

Letter to Senator John Warner from Virginia Veterans Urging a Ban on Antipersonnel Landmines

Dear Senator Warner:

U.S. soldiers have fallen to antipersonnel (AP) landmines in every American-fought conflict since World War II. Mines are friends to no one—they maim or kill 15,000-20,000 people each year, mostly innocent people. AP mines, most of them our own, were responsible for up to one third of U.S. casualties in the Vietnam Conflict and Gulf War. Several American soldiers serving in Afghanistan have already been injured and killed by AP mines during *Operation Enduring Freedom*.

We understand that the Bush Administration is currently determining new US landmine policies and that these policies may move our country away from banning AP mines. We also understand that the last time the US military deployed AP mines was during the Persian Gulf War, and we are concerned that the weapon may be deployed if US troops are sent into Iraq. As Virginia veterans, we ask you to urge President Bush to eliminate AP mines from the US arsenal.

We are not alone in our support for banning AP landmines and our belief in the Mine Ban Treaty’s humanitarian, military, and diplomatic necessity. In May, 2001, eight retired US generals and admirals sent a letter asking President Bush to join the Mine Ban Treaty. Signed by such respected leaders as Lt. General James Hollingsworth, former commander of U.S. troops in Korea, and Lt. General Hal Moore, former commander of troops in Vietnam who was portrayed in the film “We Were Soldiers,” this letter provides further military rationale for treaty accession. In November, 2001, more than 500 veterans from all 50 states sent a letter to President Bush urging him to ban AP mines. In December, 2001, 124 Members of the House of Representatives –both Democrats and Republicans– sent a similar letter to the President.

The humanitarian reasons for supporting the Mine Ban Treaty are striking. The overwhelming majority of landmine victims are civilians in poor countries who have severely limited access to doctors, blood transfusions, and prosthetic limbs. One third of landmine victims are children. Fortunately, however, the Mine Ban Treaty has already begun saving lives. Since 1997, three quarters of the world's nations have joined the Mine Ban Treaty, and AP mine exports and production have dramatically decreased. Most importantly, casualty rates have fallen. While U.S. support of landmine victim assistance and demining initiatives is very important, a US ban on the weapon will help further stigmatize landmine use among the few remaining countries that deploy this indiscriminate and insidious weapon of terror.

Nearly all of our NATO allies have ratified the Mine Ban Treaty, demonstrating that humanitarian concerns can be met without limiting their ability to complete their missions and protect their troops. So now, as citizens, constituents, and veterans, we ask you, as a leader of the Senate Committee on Armed Services, to honor your commitment to protect U.S. troops and innocent civilians by urging President Bush to ban AP mines. Thank you for giving your attention to this pressing matter.

Sincerely,

Please print clearly.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Rank at Retirement</i>	<i>Branch of Service</i>	<i>Years/Location of Service</i>
1. _____			
Full Mailing Address	_____		
Phone Number/Email	_____		
2. _____			
Full Mailing Address	_____		
Phone Number/Email	_____		
3. _____			
Full Mailing Address	_____		
Phone Number/Email	_____		

**Please circulate among the MI veterans you know and send letters to USCBL/ Care of Physicians for Human Rights/
100 Boylston Street/ Suite 702/ Boston, MA 02116 or fax to 617-695-0307 or e-mail to banmines@phrusa.org.
For more information, call 617-695-0041 or visit www.banminesusa.org. Deadline: January 31, 2003**