

Stop U.S. Production of New Antipersonnel Landmines

By Catherine Gordon

[September 19, 2005] For the first time in nearly a decade, the Bush Administration is making plans to begin production of a new generation of antipersonnel mines. This initiative would erase many of the positive steps the United States has taken in the past toward banning antipersonnel mines.

The United States government will decide by December 2005 whether to begin production of a new generation of antipersonnel mine system called "Spider." The Pentagon has also requested a total of \$1.3 billion for development and production of yet another new antipersonnel mine called the "Intelligent Munitions System," with a full production decision expected in 2008.

Tell your Senators you are disappointed that the U.S. is contemplating new production of landmines. Tell them that the vision of a world free of the scourge of landmines will remain out of reach as long as the U.S. continues to reserve the right to produce these indiscriminate weapons. The U.S. should halt production of all victim-activated weapons, whether the government calls it a landmine or not.

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Dear Senator

I am alarmed by recent reports that the U.S. may begin new production of antipersonnel mines. As long as the United States reserves the right to use and produce weapons that are activated by unsuspecting victims, we will never realize a mine-free world. The administration's actions are providing cover for other countries that continue to use and produce landmines. If the world's sole superpower believes it needs these weapons, why should others countries think they do not?

While the administration usually does not refer to these new weapons as "landmines," I am concerned that these weapons have the potential to be victim-activated, essentially serving as a landmine. Any weapon that leaves out the decision to fire by a soldier poses a grave risk to civilians. It is time for the U.S. set a humanitarian example, and halt research and development on, or production of all victim-activated antipersonnel weapons. I urge you to raise this issue with your senate colleagues and the Executive Branch and find a way to stop these indiscriminate weapons from being produced.