

September 12, 2014

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20500

CC: Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel  
National Security Advisor Susan Rice  
Under Secretary of State Rose Gottemoeller  
Ambassador Samantha Power

Re: 1997 Mine Ban Treaty

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing on behalf of the US Campaign to Ban Landmines, a nationwide coalition of non-governmental organizations, with respect to the new US policy on landmines announced on June 27.

The US Campaign to Ban Landmines views the recent US statement of intent to join the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty in the future and its commitment not to produce or acquire antipersonnel landmines ever again as positive steps in the right direction. Nonetheless, we feel strongly that additional measures are needed to ensure that landmines are never used again by the US or others.

We understand the policy review is ongoing, and would like to suggest a number of steps the Obama administration should undertake as it concludes the review.

Most notably, under the new policy, the US still reserves the right to use its stockpiled antipersonnel mines anywhere in the world until they expire within the next two decades. We are concerned by the contradictory nature of this policy as on the one hand the US has acknowledged that antipersonnel mines should no longer be produced or acquired, and should be banned. Yet on the other hand, it makes clear the potential for them to be used by the United States over the next twenty years. We urge you to consider expanding your commitment to include no further use while also accelerating the destruction of all remaining US stocks of antipersonnel mines

Since 1991, the US has fought a wide range of conflicts, both high and low intensity in a variety of environments, and has demonstrated that it can employ alternative strategies, tactics, and weaponry without having to resort to antipersonnel mines. With the exception of a single mine in Afghanistan, the US has refrained from using antipersonnel landmines since 1991--in part because the broadly ratified Mine Ban Treaty has stigmatized these weapons.

It is difficult to envision why the US would ever use antipersonnel mines again,



CHAIR

Human Rights Watch  
1630 Connecticut Ave. NW  
Suite 500  
Washington, DC 20009  
Phone: (202) 612-4351  
Fax: (202) 612-4375  
banmineusa@hrw.org  
www.banminesusa.org

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both because of a lack of need for such weapons and because any use would engender condemnation from the US's closest allies.

We therefore question the cost and need for the "high fidelity modeling and simulation effort" to be undertaken by the Defense Department "to ascertain how to mitigate the risks associated with the loss of anti-personnel landmines." The US has spent more than one billion dollars on the development and production of systems that could be considered alternatives to antipersonnel mines.

The best next step for the administration would be to announce an explicit moratorium on use until the US joins the Mine Ban Treaty and accelerated destruction of existing stocks, including transparency regarding the stockpile types and numbers, and the destruction timetable.

Despite the contentious political environment, we nonetheless urge that the accession documents for the Mine Ban Treaty be prepared so that you can send the package to the Senate for its advice and consent before you leave office on January 21, 2017.

As a signal of its support, we also encourage the United States to vote in favor of the annual non-binding United Nations General Assembly resolution promoting universalization and implementation of the Mine Ban Treaty, instead of abstaining from the vote as it has done every year since 1997.

We would be happy to discuss these and other measures that the US government could take on landmines with your representatives at any time. We have also attached a "Questions and Answers" paper that Human Rights Watch as the campaign's chair has prepared on the new US landmine policy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Goose".

Stephen D. Goose, Chair  
U.S. Campaign to Ban Landmines