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# Land Mine Policy

By

**Madeleine K. Albright, Secretary of State  
and  
William S. Cohen, Secretary of Defense**

[The following is a reprint of a press release by Secretary Albright and Secretary Cohen in Washington DC on 31 October 1997.]

## SECRETARY ALBRIGHT

I am very pleased today to be here with Secretary of Defense William Cohen, to announce a major new United States initiative on a subject of widespread concern in America and around the globe.

The United States is today setting the goal of eliminating the threat posed by land mines to civilians everywhere on the face of the Earth by the end of the next decade.

This call for a concerted effort by the international community is based on the premise that the best way to protect civilians from land mines is to pull mines from the soil like the noxious weeds that they are. There are currently an estimated 100 million mines in more than five dozen countries. At the current rate, we will still be removing mines laid in this century many decades into the next.

The United States is far and away the world's leader in humanitarian demining. Since 1993, we have devoted \$153 million to this purpose. Our experts are helping to remove mines in 14 nations. They have trained and equipped about one quarter of those engaged in demining around the world; and we are continuing to increase our commitment. But still, there is much more that we and others in the international community can and must do.

The President's Initiative, which we are calling "Demining 2010," has several elements:

First, the Administration has asked Assistant Secretary of State Karl F. "Rick" Inderfurth to serve as the new U.S. Special Representative of the President and Secretary of State for Global Humanitarian Demining. Of course, he will also continue in his present job as Assistant Secretary for South Asia, a region that has itself been scarred by the land mine crisis, most tragically in Afghanistan.

Over the past five years, while serving at the U.S. Mission to the U.N. in New York, Ambassador Inderfurth became a leader in generating international support for efforts to halt the export or transfer of land mines, to establish the goal of their eventual elimination, and to increase demining. He is deeply committed to further progress on these issues and I am grateful for his willingness to take on this new and additional responsibility. Assistant Secretary Inderfurth will be assisted by a deputy, who will be named by the Department of Defense in the days ahead.

The job of the Special Representative will be to work in cooperation with other nations and organizations to coordinate and accelerate international demining efforts, and to increase by roughly a factor of five—to \$1 billion a year—the public and private resources devoted

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worldwide to identifying and clearing mines, promoting public awareness about mines, and improving the means of detecting and removing mines.

Second, a panel of distinguished Americans will be appointed to provide advice and help mobilize support for this global initiative. Third, we will host a conference here in Washington to develop specific strategies for achieving the goal of eliminating, by 2010, the threat to civilians posed by land mines already in the ground. A broad cross section of public and private donors, de-miners, recipient nations, NGOs [Non-Government Organizations], and technical experts will be invited.

Fourth, we will continue to ramp up our own financial commitment to global demining. In 1997, the U.S. Humanitarian Demining Program contributed \$40 million. In 1998, we will contribute close to \$80 million. And we will seek to continue to expand our commitment in 1999 and beyond.

As Secretary of State, I welcome the President's Initiative for several reasons. Accelerating mine clearance will help nations struggling to recover from war to replant their fields, rebuild their economies and re-settle their refugees. It will reduce the long term humanitarian costs of caring for the victims of land mines. It will underline the message that we join with other nations around the world in sending—that it is wrong to endanger civilians through the use of land mines. And above all, it will prevent the killing or maiming of thousands of innocent people every year.

I want to emphasize that the U.S. effort will be conducted in coordination with, not as a substitute for, the work being done by others. We recognize the leadership that has been provided by the United Nations and the commitment that has been made to demining by nations such as Canada, Germany, Norway, South Africa and the United Kingdom. We appreciate the contribution that the Nobel Prize-winning International Campaign to Ban Land Mines has made to increase awareness about the dangers land mines pose. We also respect the Ottawa process and want to continue working with it, although our nation's unique responsibilities for international security have not permitted us to sign the treaty negotiated at Oslo.

In the meantime, Assistant Secretary Inderfurth will be attending the Ottawa Conference in December. We will also ask those in attendance at Ottawa to join us in pushing at the Conference on Disarmament for an immediate, comprehensive, and global ban on exports and transfers of anti-personnel land mines.

Thirty-six years ago, President Kennedy set for our nation the goal of enabling a man to walk on the moon. Today, President Clinton is reaffirming the goal of enabling people everywhere to walk safely on the Earth. Together, our nation answered President Kennedy's call. I am confident that together with friends from around the globe, we will achieve President Clinton's vision, as well.

It's now my pleasure to introduce my colleague, Secretary Cohen.

