
U.S. Initiatives for Demining and Landmine Control

Department of State Fact Sheet

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Anti-personnel landmines are the weapon of choice for many government and insurgent groups. They are cheap, easy to manufacture and use, difficult to detect, and expensive and dangerous to remove. Usually, landmines are not removed after armed conflict ends. They are left for populations and, more recently, peace-keepers to deal with. While the U.S. military employs landmines responsibly and in accordance with international law, others often use them in unconventional and indiscriminate ways against civilian populations to generate fear, inhibit refugee repatriation, disrupt economic reconstruction, and generally create chaos in fragile governments.

Addressing the horrible toll in innocent civilian casualties caused by the irresponsible and indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines is a high priority of the [Clinton] Administration. Given the immediacy and the complexity of the problem, the U.S. has developed a comprehensive, four-track strategy.

DEMINING INITIATIVES

The U.S. currently assists demining programs in Cambodia, Afghanistan, Nicaragua, and Mozambique. These follow five steps: landmine assessment, training in mine awareness, education and training in mine clearance, transition of responsibility for the program to the host government or other designated entity (e.g., an international organization or a private non-governmental organization), and follow-on assistance. Using this general plan, the Administration is initiating this year support of demining efforts in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Honduras, and Costa Rica. There are significant landmine problems in Angola, Somalia, Rwanda, and Liberia as well, but unrest in those countries has prevented the implementation of U.S. assistance. By the end of 1994, the U.S. aims to have programs in at least nine countries where landmines are a serious problem. The Administration hopes to expand the program to other countries; it has requested additional funding for FY 1995, particularly for research and development of technologies to assist affected nations to detect and clear landmines.

EFFORTS TO STRENGTHEN THE CONVENTION ON CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS (particularly Protocol II which governs the use of landmines)

The convention has been transmitted to the Senate for advice and consent to ratification. The U.S. is pressing for substantial improvements to the landmine protocol, such as making it applicable to internal conflicts, requiring all mines to have a substantial metallic content, requiring certain mines to be self-deactivating, and establishing verification procedures.

MORATORIA ON LANDMINE TRANSFERS

In October 1992, the U.S. adopted a unilateral export moratorium on anti-personnel landmines. This moratorium was extended in 1993 for three years [i.e., until 22 October 1996]. In 1993, the UN General Assembly unanimously adopted a U.S. resolution calling for moratoria on exports of landmines that pose a grave risk to civilians. The U.S. is strongly urging key countries to adhere to moratoria. To date, eight other countries formally have declared moratoria of their own; several have export controls in place.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A MORE PERMANENT INTERNATIONAL CONTROL MECHANISM

The export moratoria are only temporary measures. The U.S. is engaged in a fast-track policy review to develop a proposal for a more permanent multilateral anti-personnel landmine control regime. It is taking a rigorous, systematic look at a broad range of options. The Administration is dedicated to building the international consensus necessary to bring about an effective control regime in the shortest possible time.

For further information see *Hidden Killers: The Global Problem with Uncleared Landmines*, U.S. Department of State, July 1993, available from the Bureau of political-Military Affairs, tel. 202-647-6968.