so-called "depleted" uranium munitions.**

The resolution regarding depleted uranium is part of an 11-page document entitled, "Texts adopted by European Parliament, on **non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; A role for the European Parliament**"

The Resolution's section No. 82 says the EP, "**Reiterates its call for a moratorium - with a view to the introduction of a total ban -- on the use of so-called 'depleted' uranium munitions.**"

The EU is moving in the direction of extending its own security and defence policy. A research program on defence policy is planned for 2007.

ICBUW continues lobby activities within the EP in the different Committees to draw attention to their responsibilities regarding the DU issue and to undertake actions.

European parliamentarians can cooperate in setting up a feedback mechanism with national parliaments, because one of the most important political aims of ICBUW is to gain the support of one or more countries in striving for a ban.

It can encourage the process, by providing a forum and resources for the necessary international debate between the national parliamentarians, NGO's, experts, victims' organisations, and soldiers' trade unions

The EP can stress the need for more independent medical and environmental impact research (both long term and short term) and can call on the member states of the EU and NATO to ensure that the moratorium on DU munitions be implemented.

Several suggestions have been made by members of the European Parliament that need following up:

Such as:

More research; a written declaration as lobby instrument; oral questions to the EU Council; a discussion in the Committee; conducting a hearing, personal statements, posting an amendment on toxicology and nanoparticles to the Commission; appropriate actions, working together with other Committees, initiatives for foreign policy makers; questioning the different member states; continuing drawing attention to the issue, including the issue in various council reports, asking the Council of Europe (to make a Bill (following the Belgian example).

At least 18 countries have weapon systems with uranium in their arsenals: They are: Bahrain, China, Egypt, France, India, Israel, Kuwait, Ukraine, Oman, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, UK and USA.

The **Council of Europe*** can question these countries on the human rights issue and the possession and/or use of uranium weapons as all member states are obliged to respect human rights.

We hope to get more results because the joint negotiating strength of the Member States (25) carries more weight than if they negotiated separately.

* Not to be confused with the Council of the European Union or the European Council, as it is a separate organization and not part of the European Union.

INDIVIDUAL EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

BELGIUM

Parliamentary initiatives against DU weapons were taken by **Senators Sabine de Bethune and Erika Thijs and by Senator Lionel Vandenberghe.**

In 2005 and 2006 they introduced new law proposals that deal with uranium weapons. Unfortunately they **did not have a large enough majority** of votes to get the issue on the agenda of the Commission of Foreign Affairs and Defence.

More successful were the initiatives of **Joseph Arens and Dirk Van der Maelen**, both **members of the Chamber of Representatives**, who introduced two proposals to ban uranium weapons under Belgian law.

Dirk Van der Maelen fully incorporated the information provided by the Belgian Coalition into his bill. His **law proposal is the most complete proposal up to now. Contrary to the law proposals of Arens and de Bethune, it stipulates a period in which Belgium must dismantle any uranium weapons arsenals.**

June 21, 2006

In June 2006, representatives Josy Arens and Dirk Van der Maelen, defended their law proposals and the need to ban uranium weapons under Belgian Law during the **Commission on Defence meeting of the Belgian Chamber of Representatives.** Van der Maelen mentioned the important role that the International and Belgian Coalitions have played in the struggle to help ban uranium weapons. The arguments of the two parliamentarians convinced the president of the Commission to organise a

hearing in the Parliament. The hearing is scheduled **for this autumn**. Experts from different disciplines will be invited, amongst them ICBUW experts.

Representative Arens stated during the Commission of Defence meeting: '**Belgium needs to play a pioneering role in the campaign for a worldwide ban on uranium weapons**'. He also insisted that when one applies the Precautionary Principle, irrefutable scientific evidence for links between ill health and DU exposure is not needed to implement a ban.

BOSNIA

During the bombing of the war against Bosnia of 1994-95 NATO bombed 19 locations with DU shells. NATO later released information about 16 of the locations, but six are still missing and are believed to be in the proximity of Sarajevo. Only a few hundred of the approximately 7000 shells have been removed from the locations of the bombings; all the others were impossible to find and some other areas were impossible to reach as they are still full of landmines.

