

FACT SHEET

NEW UNITED STATES POLICY ON LANDMINES: REDUCING HUMANITARIAN RISK AND SAVING LIVES OF UNITED STATES SOLDIERS

PRESIDENTIAL ACTION:

The United States is committed to eliminating the humanitarian risks posed by landmines.

The indiscriminate use of persistent landmines is a serious humanitarian problem around the world. Persistent landmines are those munitions that remain lethal indefinitely, affecting civilians long after military action is over.

At the same time, the military capabilities provided by landmines remain necessary for the United States military to protect our forces and save lives.

To address the humanitarian problem caused by the indiscriminate use of persistent landmines, the President has announced a bold, comprehensive policy on the use of landmines that, unlike any previous landmine policy, covers all persistent landmines, both anti-personnel AND anti-vehicle.

No country does more than the United States to support humanitarian mine action, including landmine clearance, mine risk education, and victim assistance.

The United States has provided nearly \$800 million to 46 countries since 1993 to clear landmines and help civilians.

Funding for the State Department's portion of the U.S. Humanitarian Mine Action Program will be increased by an additional 50 percent over FY03 baseline levels to \$70 million a year, significantly more than any other single country.

THE NEW POLICY:

The United States has committed to eliminate persistent landmines of all types from its arsenal.

The United States will continue to develop non-persistent anti-personnel and anti-tank landmines. As with the current United States inventory of non-persistent landmines, these mines will continue to meet or exceed international standards for self-destruction and self-deactivation. This ensures that, after they are no longer needed for the battlefield, these landmines will detonate or turn themselves off, eliminating the threat to civilians.

The United States will continue to research and develop enhancements to the current technology of self-destructing/self deactivating landmines to develop and preserve military capabilities that address our transformational goals.

The United States will seek a worldwide ban on the sale or export of all persistent landmines to prevent the spread of technology that kills and maims civilians.

Within one year, the United States will no longer have any non-detectable mine of any type in its arsenal.

Today, persistent anti-personnel landmines are ONLY stockpiled for use by the United States in fulfillment of our treaty obligations to the Republic of Korea. Between now and the end of 2010, persistent anti-vehicle mines can only be employed outside the Republic of Korea when authorized by the President. After 2010, the United States will not employ either of these types of landmines.

Within two years, the United States will begin the destruction of those persistent landmines that are not needed for the protection of Korea.

Funding for the State Department's portion of the U.S. Humanitarian Mine Action Program will be increased by an additional 50 percent over FY 03 baseline levels to \$70 million a year, significantly more than any other single country.

BACKGROUND:

The Ottawa Convention entered into force in 1999. Parties to the Treaty commit not to use, produce, or transfer anti-personnel landmines. They further commit to destroy all of their stockpiled anti-personnel landmines, except those for demining training, within four years of joining the Treaty.

The Ottawa Convention does not restrict the entire class of more powerful anti-vehicle landmines and commits its adherents to the costly and unnecessary act of clearing every last mine in order to achieve a "mine-free" status.

The humanitarian harm caused by anti-vehicle landmines is significant. Anti-vehicle mines prevent refugees from traveling home, food aid from reaching the needy, and the free exchange of goods vital for economic prosperity, as well as causing injury or death to the occupants of vehicles. (A recent report from Angola suggests that up to 70 percent of that country's roads are blocked by persistent anti-vehicle mines.)

The United States will not join the Ottawa Convention because its terms would have required us to give up a needed military capability. However, this new policy dramatically reduces the danger posed to civilians from unexploded landmines - both anti-personnel and anti-vehicle - left behind after military conflicts.

President Bush has charted a new course by addressing the entire threat to innocent civilians from the lingering nature of persistent landmines -- both anti-personnel AND anti-vehicle.

Self-destructing/self-deactivating landmines have been rigorously tested and have never failed to destroy themselves or become inert within a set time. Furthermore, all are battery operated. In the event that a self-destructing/self-deactivating mine malfunctions, the battery will die at a set period of time (90 days for example) and render the mine inert.

Landmines still have a valid and essential role protecting United States forces in military operations. Landmines enable a commander to shape the battlefield to his advantage. They deny the enemy freedom to maneuver; enhance effectiveness of other weapons (such as small arms, artillery or combat aircraft); allow us to fight with fewer forces against a larger enemy

force; and protect our forces, saving the lives of our men and women in uniform and of those civilians they defend. No other weapon currently exists that provides all the capabilities provided by landmines.

The United States was one of the first countries to support humanitarian demining efforts back in 1988 when it funded the first such programs in Afghanistan.

Since that time, the United States has consistently been one of the world's strongest supporters of humanitarian mine action, providing nearly \$800 million to 46 countries since 1993 when the United States Humanitarian Mine Action Program was formally established.

United States efforts include support for mine clearance operations, mine risk education, survivors assistance, research and development, training and a public-private partnership program.

The United States Department of Defense trains countries in the procedures of landmine clearance, mine risk education, and victim assistance, as well as in the development of leadership and organizational skills necessary to sustain these programs after the departure of United States military trainers. In addition, a DOD research and development program creates new technologies to facilitate landmine clearance.