

International Campaign to Ban Landmines Australian Network Inc.

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Memorandum 85
May/June 2009



Making the Ban on Cluster Munitions Universal

May 2009

In 1993, nine-year-old Phonsay was playing in the fields when a friend found what he thought was a ball and threw it at him. Fortunately, Phonsay missed the catch. The ball was, in fact, a cluster bomb. Phonsay does not remember much of what happened next. An explosion caused burning shrapnel to tear a hole in his skull and left him unconscious. When he regained consciousness 25 days later, he discovered that brain damage had left him hemiplegic – he had lost the use of his entire left side. Although he can now talk and is able to walk, he still has difficulty comprehending how he became a casualty of a war that ended long before he was born.

In Dublin between 19 May and 28 May 2008, 110 governments negotiated a new international treaty, the *Convention on Cluster Munitions*, that bans cluster munitions that “cause unacceptable harm to civilians”. Australia was part of the negotiations.

In December 2008, 94 countries signed up to the new treaty, including Australia. As of 6 May 2009, the number of countries that had signed up is 96, and seven countries had ratified (become full parties to the Convention). It takes 30 ratifications for the Convention to enter into force. Those countries that have ratified so far are Mexico, Austria, the Holy See, Ireland, Lao PDR, Norway, and Sierra Leone.

What are cluster munitions?

A cluster munition is a bomb, artillery shell or rocket that when launched or dropped the outside canister opens to release a number of smaller bombs, submunitions, over a wide area. The submunitions are designed to explode before, on, or just after impact with the ground, although many fail to do so.

The unexploded submunitions can then lie dormant for years or even decades after conflicts end until they are disturbed, often by children attracted by their small size and bright colours. A number of other characteristics also render cluster munitions inherent violators of international humanitarian law. They are often inaccurate, have a large area of effect, and the vast majority of those injured or killed by cluster submunitions are civilians.

What does the *Convention on Cluster Munitions* do?

The treaty bans all the cluster munitions that have been extensively used. Cluster munitions are exempted if the submunitions contained weigh more than 20 kg or has all the following characteristics:

- The munition contains less than ten submunitions;
- Each submunition weighs more than 4 kg;
- Each submunition is designed to detect and engage a single target;
- Each submunition is equipped with an electronic self-destruct mechanism; and

Each submunition is equipped with an electronic self-deactivation mechanism.

The treaty requires that stockpiles of banned cluster munitions be destroyed within 8 years of the country becoming party to the treaty. Countries are able to apply for extensions of 4 years if they are unable to meet the 8 year deadline for stockpile destruction.

Countries that become party to the treaty agree to clear all areas contaminated by unexploded cluster munitions within 10 years. Extensions of up to five years for clearance can be applied for.



Dtar lost both his arms after finding a cluster bomblet while fishing with his sons in Laos. **Courtesy of Alison Locke**

The country responsible for dropping the cluster munitions is strongly encouraged to provide assistance to the country that the munitions have been dropped on for their clearance.

The treaty requires that countries assist victims of cluster munitions under their control, which includes the families and communities of anyone injured by cluster munitions.

What you can do

Please write polite and respectful letters to Vietnam, Thailand and Cambodia urging them to sign and ratify the *Convention on Cluster Munitions* as three countries in our region yet to sign up to the Convention (a letter to Vietnam, Thailand and Cambodia will require a \$1.40 stamp):

His Excellency Nguyen Tan Dung Prime Minister Office of the Prime Minister Hoang Hoa Tham Ha Noi Socialist Republic of Viet Nam Salutation: Your Excellency	His Excellency Mr NGUYEN Thanh Tan Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam 6 Timbarra Crescent O'Malley ACT 2606 Fax: (02) 6286 4534 Email: vembassy@webone.com.au Salutation: Your Excellency
Mr. Nitya Pibulsonggram Minister of Foreign Affairs Kingdom of Thailand Ministry of Foreign Affairs 443 Sri Ayudhya Rd Bangkok 10400, THAILAND E-mail: minister@mfa.go.th Salutation: Dear Minister	His Excellency Mr Bandhit SOTIPALALIT Ambassador Royal Thai Embassy 111 Empire Circuit Yarralumla ACT 2600 Email : thaican@mfa.go.th Salutation: Your Excellency
H.E. Hor NamHong Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation No 161, Preah Sisowath Quay Phnom Penh CAMBODIA E-mail: mfaicasean@bigpond.com.kh Salutation: Your Excellency	His Excellency Mr MEAS Kim Heng Ambassador Royal Embassy of Cambodia 5 Canterbury Crescent Deakin ACT 2600 Fax: (02) 6273 1053 E-mail: cambodianembassy@ozemail.com.au Salutation : Your Excellency

Points to make in your letter:

Express concern that cluster munitions have created large humanitarian problems wherever they have been used due to the fact they are often inaccurate, have a large area of effect, and leave behind a legacy of large number of unexploded submunitions. The vast majority of those injured or killed by cluster submunitions are civilians and tens of thousands of civilians have been killed or injured by the use of cluster munitions.