In 2001 the Bosnian health minister, Bozo Ljubuc, announced a worrying increase in cancers between 1998 and 1999: the rate had grown from 152 to 230 cases per 100.000 persons, and leukaemia from 6.24 to 10.4.

An initial investigation was conducted by UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) and published in 2003; they did not find any significant contamination but found DU present in the water and in the air at some locations. Another report has been commissioned by the Bosnian Government and kept secret so far, but its findings have been published in the Bosnian newspaper Dani on 2/12/2005.

In the report, Bosnian experts nominated by the Government found an increase in cancers, leukaemias and genetic mutations in the population of the areas bombed with DU. Other unusual pathologies have also been found and associated with the symptoms of the so-called Balkans Syndrome.

The Bosnian study has focused in particular on the refugees who were displaced from Hadzici (one of the locations of the DU bombings) to Bratunac (a different location, not bombed during the war). They discovered a significant increase in mortality rate: four times higher compared with the local population, and 2.2 times compared with other refugees. Cancer incidence grew to 27.6% in 1998 and later stabilised at 18% (the normal average incidence is 6% for the local population, and 10% for war refugees). Furthermore, significant chromosomal changes have been found in 57% of the Hadzici cases.

FINLAND

Last summer the 'Finnish Women for Peace' met the Foreign Minister of Finland and handed him an appeal signed by 11 organisations to promote ICBUW's goal of banning uranium weapons. Minister Erkki Tuomioja considered the campaign important and referred to the convention on conventional weapons. However, he did not take the issue to the Finnish government.

After the conference in Brussels in 2005, a press release and other material was sent to the press in Finland. More recently, a public meeting was organised last October with Dr Keith Baverstock, which ended in a lively discussion.

There is hope that the Minister will take a more active role when the ICBUW delegation meets him and/or his officials next September. Plans are also being made to meet with the Defence Ministry and with several members of the Parliament to start political lobby work.

Public meetings/seminars and a press conference will be organized this year to raise awareness of the DU issue. Amongst the invitees is Dr Al Ali from the Al Sadr Teaching Hospital in Basra, southern Iraq.

Gathering signatures during events and happenings and the publication of the petition in several papers and magazines and on the website are all part of the campaign.

Satu Hassi, a member of the European Parliament for Finland and former Minister of Environment of Finland, stated last year that: "Uranium weapons should be banned." She is willing to include the issue in various council reports and to prepare a written document together with other Members of Parliament. An appeal from the Finnish campaign group has been sent to Satu Hassi.

It is also worth noting that currently several foreign and Finnish companies have reserved areas in Finland for uranium mining. The first decisions will be made by the Ministry of Trade and Industry in the near future. In Itä-Uusimaa (southeast Finland) a citizens' movement has grown into a strong opposition force. We have started fighting against plans for uranium mining across Finland. It has taken a good deal of time, but it is also connected with the issue of uranium weapons and nuclear weapons, not only with nuclear power.

FRANCE

A report from AVIGOLFE:

After setting up the Association of Civilian and Military Victims of the Gulf War, AVIGOLFE, we sent out a questionnaire, devised by ourselves, to the people who were contacting us. They told us that since their return from the Gulf they had been suffering from various illnesses, or that their son or their husband had died. This survey revealed the similarities in the situation in which US, British or Australian veterans found themselves.

We then requested that a parliamentary commission of inquiry be set up. The 'Defence Commission of the National Assembly', presided over by M. Paul Quiles (Socialist Party), responded with a parliamentary fact finding exercise, which appeared to us inadequate. We rejected its report, which because of its partial nature and manipulation of the facts, allowed the government to reach no conclusions.

