



4 April: International Mine Awareness Day

Smart Mines & Trump: Greenlighting barbaric weapons puts civilians in grave danger

Ottawa, 1 April 2020 - On January 31, the Trump Administration cancelled a policy to eliminate all antipersonnel landmines and announced the authorisation to use 'smart' landmines. HI, co-founder of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), and co-recipient of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize, denounced a major setback in the fight against these barbaric weapons. As we observe the International Mine Awareness Day on April 4, HI calls the U.S. to reverse this decision that threatens the resounding success of the Ottawa Convention which prohibits landmines and has reduced by 3 the number of victims in 20 years.

HI denounces this **abhorrent decision** that may threaten the progress achieved in 20 years thanks to the framework of the Ottawa Convention that bans landmines.

- **Quote 1:** "It is unimaginable that after more than 20 years of fighting and victories against these infamous weapons, The U.S. are launching the use of smart mine! We refuse to go back to the scenario of the 90s, when we counted more than 20,000 victims a year," said Emmanuel Sauvage, Head of the Armed Violence Reduction Division at HI. "In addition to being irresponsible and giving a negative signal to countries that haven't joined the Convention, the policy of the United States is absurd."

The new policy goes against decades of non-use. How can the new policy state that landmines are "a vital tool in conventional warfare" when **the U.S. military hasn't chosen to use them in decades?**

- **Quote 2:** "As the United States, as well as the rest of the world, have now to fight the Covid-19 which might have serious health, economic and social consequences", adds Emmanuel Sauvage, "And as UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres called for an 'immediate global ceasefire' to prioritize the fight against the pandemic, this decision appears totally irrelevant and does not correspond to the challenges we are now facing. Landmine is not a 'vital tool' as said by the US administration in its decision last January. What is 'vital' is to join worldwide efforts to combat the Covid-19. We urge the Trump administration to reverse this decision and to concentrate on the first actual priority."

- **Quote 3:** "We urge the Trump administration to reverse this decision and to concentrate on the first actual priority: addressing the vulnerabilities of 60 million people living in mine/ERW affected countries where covid-19 could further increase vulnerability of people affected directly or indirectly by mines", said Jérôme Bobin, Executive Director of Humanity & Inclusion Canada.

The resounding victory of the Ottawa Convention

In 1997, the Ottawa Convention prohibiting the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel mines marked a turning point in the fight against landmines. In 20 years of application, the Convention has proved effective: There are [164 States parties](#) to the Convention, making the ban on landmines a universal norm of international humanitarian law. The [U.S.](#) is one of the few countries that has yet to join the 1997 Mine Ban Convention , sharing ranks with China, Egypt, India, Israel, Pakistan, and Russia. In twenty years, the use of landmines has **almost been eradicated**.

The Ottawa Convention has almost completely dried up the trade of this weapon: In 1999, 50 states were still producing landmines and 160 million landmines were stockpiled. Today only 11 states still produce these weapons and stockpiles are less than 50 million landmines.

There is no information on the production of this weapon by any arms companies; commercialisation seems to have been abandoned. Remaining stockpiles continue to be destroyed: stockpiles were estimated at 160 million landmines in 1999, against less than 50 million in 2018. The use of antipersonnel mines is almost eradicated.

More than 120,000 casualties have been recorded in the Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor database in the period 1999–2018, with the annual number of recorded victims divided by 3 in 15 years. The global trend has indeed been positive showing the **resounding victory of the Ottawa Convention**. Nonetheless, 2018 was the fourth year in a row with exceptionally high numbers of recorded casualties due to landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW)- including improvised types that act as antipersonnel mines, cluster munition remnants, and other ERW.

Globally at least **60 million people live in contaminated areas**. These data show that we cannot enjoy the luxury to take the Ottawa Convention for granted. It needs continuous strengthening instead of being cowardly attacked by some states.

For the first time in seven years, funding dedicated to victim assistance as part of the global mine action budget increased in 2018. HI calls on the donor community to turn this positive change into a trend. States Parties in a position to provide assistance should continue keeping people at the centre of their action supporting better access to vital

services for people injured, survivors, affected families and communities in humanitarian crisis, situations of protracted conflict, and in development contexts.

"There are no such things as 'smart' mines!"

Presented by the Trump administration as "an important tool," the Pentagon policy states that the "advanced, non-persistent landmine" that is currently under development, would deactivate after a period of time, and would be "designed to reduce unintended harm to civilians and partner forces".

- **Quote 4:** *"This is absolute nonsense", said HI mines and explosive weapons expert Gary Toombs. "There are no such things as 'smart' landmines! Mines that self-destruct remotely have, like any electronic device, the potential to fail and may not function or may malfunction, leaving behind dangerous explosives. Even fragments of improperly destroyed landmines can be dangerous!"*

About HI

HI is an independent international aid organisation. It has been working in situations of poverty and exclusion, conflict and disaster for 30 years. Working alongside persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, our action and testimony are focused on responding to their essential needs, improving their living conditions, and promoting respect for their dignity and basic rights. Since it was founded in 1982, HI has set up development programmes in more than 60 countries and intervenes in numerous emergency situations. The network of eight national associations (Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States) works constantly to mobilise resources, jointly manage projects and to increase the impact of the organisation's principles and actions. HI is one of six founding organisations of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), the co-winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997 and the winner of the Conrad N. Hilton Award in 2011. HI takes action and campaigns in places where "living in dignity" is no easy task.

Learn more:

<https://hi-canada.org/en/petition-mines>

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