Urge their country to join the 96 countries around the world that have already signed the *Convention on Cluster Munitions*. Those countries that have signed include stockpilers, former users and producers and affected countries from all regions of the world.

Point out that this comprehensive international ban on cluster munitions is the most important humanitarian and disarmament treaty of the last decade, requiring each country to destroy its stockpiles of this weapon within eight years.

Also point out that, with the full implementation of the treaty, it will make a real difference to countless lives and livelihoods by requiring clearance of contaminated land within 10 years and recognising the rights of affected individuals and communities to receive assistance.

With every new signature and ratification the emerging global norm against the use of cluster munitions is further strengthened. This stigmatisation of cluster munitions will help make sure they are never used again, even by states that may not join the treaty right away.

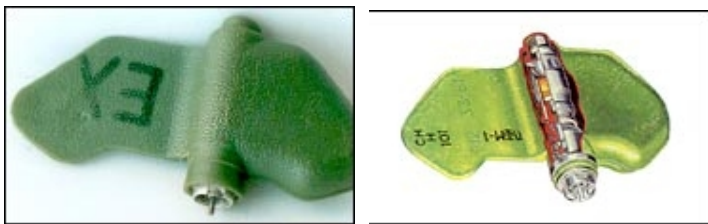
Destruction of PFM-1 (Butterfly) Antipersonnel Mines

In Geneva in November 2008 during the 9th Meeting of States Parties for the Landmines Treaty it was noted that there were countries that had failed to meet their commitments under Article 4 to destroy their stockpiles of antipersonnel landmines. One of these was Ukraine, which as of 2008 possessed around half of all the 14 million mines to be destroyed by the six States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty that still have to complete their stockpile destruction programs.

While Ukraine eliminated all 400,000 antipersonnel PMN mines in 2003, using Canadian financial assistance, the main problem now is the required destruction of more than 6 million "Soviet era" antipersonnel PFM-1 and other type mines still stored in Ukraine.

The PFM-1 is a Soviet anti-infantry scatterable cluster landmine, known as a butterfly mine (NATO name: Green Parrot). It is very similar to the BLU-43 US Army landmine (Dragontooth). Both devices are alike in shape and principles, although they use different explosive (more later).

This blast mine weighs 75g and contains 37g of VS6-D or VS60D liquid explosive. It is 120mm in length and 20mm thick. It has been used in Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbeidschan, Iraq, Somalia and Chechnya.



Its body contains liquid explosive and is made from low-density polythene. It is designed with a shape that causes it to spiral down to the ground, removing the need for a parachute. It has also been deployed by manual scattering from helicopters or by infantry. Butterfly mines are manufactured in a variety of colours, including green, brown and white; some markings are stencilled in black, while others are impressed into the plastic.

A variant of the mine, PFM-1S, self-destructs after one to forty hours, with 85% of the mines destroyed by 80 hours.

In the centre of the mine is a cylindrical fuse made mostly of aluminium; the remainder of the bulbous section of the mine is filled with the liquid explosive. The fuse is sealed into the plastic casing by a metal compression band, with the end of the fuse protruding a few millimetres.

The mine is stored with a pin restraining an arming plunger. Once the arming pin is removed, the plunger is slowly forced forward by a spring until it contacts the detonator, at which point it is armed. This takes between one and forty minutes, allowing the mine to be deployed or air dropped. **Once the mine is armed it cannot be disarmed.**

The fuse operates hydraulically using the liquid explosive from the bulb. Deformation of the soft plastic skin of the mine forces the arming plunger to strike the detonator, detonating the mine. Because the body of the mine is a single cumulative pressure primer, it is extremely dangerous to handle the mine: Single or multiple squeezes of the mine culminating in 5.25 kg of pressure will result in detonation.