We also requested an exhaustive epidemiological study which would reveal the true situation of the Gulf veterans, and medical and scientific tests linked to the toxic elements that we had highlighted (uranium, fumes from oil wells, pesticides, pyridostigmine, Virgyl, vaccines, neurotoxic chemical weapons particles). The 'Salamon Enquiry' and its accompanying medical tests **allowed the Ministry of Defence, because of their inadequacy, to close the enquiry.**

We continue to this day to denounce the machinations of the Ministry and the Government and to fight for recognition of the effects of this war on the health of both soldiers and civilians.

We have also lodged legal complaints. These are ongoing, and are being pursued by a judge who specialises in health matters.

In the United States, the Minister for Veterans Affairs has completely changed his approach to the question over the last year. Based on the principle that in order to treat illnesses, it is necessary to know their exact cause, a report, published in 2004, recognised the reality of the facts that we brought to light five years ago. French soldiers are mentioned in this report. The French Ministry of Defence refuses to take the report's findings into consideration. A summary of the report is available on our website.

Our struggle has been, and continues to be, a hard one: we have gone through very difficult times, experienced harassment by the authorities, fought against misinformation, held inquiries, brought ever more proof of what we were claiming. This struggle will be a long one. To some it may appear a pointless one. But we must not lose heart. Together with all those who have joined us and who continue to join us each day, we will follow it through until we get complete recognition of the reality of this war and its consequences on our health and on the health of civilian populations.

Avigolfe will co-organize a colloquium in Marseille in November 2006 about: "The psychological traumas of the war, radiation, Gulf War victims and the forgotten victims of the armed conflicts of the 20th Century.

GERMANY

The DU issue is still perceived as very politically sensitive in Germany. It has been decided that we should build up DU-related alliances and, especially, the possibility of co-operation with the German Cluster Munitions Campaign.

Creating a formal political and lobbying link between the two topics might be difficult and even counter-productive. But it should not exclude co-operation and co-ordination on an informal level. This might include discussion on common topics such as the protection of civilian populations and the environmental remediation from a remnants-of-war perspective.

There are ideas about possible joint activities such as shared press conferences, meetings with politicians and parliamentarians and lunch seminars. Encouraging the exchange of information regarding changes in legislation, and planning pressure campaigns like divestment is also being considered.

The Association of German Military Forces (Bundeswehrverband) promised to help in collecting evidence. The German military has a commitment not to use DU weapons. Indeed a meeting with the head and staff of the German Bundeswehrverband was very stimulating and promising. They expressed strong support for ICBUW's aims as they have a keen interest in protecting German soldiers from the effects of DU exposure.

These experiences, together with the substance of the meetings and of its follow-up, have given fresh impetus in pursuing the goal of a German Coalition.

GREECE

In 2001, Greece decided to remove all DU shells from their inventory. The Greek Navy had in all about 15,000 shells, which are used in the naval defence system Phalanx (Close-In Weapons System). Several other countries decided to remove the Phalanx DU munitions at around that time due to concerns over the fire hazard that DU shells represent. During exercises since 1990, 30,000 rounds of 20mm ammunition were fired. It is not clear where they have been fired. In the nineties Greece rejected a US offer of 100,000 DU tank shells after which they were exported to Turkey.

Greece still has some DU in its inventory; it has been public knowledge for some years that **Greece purchased 504 antipersonnel mines (ADAM M692 worth \$2.6 million) from the U.S.** prior to 1992, when a moratorium on the export of antipersonnel mines was put into effect.

The Greek Helsinki Monitor pressure group, have called on the Greek government to scrap their last remaining stocks of the mines.

ITALY

The Italian campaign against DU started in 1999 after the first news about its use in Iraq, but public interest grew in 2001 when some journalists reported the first cases of soldiers dying of unexplained cancers when returning from abroad. The Italian army, as a member of NATO, had been involved in several missions abroad in areas where DU was known to have been used, such as Bosnia and Kosovo, but no information had been given to the soldiers sent to the Balkans. Furthermore they were deployed in the areas more affected by DU bombings.

