
Implementation of U.S. Anti-Personnel Landmine Policy

By

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[The following is a reprint of the 1 July 1998 remarks of Ms. Rosenblum at the Crane Army Ammunition Activity near Bloomington Indiana, on the occasion of the destruction of the last 80 non-self-destructing anti-personnel landmines in the U.S. Army inventory.]

We are here today to reaffirm—through action, not just words, the U.S. commitment to putting an end to the human tragedy and suffering caused by non-self-destructing Anti-Personnel Landmines (APL).

As a significant part of this commitment, President Clinton directed, in May 1996, that the United States would destroy, by the end of 1999, our inventory of non-self-destructing anti-personnel landmines, except those needed for the defense of South Korea or for training purposes. Since that time, we have destroyed approximately 3.3 million of these mines.

We are now gathered here—18 months in advance of the 1999 deadline—to witness the destruction of the last few non-self-destructing mines in the U.S. inventory, in compliance with the President's 1996 anti-personnel landmine directive.

This is indeed an important step and, although this was a defense-wide effort from beginning to end, I want to particularly recognize the U.S. Army and its Industrial Operations Command, as DoD's Executive Agent, for the significant part they played in demilitarizing these mines well ahead of schedule.

You are probably already aware that the non-self-destructing anti-personnel landmine is the most dangerous type of mine. It is referred to as a "dumb" or long-lived mine, because it remains a threat long after a conflict is over. It claims the lives of numerous, innocent civilians and cannot distinguish friend from foe.

The indiscriminate and irresponsible use of this deadly weapon, I might add, is what has led to the world's humanitarian tragedy that we hear and read so much about. We hear a lot of statistics, but I want to stress that, unfortunately, this tragedy extends beyond individual lives lost. Famine, population displacement, and destructive socioeconomic implications are but a few of the collateral fallout from mines.

It was with vision and foresight that the United States replaced this technology in the 1970s, after the Vietnam War, in fact. We are, therefore, thankful that—even before today—we as a nation have not been considered a cause of this humanitarian tragedy.

Rather, we have taken a series of concrete, positive steps to resolve the problems caused by landmines, such as the step you have made with us today by your presence here at Crane Army Ammunition Activity.

Presidential Directive

We are extremely proud of the fact that the United States—just over two years ago—has taken unilateral steps to voluntarily eliminate our non-self-destructing landmines. These steps have led us to this day—and I will continue to emphasize—much sooner than any of us originally anticipated!

Let me digress for just a moment, because I think it is important to put today's event in the context of our overall efforts. Let me share with you some facts that not many people may know. President Clinton was the first world leader to call for a comprehensive, global elimination of APL at the United Nations in 1994.

On December 10, 1996, a United Nations General Assembly resolution, urging states to pursue an agreement to ban anti-personnel landmines—introduced by the United States—passed overwhelmingly (155-0).

On January 17, 1997, the United States permanently banned the export and transfer of anti-personnel landmines.

Additionally, in September 1997, the President directed the Department of Defense to develop alternatives to APL so that, by the year 2003, we can end the use of APL outside Korea. As for Korea, the objective is to have alternatives to APL ready by 2006.

Finally, the Administration also has made clear that the "U.S. will sign the Ottawa Convention by 2006, if we succeed in identifying and fielding suitable alternatives to our APL and mixed anti-tank systems by then."

And I am happy to report to all of you today that we are aggressively striving to achieve these objectives.

Encouraging Others to Support Our Efforts

The destruction of all of approximately 3.3 million U.S. non-self-destructing anti-personnel landmines is certainly a very important step, but, as I have previously mentioned, it is but only one example of many significant contributions the United States is making towards the elimination of APL.

It is one thing to work towards an effective anti-personnel landmine ban, but the other half of the equation—which is equally important and should not be forgotten—is what to do about the mines that are already in the ground and taking daily tolls in terms of lives and injuries. Well, we have a plan of action to address that, too!

Last September, the Administration announced its "Global Humanitarian Demining 2010 Initiative." This initiative's goal is to accelerate and expand the worldwide effort to eliminate the threat posed by anti-personnel landmines to civilians worldwide by the year 2010 through an effective international campaign.

U.S. and DOD Demining Programs

Five years ago, the United States did not have a comprehensive humanitarian demining program. Today, we are providing training and equipment assistance to 19 countries and have dedicated over \$153 million over the past five years to assist in global humanitarian demining

operations. This fiscal year alone the United States will spend upward of \$93 million. And I can assure you this program will continue to grow.

We view demining as one of the most important humanitarian missions for the United States in the post-Cold War era. Indeed, ever since the Vietnam War, and even going back to the First and Second World Wars, U.S. soldiers and Marines have understood the terrible risks that anti-personnel landmines—in particular, non-self-destructing ones—can pose to innocent civilians.

In support of this effort, U.S. military personnel have worked hard to train deminers and help countries establish self-sustaining mine awareness and indigenous demining capabilities. We accomplish this through a "train-the-trainer" program.

This program has resulted in dramatic success. For example, in Cambodia, more than 1,200 deminers have been trained, and the death rate has dropped by one-half. In Namibia, 240,000 acres have been cleared, and the casualty rate has decreased by 90 percent. In Central America, thanks to the intensive demining efforts of recent years, we expect to be able to declare that region "mine free" by the year 2000.

Another success story is DoD's humanitarian demining R&D program. The program applies existing technology and attempts to quickly put that technology into the field through rapid prototyping. Last year, 26 innovative projects adapted commercial off-the-shelf equipment and mature technologies to demonstrate and transition equipment for landmine clearance, detection, protection of deminers, and mine awareness training to the international community.

In addition to emphasizing the important role of the U.S. military in humanitarian demining operations worldwide and our humanitarian demining R&D efforts, let me briefly mention the importance of the Defense Department's public and private partnerships. One example I can share with you is our partnership with Time-Warner/DC Comics. This particular partnership involves the publication of a comic book for Central America, written in Spanish and featuring Superman and Wonder Woman, that is geared to promote mine awareness, particularly for children. This is actually our second mine awareness comic book—the first successful effort was the Superman comic book written for Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1996.

Before I close, I want to convey that I am especially proud of our Special Operations Forces personnel, in these two theaters, whose facility in local languages and cultures helped to produce materials accepted as very authentic by the peoples of these region.

As you can see, the United States believes strongly in the need to take concrete steps now to alleviate the humanitarian crisis caused by the indiscriminate and irresponsible use of anti-personnel landmines. The urgency of these efforts is reflected in the alarming statistics that are still a reality in many parts of the world: thousands of civilians, including many children, killed or maimed each year; thousands of acres of agricultural land left fallow; disruption to markets; and economic growth and development stymied, just to name a few of the consequences of landmine infestation.

The United States continues to encourage other nations to end the indiscriminate and irresponsible use and export of anti-personnel landmines and to enhance our collective efforts to remove existing landmines—the hidden killers—which have been emplaced in the ground over time. All of these are important steps in ending the humanitarian crisis caused by landmines.