PFM-1 was mainly used during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan to prevent groups of insurgents from using certain roads. Unfortunately civilians often fell prey to it. One of the unforeseen results of its military application was a high number of casualties among children. Due to its unusual shape, the mine was often mistaken for a toy by children. If walked on it produced traumatic amputation of the foot. If picked up by a child it resulted in hand and head trauma, which was frequently lethal. This characteristic made this particular type of landmine a principal target for banning by the [International Campaign to Ban Landmines](#).

PFM-1 mines cannot be merely recycled or exploded because of their type of construction and the fact that an explosion of the mines produces noxious and polluting chemical waste products that contaminate

the surrounding blast zone. Unlike the original US Dragontooth mines (which used a liquid nitromethane / nitroethane explosive) the VS60D explosive in PFM-1 mines (1,5-dichloro-3,3-dimethoxy-2,2,4,4-tetranitropentane) produces **cyanides, dioxins, furans, phosgens, biphenyls, lead oxide and aluminium oxide residues**, at levels 1800–2000 times higher than the European Economic Community maximum permissible level. However, a new plasma chemical technology has been developed for the destruction of these mines. Two needles are inserted into each mine. One is connected to a vacuum collector the other delivers alcoholic liquid to compensate for the pressure and dissolve the explosive. This liquid is then pyrolysed at over 4000°C. After two further burning processes the hot mixture is then rapidly cooled and its atoms combine again into simple stable compounds (such as CO₂, CO, HCL, NxOy and PbO).

Further purification is then provided for these resulting gases before they are expelled to the atmosphere. The empty plastic mine bodies with detonators are also sent through the pyrolysis process and the resulting gasses produced are then burnt again.

This is an expensive operation and is a slower and more demanding method than conventional destruction. Ukraine expects to destroy the first thousands of PFM using the facilities of the only rotary kiln it currently possesses. However, as at June 2008 Ukraine was still actively canvassing for additional funding to create more kiln resources to speed up the process.

Addendum: The Dragontooth air dropped landmines used by the US during the Vietnam War were designed to prevent infiltration into South Vietnam. Dragontooth was one of a number of airborne land mines tested, being popular because they could be used to deny access to large areas to foot traffic. Its area denial qualities were exemplified in the fact that the explosive content of any individual mine (9g) was readily capable of killing the victim, being powerful enough to remove a person's foot, but potentially incapable of even flattening the tire of a truck passing over it. They were air dispensed in batches of 4,800.

The use of Dragontooth mines in Vietnam went largely unnoticed, largely because of its essentially classified use primarily in Laos, as part of Operation Igloo White. Production of Dragontooth mines had ceased by 1970, and it was predicted that existing stocks would be exhausted by the end of 1971. It is reasonable to assume the Soviet PFM-1 Butterfly mines were modelled on the Dragontooth.

A chemical self-neutralization system was used in the mines, rendering the main explosive content inert some time after activation. However, the reliability of the mechanism was largely unknown and the detonator and booster charge could still present a hazard.

For more information, internet search on "Butterfly Mine", "PFM-1" or "Howstuffworks."

News from the Thai Campaign to Ban Landmines

Our congratulations to Mr Suthikiet Sopanik, the Director of the General Chaitichai Choonhavan Foundation, who has now taken over as Thai CBL National Coordinator. Our good wishes to Emilie Ketudat who has done so much good work as coordinator for many years and who has worked so closely with the Australian Network.

Also Miss Sermsiri Ingavanija, Assistant Coordinator of the JRS Ban Landmines Project has been confirmed as Thai Victim Assistance Vocal Point.

Tasmania has two items to report, about our donations of Land Mine Monitor to libraries, and about demining in Laos

I brought two copies of the Land Mind Monitor back to Hobart with me in March from the ANBL National Conference, with the intention of donating them to libraries. One copy was donated to the Kingston Branch of the State Library of Tasmania, for lending use, as there is already a copy in the State Reference Library in Hobart. The other was donated to the Tasmanian Centre for Global Learning, and is available to the public. The Global Learning Centre is actively involved in raising awareness of land mines and many other social justice issues. An example of its activities is its ruMAD program. Visit <http://www.afaierworld.org/index.html> for more information about TCGL

The March meeting of ANBL donated \$1458-80 for the MIVAC Minefield Clearance "Khangpunhor Mt 1" (KP-1) project at Sai Village, in Phoukout District, Xieng Khouang Province Lao PDR

This donation is part of \$10,000 donated by the Mines Victims and Clearance Trust toward this project. The overall cost of the project could run to \$30,000, and the balance of the expenses will be donated by Phoenix Clearance Limited, the company that MiVAC contracted to clear mines at Khangpunhor Mt. (KP-1 for short). Without the ANBL donation, MiVAC could not have gone ahead with this project,

The photo below shows the area affected, a forested hilltop. Demining commenced in the first week of April and by the end of April, PCL had cleared 10ha on KP-1 and also a local garden full of UXO and the local school yard.



