

THE BERTRAND RUSSELL PEACE FOUNDATION

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### FALSE ACCUSATIONS AGAINST RUSSIA

‘On 15 August 2008, Human Rights Watch (HRW) accused the Russian Federation of having used cluster bombs in the conflict with Georgia. These accusations were widely repeated in the “western” media. The Russian Federation consistently denied any use of cluster ammunition. As it now turns out, the repeated accusations were wrong. The “evidence” provided by Human Rights Watch was based on pictures and mis-identified ammunition in those.

The ammunition in question is of Israeli origin and was used by the Georgian military. The Georgian Ministry of Defence has now admitted as much. Human Rights Watch has now also acknowledged this in a press statement. But it continues to claim Russian use of such weapons. It does so by pointing to its own older reports which clearly misidentified Georgian cluster ammunition as Russian made ...

While reviewing the story as documented below, notice the special role of Human Rights Watch’s “senior military analyst” Marc Garlasco in this propaganda effort. An August 15 HRW press release claimed:

Human Rights Watch said Russian aircraft dropped RBK-250 cluster bombs, each containing 30 PTAB 2.5M submunitions, on the town of Ruisi in the Kareli district of Georgia on August 12, 2008. On the same day, a cluster strike in the center of the town of Gori killed at least eight civilians and injured dozens, Human Rights Watch said.

In that press release and on its website Human Rights Watch provided a picture as evidence identifying the weapon debris shown as a Russian RBK-250 clusterbomb. But a zoomed picture of the “bomb” shows that the fins of this object are cambered. Cambered fins are typical for tube-launched missiles. While in the tube, the fins are wrapped around the missile body. When leaving the tube, the spring-loaded fins snap into their flight position but keep their original curved surface. In contrast, air dropped ‘dumb’ bombs such as the RBK-250 have straight fixed fins ... Note also that the diameter of an RBK-250 is 325 mm. The debris picture

shown by Human Rights Watch and the object identified as RBK-250 only has roughly half that diameter. The Human Rights Watch expert quoted with the wrong identifications is one Marc Garlasco:

“Cluster bombs are indiscriminate killers that most nations have agreed to outlaw,” said Marc Garlasco, senior military analyst at Human Rights Watch. “Russia’s use of this weapon is not only deadly to civilians, but also an insult to international efforts to avoid a global humanitarian disaster of the kind caused by landmines.”

One wonders how Human Rights Watch and Marc Garlasco, its senior military analyst quoted in the report, missed those obvious inconsistencies in their “evidence” when making their accusations.

In its second report of 21 August 2008, Human Rights Watch showed pictures from alleged Russian sub-ammunition on Georgian ground:

Human Rights Watch researchers saw and photographed unexploded submunitions from cluster munitions in and around the villages of Shindisi, in the Gori district of Georgia ...

“Many people have died because of Russia’s use of cluster munitions in Georgia, even as Moscow denied it had used this barbaric weapon,” said Marc Garlasco, senior military analyst at Human Rights Watch. “Many more people could be killed or wounded unless Russia allows professional demining organizations to enter at once to clean the affected areas.”

This second report contains pictures of unexploded submunitions as evidence. A Human Rights Watch chart identifies an M85 submunition as produced by various “western” countries. The bomblet in the picture is identified as PTAB 2.5M, content of the Russian RBK-250 clusterbombs. It is obvious that the pictures from Georgia resemble the western submunitions type. Pictures from the 2006 Lebanon war show similar M85 submunitions dropped by Israel. Again one has to ask why Human Rights Watch senior military analyst Marc Garlasco mis-identifies these.

The government of Georgia has admitted that it used cluster ammunition in the recent war. It did so after a request from a different Human Rights Watch expert:

The Georgian MoD released a press statement on Monday evening after Human Rights Watch (HRW) said on September 1 that in a letter sent to HRW, the Georgian side had admitted to using cluster bombs in the vicinity of Roki Tunnel, linking breakaway South Ossetia with Russia.

“The Georgian armed forces have GRADLAR 160 multiple launch rocket systems and MK4 LAR 160 type (with M85 bomblets) rockets with a range of 45 kilometers,” the Georgian MoD said.

The GRADLAR 160 is a product of the Israel Military Industry Ltd. It uses tube-launched missiles with a diameter of 160mm and M85 submunition.

