

PETITION
BAN ANTI-VEHICLE MINES

To the Honourable the President and members of the Senate in Parliament assembled:

The Petition of the undersigned shows:

That the undersigned note that like anti-personnel landmines, anti-vehicle mines are indiscriminate in who they effect, that they disproportionately kill and maim civilians, they delay relief efforts in war affected countries and they go on killing for decades after the conflict has ended. We note that Australia's existing stock of anti-vehicle mines is obsolete and only used for training purposes, so now is the perfect time to commit to supporting a ban on these indiscriminate weapons. We welcome the Australian Government's support for further restrictions on the use of anti-vehicle mines, but believe such measures to be inadequate to address the humanitarian problems caused by anti-vehicle mines.

Your Petitioners ask that the Senate should:

- Legislate a ban on the production, transfer, importation and use of anti-vehicle mines in Australia and by Australians other than by the Australian Defence Forces for training in demining and avoiding the hazards of anti-vehicle mines; and
- Should pass a motion supporting the development of an international treaty that would ban the production, transfer, importation and use of anti-vehicle mines globally.

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Return to: International Campaign to Ban Landmines Australian Network, c/o Justice and International Mission Unit, Uniting Church Centre, 130 Little Collins St, Melbourne, Victoria, 3000 by 20 September 2004.

Dangerous Driving – Anti-Vehicle Mines

*Seven people were killed and six wounded when a medical convoy of Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) hit an **anti-vehicle mine** on a road near the city of Mavinga in south-east Angola on 29 November 2002. The wounded included an eight-month-old baby and two of the wounded had to have limbs amputated. As a result of the incident MSF stated that it would reduce its vital humanitarian activities in the area until it could be sure of the safety of its staff.*

As of June 2004 total of 151 countries have agreed to a ban on anti-personnel landmines and only a handful of those that did not sign the ban continue to be caught exporting landmines. At the same time, no countries have agreed to a ban on anti-vehicle mines. Anti-vehicle mines are usually intended to blow-up vehicles. Like anti-personnel landmines, anti-vehicle mines:

- go on killing and maiming (mainly killing, as anti-vehicle mines are many times more powerful than anti-personnel landmines) long after conflicts have ended;
- have an even greater effect in stopping or delaying the movement of essential goods and humanitarian aid in impoverished mine effected countries than anti-personnel landmines. Anti-vehicle mines can create a many-fold increase in the cost of the shipment of essential goods and humanitarian aid if air-lifting becomes necessary. The number of people who die and suffer as a result of the impact on anti-vehicle mines on the transport of essential goods and humanitarian aid is likely to greatly outnumber the number of people killed and maimed directly by anti-vehicle mine instances; and
- are indiscriminate, they fail to distinguish between civilians and military personnel. A survey of media reports and incidents reported by *Landmine Monitor 2002* found that at least 159 civilians, peace-keepers or deminers were killed and 83 wounded by anti-vehicle mines between January 2001 and January 2003. This is likely to be a significant underestimate of the number of civilians killed and wounded by anti-vehicle mines in this period.

For these reasons the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) Australian Network supports a ban on anti-vehicle mines.

Lack of military use for anti-vehicle mines

Resistance to a ban on anti-vehicle mines comes largely from military forces. However, while there is substantial evidence of the negative impact of anti-vehicle mines on civilian populations, there is little evidence that anti-vehicle mines are militarily useful. Anti-vehicle mines have had no combat utility in any operation involving the Australian Defence Forces since the Korean war.

In the 1991 Gulf War, US forces dropped 90,099 anti-vehicle mines on Iraq and Kuwait. The US General Accounting Office found in their September 2002 report "*Military Operations. Information on U.S. Use of Land Mines in the Persian Gulf War*" that "neither DOD [Department of Defence], the Joint Chiefs of Staff, nor the U.S. Central Command provided us with any reports or other evidence clearly indicating that U.S. land mines used during the Gulf War had been the direct or indirect cause of enemy casualties, equipment losses, or maneuver limitations."

Australian casualties from anti-vehicle mines

The only Australian soldier killed in the 2001 - 2002 deployment to Afghanistan, SAS Sergeant Andrew Russell, was the victim of an anti-vehicle mine.

Only four Australian peace-keepers since 1966 have died from weapons. Two have been killed by the accidental discharge of firearms and two by landmines while driving in vehicles. In 1974, police Sergeant Ian Ward was killed by a mine in Cyprus while he was driving a Turkish Cypriot family across the buffer zone. In January 1988 Captain Peter McCarthy, a UN observer in Lebanon, was killed when the jeep he was travelling in struck a mine north of Tyre.

Australian Government Position on Anti-Vehicle Mines

The Australian Government does not currently support a ban on anti-vehicle mines arguing that they have 'military utility'. However, the Government does support further restrictions on anti-vehicle mines that have been proposed by the US Government.

Questions from Democrat and Greens Senators have revealed that Australia's stock of anti-vehicle mines are obsolete and are only used for training purposes. The Government is currently looking at options to replace them. Thus, now is the time to deter the Australian Government from purchasing more anti-vehicle mines.