Independent military associations like Osservatorio Militare and Anavafaf; a few journalists and academics, and some peace groups, such as Peace Link, provided the only accurate information about the risks and the locations where DU was used. The government only responded after a huge delay, informing the troops of possible hazards six months after their deployment, and setting up a commission (whose members were nominated by the Defence Minister himself and headed by Prof. Mandelli, (a well-known oncologist) to produce some sort of scientific report on the issue.

The first two "Mandelli reports" denied any link between the illnesses and DU, but they had some fundamental mistakes in the statistics calculations. In the third version of the report they had to admit that there was an unusual increase in the rate of lymphomas in the soldiers from the Balkans; but also this report was largely flawed by missing data and inaccurate methodologies, as later admitted by some Ministry consultants as well.

More interesting papers and books have been published in those years by an independent group of academics and researchers - the Italian Network of Scientists against War.

In the meantime, soldiers were getting sick and dying, abandoned with neither health assistance nor financial support. The cancers were mainly lymphomas, lung tumours and leukaemia; some cases have later been reported of malformed fetuses conceived by their partners.

Legal cases were brought to Court in an attempt to link the illnesses to the military service and obtain a pension and some sort of support. One of the very first cases

was that of Paola Melone, who in the end achieved compensation for the death of her husband after he developed cancer following several missions abroad, including in the Balkans. Compensation still has to be paid by the Ministry of Defence and is appealing against the judgement. Marco Diana later won another similar legal case.

According to the Ministry of Defence, as of April 2006, 28 soldiers have died and 158 have developed some kind of cancer; but the Ministry does not take into account some army corps (like "carabinieri") and some missions (like Iraq 1991 and Somalia). According to the Osservatorio Militare, 48 soldiers have died so far and 478 are ill as a consequence of their missions in areas where DU has been used. Please note that these figures, even if far more reliable than those of the Ministry, are likely to be and underestimate, as they're based only on the soldiers or families who get in touch with the Osservatorio Militare for support. It's known that many soldiers or families are fearful about losing financial support from the Ministry if they speak out about their situation.

The Ministry has tried to blame the illnesses on stress or bad food with no mention of DU. The ill soldiers receive a pension of 500 euros per month, and the families 16.000 euros of compensation in case of death.

After an initial delay and lack of organisation, the Ministry of Defence is now very careful in following and covering all the cases of soldiers who come back from a mission with some health issues. It's becoming more and more difficult to find out any information about them, even for parliamentarians. Some cases have been reported about soldiers, some of them women, coming back from Afghanistan and Iraq with severe health problems, but it has been impossible to find out even the most basic information about them.

In the meantime, a new possible interpretation of the illnesses has emerged thanks to the scientific research of Prof. Gatti and Mr Montanari, who proved the presence of nano-particles of DU in samples from dead or ill soldiers.

A Parliamentary Commission was formed in 2005 after a long (three years) and difficult process and it concluded its work in March 2006. Few independent experts have been called to give evidence and the final document produced by this Commission is still in denial about DU. It calls for more research and epidemiological studies, offering funding of 300.000 euros for it. Some more funding (10 million euros per year) has been allocated for soldiers' financial support and this represents the only significant change. No money has actually been given to the soldiers so far, and the Osservatorio Militare has filed a legal case against this.

This July, the new Government has just nominated a new Commission, but it will focus only on the health aspects of DU.

Italy neither produces nor uses DU. However some American bases on Italian territory are known to stock DU. Of particular concern is the very large fire range of Quirra – Villaputzu in Sardinia, which has been used for decades by various armies and military companies to test their weapons. The Italian Ministry of Defence denies any use of DU in the area, but there's an abnormal increase in leukaemia cases and malformed babies in the villages surrounding the fire range, and some soldiers have died of cancer after a period of service in the area.

NORWAY

Since the early 1990s, when we invited Rosalie Bertell to give a review of the possible effects of DU-weapons at a Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) meeting in Geneva, the Norwegian section of WILPF has endeavoured to inform the public about it.