Photo Khangpunhor Mt1 minefield location

This part of Laos was intensively bombed during the war of 1963-1975 (called the Vietnam War or

else the American War, depending on where you live). Over 2 million tonnes of ordnance were dropped, with up to 30% not exploding. While there is UXO in the area, KP-1 was a tactical-position held by troops during the Laotian Civil War, and the landmines present were laid by the troops involved.

The area is now peopled by Hmong villagers. The relation of the village of Sai to KP-1 is shown in this photo, taken from the edge of the cleared area on the hilltop.



The photos shows Sai Village, as seen from KP-1



The photo above shows a PCL Deminer on Khangpunhor 1 Minefield.

MiVAC's \$10,000 contribution could be said, on the arithmetic, to pay for the demining of an area about one third the size a footie oval. Clearly, the prevention achieved by the Ottawa Treaty is better than a cure! Without demining and UXO removal, Laos will remain among the world's poorest countries, with vast areas denied for agriculture.

Robert Rands MiVAC Tasmania.

ANBL Visit to Canberra Wednesday April 8 2009

Four representatives from the Australian Network to Ban Landmines visited Canberra on April 8, to visit embassies and encourage universalisation of both the Mine Ban Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. The date was chosen to be as close as possible to the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action on April 4. By going on this day we were also able to attend a forum at AusAID entitled from Conflict to Development, which was part of activities that they had organized around this designated mine awareness day.

Over the course of the day we met with Ambassadors or Chargés d'Affaires from the embassies of Poland, Nepal, Vietnam and Indonesia. We also visited and left material at the Myanmar Embassy, the Lao PDR Embassy and the Indian High Commission. Poland and Nepal were target countries for the ICBL March 1 Action commemorating the Ten Year Anniversary of the Entry into Force of the Mine Ban Treaty and had already received letters from us. These visits therefore were a follow up to the letters. We tried to leave some material in all embassies, usually a full copy or an executive summary of Landmine Monitor, and/or letters for the ambassador.

We were warmly received at all places and the representatives from the Lao PDR and the Indian High Commission indicated that they would like to meet with us at a later date.

The AusAID forum was informative with the following speakers:

Professor William Maley who spoke about the challenges of undertaking mine action in conflict situations.

Jenny Clement, Manager Country Programs, CARE Australia, speaking about how mine action contributes to long term development goals and

Warrant Officer Joe Cochbain, Army Explosive Hazards Centre, Australian Defence Force, who provided a demonstration of mine clearing equipment and discussed the mine clearing process

Lorel Thomas, Secretary ANBL

US Campaign to Ban Landmines and Cluster Bombs

Friends Committee on National Legislation, coordinator

On March 11 President Obama signed a law that will make permanent a ban on nearly all cluster bomb exports from the United States. This provision will move the U.S. one step closer to the position of the nearly 100 nations--including our closest NATO allies--that signed a treaty banning cluster munitions in December.

The legislation states that cluster munitions can only be exported if they leave behind less than one percent of their submunitions as duds, and if the receiving country agrees that cluster munitions "will not be used where civilians are known to be present." Only a very tiny fraction of the cluster munitions in the U.S. arsenal meet the one percent standard. This export ban was first enacted in a similar budget bill in December 2007, but that law mandated it for only one year.

U.S.-exported cluster bombs were most recently used by Israel in Southern Lebanon, where dud rates were reportedly as high as 40 percent; hundreds of civilians and deminers have been killed or maimed since the fighting ended in 2006.

Now Congress needs to take the next step and ban U.S. use of these deadly weapons. Nearly one in four senators have already cosponsored the Cluster Munitions Civilian Protection Act (S. 416), introduced one month ago, which would stop the military from using virtually all of the cluster bombs in its vast arsenal by applying this same one percent standard to U.S. use.