#### **SECRETARY COHEN**

Thank you very much, Secretary Albright. I am pleased to join with you today to announce this new U.S. initiative to invigorate international efforts to end the humanitarian tragedy of civilians being maimed and killed by land mines. This is the most recent in a series of initiatives through which the United States, under President Clinton's leadership, has led the world in efforts to eradicate this scourge of humanity.

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Over three years ago, President Clinton stepped forward as the first world leader to call for the elimination of anti-personnel land mines. Under the President, the U.S. unilaterally banned the export of these weapons. We have already destroyed 1.5 million of these weapons, and we will destroy another 1.5 million within the next year and a half.

Under President Clinton, the Department of Defense has greatly expanded the humanitarian demining efforts around the world. Secretary of State Albright just mentioned some of these numbers, but let me re-emphasize. We are the country primarily responsible for providing the humanitarian demining assistance to the rest of the world. We have provided more than the entire rest of the world combined; all of the nations who have signed, for example, the Ottawa Treaty have not contributed as much combined as the United States has done on its own.

One-quarter of all the active humanitarian deminers in the world were trained by the United States military. There are tangible results that have benefited untold millions—numbers of people—of innocent civilians across the globe who have benefited as a result of this. In Namibia, for example, there's been a 90 percent drop in the casualty rate. In Angola, 100,000 people have returned to land that has been cleared of a quarter of a million mines. In Cambodia the land mine death rate has dropped nearly a third. But we believe, as Secretary Albright said, that much more needs to be done. So today we are launching this new initiative.

What we want is for the other countries to follow the United States' lead: to stop being part of the problem and to start being part of the solution. The United States has stopped, and we have been the leader in stopping being part of the problem. We are the ones who, in fact, have developed systems which do not injure innocent individuals.

Nonetheless, the President went forward beyond our systems, which we have spent millions of dollars to develop and said we will eliminate those and go forward with our anti-tank mines, which we believe are absolutely essential to protect our troops. The President made a very principled decision that we need to have force protection for the young men and women, our sons and daughters, who are serving in the military all across the globe. We can do so in a way that nonetheless protects the lives of innocent people all across the globe.

We have been the leader in being part of the solution. What this initiative is, is to ask other countries to join with us in becoming part of the solution, as well. So, Madame Secretary, I'm pleased to be here and we will answer any questions that might come our way.

*Question: Madame Secretary, it sounds like you're saying that the ban negotiated a month ago really is not the appropriate way to go with this problem and that the way to go is the clearing of mines; is that correct?*

**Secretary Albright:** Well, I think there are two parts to this. I think obviously it is very important to do what we can to ban anti-personnel land mines. We are working on that process, as Secretary Cohen has said, as we have said, through a variety of vehicles. We want to see the Conference on Disarmament take up its appropriate role in this. We are working on getting Congressional treaty ratification of the convention on conventional mine protocol, which will also create some norms on all this.

But we do believe that it's important to work toward the eventual elimination. As Secretary Cohen has said, we have taken a leading role in that, and will continue to do so, commensurate with our responsibilities as the sole superpower, where we have some very special responsibilities. At the same time, we consider that it is absolutely essential to move more robustly in the area of demining because of the hundreds of thousands of mines that are in the ground now that need to be removed, and that we ought to do more in terms of trying to

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train people to demine, develop new technology so that the demining operations themselves are more sophisticated than what exists now, where basically the tool for demining is a person walking around with one kind of a demining instrument.

*Question: Secretary Cohen, is there any hope that technology will come to the rescue? We keep hearing about new designs of minefield clearers, new plastic foams. Do you see any hope that that will be a solution?*

**Secretary Cohen:** Well, we're always looking for technology to help deal with this particular problem. We have a number of research efforts underway—President Clinton, as a matter of fact, has asked for us to develop alternatives, for example, to Korea, where we have mines in place in storage that can be used in specific mine fields. The President has gone forward, because we have such a clear responsibility to protect our troops there, to see if we can't develop alternatives to those systems currently there.

So we are constantly looking for technology to help deal with force protection, obviously, but also to deal with the humanitarian aspect of this.

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*Question: One more, if I might. Just to clarify if—does the Secretary consider that they [i.e., the U.S. Armed Forces] are going to try to put new technology in to protect the troops. Is that the case for Cuba? I mean, the Guantanamo Base and the Cuban territory has a lot of mines.*

**Secretary Cohen:** There is in fact every attempt to remove the mines that are not self-destruct types of mines in that area. So those we expect to remove in the near future.

But I should make clear once again that the President has indicated that mixed systems are going to remain in order to provide adequate force protection for forces that are dispersed all across the globe. That's something that the President feels very strongly about—that we in fact need to have the mixed systems for force protection. But our systems are designed in a way that will also promote humanitarian objectives; and that is to not injure innocent women, children, farmers. Our systems will not do that.