

Patrick J. Leahy War Victims Fund

In 1989, Sen. Patrick Leahy started a fund to get medical aid to victims of landmines. There are an estimated 100 million unexploded landmines in over 60 countries, where they kill or maim an estimated 26,000 people each year. Vast areas of countries like Cambodia, Bosnia and Angola have become death traps.

In 1992, Leahy sponsored an amendment to stop U.S. exports of anti-personnel landmines: the first law of it's kind anywhere in the world. In 1993, the amendment to extend the export ban passed the Senate 100-0, and in 1997, President Clinton adopted it as permanent U.S. policy. The senator sponsored a 1995 amendment to halt U.S. use of anti-personnel mines for one year, beginning in 1999. That amendment was passed in the Senate 67-27, and was signed into law by Clinton on February 12, 1996. The law reads as follows:

Leahy Amendment Moratorium on Use of Anti-personnel Landmines

Sec. 583. (a) UNITED STATES MORATORIUM: For a period of one year beginning three years after the date of enactment of this Act, the United States shall not use anti-personnel landmines except along internationally recognized national borders or in demilitarized zones within a perimeter marked area that is monitored by military personnel and protected by adequate means to ensure the exclusion of civilians.

(b) DEFINITION AND EXEMPTIONS: For the purposes of this section:

(1) ANTI-PERSONNEL LANDMINE: The term "anti-personnel landmine" means any munitions placed under, on, or near the ground or other surface area, delivered by artillery, rocket, mortar, or similar means, or dropped from an aircraft and which is designed, constructed or adapted to be detonated or exploded by the presence, proximity or contact of a person.

(2) EXEMPTIONS: The term "anti-personnel landmine" does not include command detonated Claymore munitions.

In June 1997, Leahy sponsored legislation with Sen. Chuck Hagel to ban U.S. deployments of anti-personnel mines after January 1, 2000. That bill now has 60 co-sponsors. Currently he is working with Jody Williams of Brattleboro, Vermont, the coordinator of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL).

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ANTI-LANDMINE CHRONOLOGY

1989

- Sen. Patrick Leahy establishes the "Patrick J. Leahy War Victims Fund," a \$5 million annual program to aid war victims. The fund has been used in a dozen countries to produce artificial limbs for landmine survivors.

1992

- President Bush signs Leahy's amendment for a one-year moratorium on exports of anti-personnel mines into law.

1993

- Leahy's amendment to extend the export moratorium for three years passes the Senate 100-0, and is signed in to law by Clinton.

1994

- Clinton, in a speech to the U.N. General Assembly, declares as a goal the "eventual elimination" of anti-personnel mines, and "encourages further international efforts" toward this goal: "Ridding the world of those often hidden weapons will help save the lives of tens of thousands of men and women and innocent children in the years to come."
- The U.N. General Assembly adopts a resolution, introduced by Leahy on behalf of the United States, endorsing the president's goal. The Clinton administration announces a policy to promote the use of anti-personnel mines that automatically self-destruct, to use non-self-destruct mines in limited locations, and to develop "viable and humane alternatives" to anti-personnel landmines.

1995

- Formal negotiations begin in Vienna to amend the 1980 Conventional Weapons Convention, which governs the use of landmines.
- Leahy sponsors an amendment to impose a one-year moratorium on U.S. use of anti-personnel mines, except along international borders and demilitarized zones, to begin in 1999. The amendment passes the Senate 67-27.

1996

- **Feb. 12** Clinton signs into law Leahy's amendment to impose a moratorium on use of anti-personnel landmines in 1999, and to extend the moratorium on exports through 1997.
- The Pentagon announces a review of its policy on landmines. Gen. John Shalikashvili, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is reported to be "inclined to eliminate anti-personnel mines."
- U.N. Ambassador Madeleine Albright, after a trip to Angola, writes to Clinton urging a new policy on landmines because the current policy would not achieve their elimination "in our lifetimes."
- **April 3** Fifteen retired senior military officers, including Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. David Jones, former Supreme NATO Commander Gen. John Galvin, and former commanders of U.S. forces in Korea Gen. James Hollingsworth and Gen. Henry Emerson, urge Clinton to ban anti-personnel mines. They say a ban would be "humane and militarily responsible" and "would not undermine the military effectiveness or safety of our forces, nor those of other nations."
- **May 3** The Geneva negotiations on landmines conclude. The most significant requirement, that anti-personnel mines must be detectable, does not take effect for over nine years. By the end of the conference, over 40 nations have declared support for an immediate ban on the production, use, export and stockpiling of the weapons.

- **May 16** Clinton announces that the United States will negotiate an international agreement to ban anti-personnel mines with a view to completing the negotiation "as soon as possible," but will continue to use non-self-destruct mines to counter aggression in Korea, and self-destruct mines anywhere, until such an agreement is reached.
- **Oct. 3** In Ottawa, Leahy urges representatives of over 50 governments to commit to "the earliest possible conclusion of a legally-binding international agreement to ban anti-personnel mines." Canadian Foreign Minister Axworthy announces that Canada will host a conference to complete a ban treaty in December 1997.
- **Nov. 4** Leahy joins Albright in introducing a U.S. resolution calling for "vigorous" negotiation of an "international agreement to ban the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines, with a view to completing the negotiation as soon as possible." The resolution passes the U.N. General Assembly 156-0, with 10 abstentions, on Dec. 10.

1997

- **Jan. 17** The administration announces that it will seek to negotiate a treaty banning anti-personnel mines in the U.N. Conference on Disarmament.
- **Feb. 12** In Vienna, 111 nations meet for the first time to discuss elements of a ban treaty to be completed at Ottawa in December 1997.
- **June 12** Leahy and Hagel introduce legislation to ban new deployments of anti-personnel mines by the United States, except in Korea, beginning Jan. 1, 2000. Congressmen Lane Evans and Jack Quinn introduce identical legislation in the House.
- **Sept. 17** Eighty-nine nations agree to convene in Ottawa in December to sign a treaty banning the production, transfer, use and stockpiling of anti-personnel mines, and to remove existing minefields within 10 years.
- **Nov. 12** A Canadian resolution urging all nations to sign the Ottawa Treaty passes the U.N. General Assembly by a vote of 127-0. Nineteen nations abstained including the United States.
- **Dec. 3-4** 122 nations sign the Ottawa Treaty.

1998

- **May 15** U.S. National Security Advisor Sandy Berger, in a letter to Leahy on behalf of the president, says the United States will sign the Ottawa Convention by 2006 if suitable alternatives to anti-personnel landmines, including those used in mixed mine systems, are identified and fielded.
- **Sept. 16** The 40th country ratifies the Ottawa Convention, triggering the six-month period before the convention comes into force.

1999

- **March 1** The Ottawa Convention comes into force.