In April 2005, to coincide with the commemoration of the Chernobyl disaster, WILPF member and physics teacher, Eva Fidjestoel, wrote a booklet in Norwegian on DU-weapons with an eye-catching cover by Susanne Urban, produced by WILPF, Norway.

It was sold and copies were given to key people in the military, the health services, the radiation protection and environmental authorities, as well as the media.

Since 2004 the Bergen section has been actively trying to gain public support for a call to "Ban Uranium Weapons".

At the International meeting on Women's day March 8 in Geneva 2006, members of the Bergen branch of WILPF discovered that Eva's booklet is unique in popularising the issue, making difficult matters easily understood by lay readers - in contrast to either the heavy-duty scientific textbooks or the general leaflets. They think that a translation of the booklet into English would be useful as a way to reach UN-representatives and the general public.

A letter they wrote to the Norwegian Ministry of Defence received a reply that indicated awareness of the risks attending the use of such ammunition. The deputy Minister of Defense concluded his reply with the following paragraph:

"Further, with reference to WILPF's interpretation of international human rights, I agree that an evaluation ought to be done of the consequences of the use of DU ammunition in the light of the rules in the first Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions. It ought, however, to be kept in mind that DU-ammunition is not regarded as being covered by any of the specific prohibitions in international law in force today."

THE NETHERLANDS

Developments on DU in the Dutch parliament

The Netherlands does not have DU weaponry in its arsenals. This was stated by several Defence (under)ministers in answers to questions in the Dutch parliament during the past 14 years. However, in a letter to the Dutch Parliament (2001), the then underminister Van Hoof admitted that the Dutch Army had used DU munitions in the Dutch test areas Vliehors and Noordvaarder until 1993.

Dutch Members of Parliament continue to ask questions on the military use of DU and the safety of soldiers who serve(d) in risk areas. In 2001, a motion was passed from Mrs. Nebahat Albyarak (Labour) and Mrs. Nicky van 't Riet (Democrats). The motion calls on the Dutch government to exert themselves to the utmost at the international level for a moratorium on the military use of DU in military operations within the framework of NATO and UN as long as there is no scientific clarity on the impact of DU on human health. In 2005 the Dutch minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Minister of Defence, at another meeting with MPs, said that the Dutch government had proposed this at several international forums, but that all their efforts were in vain.

In June 2005 the standing Defence commission in the Dutch Parliament in a discussion on safety issues with the underminister of Defence Van der Knaap raised the question of DU in risk areas where Dutch troops are serving. He stressed again [the same words have been used by the Dutch Defence minister Kamp before – HvdK] the policy regarding DU: before Dutch troops are sent to risk areas, the specific areas where DU might be present will be fenced off. The military personnel will be informed that they should avoid these areas as much as possible and when they have to enter the area they have to use protective masks and gloves. When contamination may have taken place the instructions are followed in accordance with <<Protocol survey Exposure to Depleted Uranium at Incidents>>. According to the underminister there has been no significant exposure so far. In addition he remarks: “Authoritative sources, such as the World Health Organisation (WHO), do not claim that exposure in DU contaminated areas will have adverse health effects”

After the January 2001 media hype on cases of leukaemia among Italian Kosovo veterans, at which DU was seen as the most likely causative agent, the then Defence underminister Van Hoof decided to investigate whether Dutch veterans, who had served in the Balkans, have a higher risk of developing cancer. [Other health complaints are apparently not considered in the survey – HvdK] Van der Knaap explained that the results will be compared, from 1992, within a group of 200,000 soldiers between soldiers who have served in the Balkans and soldiers who have not served in a risk area. The investigation will take about two or three years (from July/August 2005).

In a debate with the Dutch ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defence and Development Cooperation on Dutch participation to ISAF in South Afghanistan (January 2006) the Defence minister said that there are no guarantees that the US or other countries wouldn't use DU munitions. [There is no evidence that DU weaponry has been used in Afghanistan, however one can speak of “circumstantial evidence” – HvdK]

The minister repeated what the underminister has stated before on the procedures when DU contamination has been found, but in a somewhat more detailed manner. He states that the local authorities will be informed about the measures which have to be taken to ensure that the local population will not run unnecessary risks. Also he declared that in the case where DU contaminated areas have to be entered, military personnel must use respiratory and skin protective measure when they approach DU contaminated objects and that they will be subjected to a medical survey. The names of the soldiers will be registered and urine and other samples will be taken.