It seems that a different researcher than Marc Garlasco at Human Rights Watch finally made a correct identification and contacted the Georgians:

Bonnie Docherty, arms division researcher at HRW, said on September 1 that M85 cluster munitions were discovered in Shindisi, a village outside breakaway South Ossetia, north of the town of Gori. Docherty said that while this could point to Russian use, Moscow was not known to have that particular make in its arsenal. She added that it was possible that the M85 munitions had been scattered about, having been hit in a Russian strike.

It is also possible, and much more likely, that Georgian troops fired their cluster-ammunition rockets against advancing Russian troops in Shindisi, i.e. on Georgian native ground, hitting their own population. A Russian strike on a Georgian GRADLAR launcher would certainly not have 'scattered' such ammunition intact ...

Despite the new finding that submunitions found in Shindisi are not of Russian origin, Human Rights Watch in its 1 September press release still speaks of Russian cluster bomb usage:

Human Rights Watch said it welcomed Georgia's willingness to acknowledge its use of cluster munitions and expressed hope that this was a first step toward adopting the treaty ...

In August, Human Rights Watch documented Russia's use of several types of cluster munitions, both air- and ground-launched, in a number of locations in Georgia's Gori district, causing 11 civilian deaths and wounding dozens more (<http://hrw.org/english/docs/2008/08/20/georgi19660.htm>). Russia continues to deny using cluster munitions.

"Russia has yet to own up to using cluster munitions and the resulting civilian casualties," said Garlasco.

But all Human Rights Watch 'documented' in its earlier reports was misidentified debris and submunition. On what basis, then, is Marc Garlasco again making these accusations when the only proof for them are the August 15 and August 21 HRW reports which mistakenly identify Israeli made rockets and submunitions as Russian? ...

If Human Rights Watch wants to achieve a somewhat believable, neutral position in conflicts, it would be well advised to distance itself from a 'senior military analyst' who is not able to distinguish 160 mm tube launched rockets from 325 mm airdrop bombs and uses such false 'evidence' for partisan accusation.

We again point to the professional history of Marc Garlasco and

question his suitability for his current “human rights” job:

“Before coming to HRW, Marc spent seven years in the Pentagon as a senior intelligence analyst covering Iraq. His last position there was chief of high-value targeting during the Iraq War in 2003. Marc was on the Operation Desert Fox (Iraq) Battle Damage Assessment team in 1998, led a Pentagon Battle Damage Assessment team to Kosovo in 1999, and recommended thousands of aim points on hundreds of targets during operations in Iraq and Serbia. He also participated in over 50 interrogations as a subject matter expert”.

*Source: www.moonofalabama.org, 2 September 2008*

### **A COMMUNICATION FROM HONDURAS**

*Long-time Spokesman subscriber Nigel J. Potter writes:*

You should take a look at Honduran politics. Honduras boasts the third biggest American Embassy in the world (after Iraq and Israel). Why should a little, third world, undeveloped banana republic like Honduras (I use such terms on purpose) have a modern, state-of-the-art fortress on its land? ... Well, of course, because the US was waging war in Nicaragua (with the Contras), in El Salvador (against the FMLN) and Guatemala, and basically dominating the whole continent. It is not without cause that Honduras has been nicknamed ‘USS Honduras’.

Mel Zelaya is the first President and politician who, in the 18 years I have been here, has caught my attention. He can’t pay his teachers (which is why they are always on strike) and health services are abysmal, but he has actually given the finger to the gringos. He goes to Cuba, invites to visit and meets up with Hugo Chavez, Evo Morales and Ortega. He openly denounces capitalism and berates the United States for its coups in Latin American countries. Furthermore, he advocates the legalisation of drugs, given the disastrous ‘war on drugs’ (did no one learn the lessons of the Volstead Act and prohibition?).

The press is up in arms against Zelaya because this ‘free’ press is run by local élites who all have interests in the US. What amazes me is that Zelaya, one of the élite, dare say such things. Where is his support coming from? Perhaps Mel Zelaya is just more geared up than the rest. Just another opportunistic politician (why should he be different from the rest?). He realises there are cracks fast appearing in the American Empire. The collapse of said Empire may take us all with it, but it is collapsing, especially in Latin America, given the USA’s obsession with Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan.