



The Time to Act on the U.S. Landmine Policy is Now

January 31, 2022

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
Washington, D.C.

cc: National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan;
Secretary of State Antony Blinken;
Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin

Dear Mr. President:

Today marks the second anniversary of the current U.S. landmine policy. On the campaign trail, you promised to “promptly roll back” President Donald Trump’s antipersonnel landmine policy, which you deemed “reckless.” We could not agree more. The United States’ current landmine policy is dangerous and fails to recognize the harm these indiscriminate weapons have on civilians. However, after more than a year in office, we are disappointed by your inaction on this grave matter. We urge you to take immediate action to fulfill your campaign promise. It’s time to ban antipersonnel landmines, to set the United States on a path to accede to the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty, and to protect civilians around the world.

While the United States is not yet a signatory, under President Barack Obama’s 2014 policy the U.S. had functionally adhered to most key provisions of the Mine Ban Treaty – except those prohibiting the U.S. from ordering the use of landmines on the Korean peninsula. However, the current new landmine policy announced in January 2020, by the Trump administration, further set the U.S. apart from its allies and the global consensus by allowing for the use of landmines anywhere in the world.

Following UN Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield’s remarks in April 2021 that your administration was conducting a landmine policy review, the U.S. Campaign to Ban Landmines - U.S. Cluster Munition Coalition (USCBL-USCMC) and our partners [strongly encouraged you to adopt a policy to ban the use](#), production, acquisition, stockpiling and transfer of antipersonnel landmines, and to set the United States on course to swiftly accede to the Mine Ban Treaty.

Landmines are victim-activated and cannot distinguish between the footstep of a combatant or a civilian, rendering their use incapable of abiding by international humanitarian law. Every day, these barbaric weapons continue to maim and kill civilians, at least 40% of civilian victims are children – often long after a conflict has ended. In 2020, landmines resulted in at least 4,352 casualties globally, [according to the Landmine Monitor’s most recent report](#). The U.S. cannot continue to endorse these inhumane weapons.

For nearly 25 years, the world has rejected antipersonnel landmines through the Mine Ban Treaty – to which 164 countries, including every other member of NATO, are states parties – in recognition of the horrific effects landmines have on civilians around the world.

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Fortunately, in recognition of the threats landmines pose to civilians and U.S. service members alike, the U.S. military has not deployed antipersonnel landmines since 1991, excluding the use of a single munition in 2002; it has not exported them since 1992; and has not produced them since 1997. While these are positive trends, we cannot ignore that for the last 25 years the U.S. has made the intentional decision to remain in the company of countries like China, North Korea, Russia and Syria by stockpiling antipersonnel landmines and failing to formally reject the use of landmines once and for all.

We have a moral obligation to the past victims of landmines and to future generations to do better.

We ask your administration to take the following long-overdue steps:

- Complete the review of the U.S. landmine policy and publish its findings.
- Take immediate executive action to ban the use of antipersonnel landmines without geographic exceptions, including the Korean peninsula.
- Ban the development, production, stockpiling, and acquisition of all antipersonnel landmines.
- Ban the sale or transfer of any type of antipersonnel landmines to any other government or partner.
- Lay out an accelerated timeline for the destruction of all stockpiled landmines, and create mechanisms to ensure public transparency on progress towards that goal.
- Commit to actively and constructively participate in regular meetings of the Mine Ban Treaty.
- Set the U.S. on a direct path to accede to the Mine Ban Treaty by 2023, by delivering the treaty to the Senate and working to secure the Senate's prompt advice and consent.
- Consult regularly with civil society and victim advocates throughout the decision-making and implementation process for this significant policy change.

Two years of this reckless and immoral policy is two years too long. We urge immediate action to ban the use of anti-personnel landmines without geographic exceptions, and to set the U.S. on a short direct path to join the Mine Ban Treaty by 2023.

Regards,

U.S. Campaign to Ban Landmines - U.S. Cluster Munition Coalition Steering Committee:

Amnesty International USA

Arms Control Association

Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC)

Friends Committee on National Legislation

Human Rights Watch

Humanity & Inclusion

Legacies of War

Physicians for Human Rights

UNICEF USA

West Virginia Campaign to Ban Landmines and Cluster Munitions/Proud Students Against Landmines (PSALM)

U.S. Campaign to Ban Landmines - U.S. Cluster Munition Coalition (USCBL-USCMC):

American Friends Service Committee

Democracy for the Arab World Now (DAWN)

Global Health Partners

Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ

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Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
Mines Advisory Group (MAG)
Peace Direct
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Saferworld (Washington Office)
United Church of Christ, Justice and Local Church Ministries
Win Without War
Women for Weapons Trade Transparency
Women's Action for New Directions (WAND)
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

Partners:

Campana Colombiana Contra Minas
CARE USA
Center for International Policy
CODEPINK
CORE Group
Corruption Tracker Project
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Plan International
The Episcopal Church
War Child Sweden
Washington Office on Latin America
Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict

The USCBL-USCMC is a coalition of non-governmental organizations working to ensure that the U.S. comprehensively prohibits antipersonnel mines and joins the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty, and calls for sustained U.S. government financial support for mine clearance and victim assistance.