SPAIN

ICBUW now has a friendly contact, Rafa Sanchez, who lives near Las Bardenas base, who is the co-ordinator of the Ecologist group. He says that they have been trying to get information about the possible use of DU at the base for years, and ministers either do not reply or the one before last said 'not during his term of office'. The anti base group has asked the new minister Alfonso Alonso to declassify the information on DU use there and to allow an independent study to visit the area and find out if it has been used. Although there have been initiatives at local, regional and national government level, nothing has come of them and he says the situation is still opaque.

TURKEY

Current data on Turkey's DU stockpiles is sparse. What is known is that the Turkish Land Forces Command has US-made M60A1 Patton Tanks. These tanks, whose

production stopped in the 1980s, are capable of firing DU munitions. They have been subsequently upgraded with a new turret system that is also capable of firing DU.

What little evidence there is suggests that Turkey received tank shells from the US in the nineties, after they had been rejected by Greece. In 2000, Janes Defence claimed that they received 85,471 105mm M774 rounds.

The true picture in Turkey will continue to be difficult to judge because of tight military security and state-imposed secrecy.

UNITED KINGDOM

Campaigners in the UK feel a particular responsibility towards the DU issue, as the UK is the only national government, other than the USA, to have used DU munitions in battle during the Gulf wars against Iraq in 1991 and 2003. There is now much wider awareness across the UK, and especially in Scotland (where the weapons are tested), of the dangers of the weapons both for innocent civilians and for serving military personnel. However the UK government remains intransigent and has repeatedly claimed that the weapons pose no danger, and that there is no reliable epidemiological evidence that reveals any connection with the increase in childhood cancers or birth deformities. The government have given no signs that they intend to comply with the European Parliament Resolution of November 2005 even though the UK is a member of the European Union, and held the EU Presidency at the time of the vote. The government also refuses to acknowledge that illnesses connected to Gulf War Syndrome in veterans could have been caused by inhaling or ingesting the DU 'dust' during their time on and near the battlefields of Iraq.

CADU (the Campaign Against Depleted Uranium) continues to pursue a wide range of activity to raise public awareness of the issues. One of these includes providing support for the 'Tooth Project'. This is a project initiated and being carried out by academics in Mount Sinai School of Medicine (USA), University of Leicester (UK) and Yarmouk University (Jordan). The aim is to investigate whether children's teeth, both historic and contemporary, from different parts of Iraq, in areas where DU munitions were fired during the wars, have been contaminated with DU.

One of our supporters has recently used the Freedom of Information to try to find out more about the UK development and stock of DU munitions. Although information on the stockpiles was withheld on grounds of 'national security', he did discover that very large sums of money have been and are involved. The development of CHARM 1, DU anti-tank ammunition, cost £213.8 million and the development of the CHARM 3 round – the 120mm tank round currently in use by the UK armed forces - has so far cost £161.5 million. The acronym for the British version of these weapons, CHARM, always seems particularly unfortunate.

There is increasing public and parliamentary interest in and unease about the UK use and manufacture of the weapons. In recognition of this, CADU is planning a wide-scale lobby of UK Members of Parliament in Autumn 2006.

Feb. 13, 2003 text of EP resolution

<http://www.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade3?PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P5-TA-2003-0062+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&L=EN&LEVEL=2&NAV=S&LSTDOC=Y&LSTDOC=N>

** Nov. 17, 2005: text of resolution

<http://www.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade3?PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2005-0439+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&L=EN&LEVEL=0&NAV=S&LSTDOC=Y&LSTDOC=N>

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We know that there may be many more initiatives across the continent of Europe and if anyone knows of some, or has contacts, please put us in touch,

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