As 17 year old Soraj Ghulam Habib from Herat, Afghanistan, who lost both legs to a U.S. cluster submunition in 2001 observes, "You'd ban them for sure, if you had them here."

Bangkok Workshop on Achieving a Mine-Free South-East Asia, 1-3 April 2009

In the first week of April 2009, members of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) gathered in Bangkok, Thailand to conduct advocacy and outreach in support of the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty. This was the second in a series of regional meetings convened in the lead-up to the treaty's Second Review Conference, which will take place in Cartagena, Colombia in the week of 30 November 2009.

Government representatives from 18 countries attended the workshop: Australia, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar (Burma), Nepal, New Zealand, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam, as well as Belgium, Canada, Colombia, Czech Republic, Norway, Switzerland, and the United States.

The ICBL delegation to Bangkok was comprised of campaigners and mine action experts from Afghanistan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Nepal, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam, and elsewhere including four mine survivors, plus two ICBL staff members from the Geneva office. Three Thai demining NGOs participated in the workshop: General Chatichai Choonhavan Foundation (GCCF), and Mekong Organisation for Mankind (MOM), Peace Road Organisation Foundation (PRO).

On 1 April participants split into two groups to undertake field trips. The victim assistance group visited the Prostheses Foundation and the Yardfon Vocational and Rehabilitation Training Centre for Disabled in Chiang Mai, while a separate group visited demining sites along the Cambodian border in Sa Kaew province. Thailand was keen to use the demining visit to attract more donor interest in its mine action programme. The clearance deadline of 1 May 2009 was extended for 9 ½ years at the end of 2008.

The Thai Minister of Foreign Affairs opened the conference on 2 April with a call on Southeast Asian nations still outside the convention to join it quickly. He and the conference chair – the Thai Ambassador to the UN in Geneva – both made calls for a peaceful resolution to the border tensions so that demining of those areas could take place. ICBL Ambassador Tun Channareth spoke about his life experience, making the case that just as he overcame his personal challenges as a survivor, the international community can reach its goal of a mine-free world if it has enough determination and energy.

The Bangkok Workshop was notable for the active participation of diplomats from states that have not joined the Mine Ban Treaty. Several delegates contributed to the discussion on universalization on 3 April. Lao PDR noted the measures that it has undertaken recently to move toward becoming a member of the treaty and expressed interest in submitting a voluntary Article 7 transparency report. Singapore also listed the initiatives it has taken against the "indiscriminate use of antipersonnel mines," including its indefinite export moratorium on all types of antipersonnel mines that was enacted in 1998. Myanmar/Burma said it has been following progress of the Mine Ban Treaty and urged action to address transfers and exports of antipersonnel mines.

The ICBL was encouraged by the participation of these non-states parties as well as Nepal and Sri Lanka, but expressed concern about Singapore and Myanmar/Burma focusing only on "indiscriminate use" because the very nature of antipersonnel mines makes all use of the weapon indiscriminate. Colombia made a useful statement on the challenges it has faced as a state party that is engaged in conflict with non state armed groups noting that "you can never be completely ready, but we took the opportunity and signed the Mine Ban Treaty."

At the conclusion of the Bangkok Workshop, the ICBL representatives participated in a one-hour briefing on the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions held by the Cluster Munition Coalition in cooperation with Australia and Lao PDR.

As the workshop opened, a Thai soldier stepped on a landmine while on patrol in the disputed area around Preah Vihear temple on the Cambodian border, losing his left leg.

Can You Help?

The International Campaign to Ban Landmines-Australian Network Inc is an advocacy organization committed to the universalisation of both the Mine Ban Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. There are many dedicated teams working on mine clearance and survivor assistance and our network has some involvement with certain of these projects.

However our core work is advocacy, aiming to stop the problem at its source, namely the production, sale and use of landmines and cluster munitions. To this end we have on-going contact with both the Australian government as well as representatives of other governments, particularly in the South East Asia region, where much lobbying work still remains to be done. In addition we liaise with campaigns from other countries, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and the Cluster Munition Coalition.

Of course, work such as this costs money and we rely on the generosity of the community to help us reach our goal of a mine free world. Can you help us with a donation at this time?

The ICBL-AN is an organization of volunteers and therefore 100% of your gift will reach its destination- advocacy work committed to the eradication of landmines and cluster munitions.



* Given our status as an advocacy organization donations are not tax deductible.

✂.....

Yes, I can support the work of the ICBL-AN.

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South Australia 5074