

# Antipersonnel Landmine Policy and Implications

By Dr. Gregory L. Bier

**A**ntipersonnel landmine (APL) policy has been the topic of heated and controversial debate on the international front as well as within the U.S. military. Many question the military soundness of the current APL policy. Many are unsure of the ramifications imposed by the policy to doctrine and training. Others question the intent and future of the policy. This article clarifies the development of the APL policy, its military applications, and its implications for Army units.

**Ottawa Process.** In September 1997, the United States withdrew from the Ottawa Process. Those negotiations, led by Canada, were aimed at drafting a treaty between "like-minded" nations prepared to ban the use, export, stockpiling, and production of APLs. The United States withdrew from this process after determining that the treaty would not meet its unique national security concerns. The United States had two fundamental concerns. First, without proven and fielded alternatives to APLs, U.S. soldiers in Korea would be faced with a critical capability gap, which would adversely impact our ability to meet unique defense requirements where only 37,000 U.S. soldiers are deployed to defend an enormous border. Second, the treaty would eliminate our ability to use current scatterable mine systems because they include APLs, even though they are self-destructing APLs. Today, the majority of our scatterable mine systems are "mixed," which means they include both self-destructing antipersonnel and self-destructing antitank mines.

**U.S. Policy and Law.** The level of public awareness concerning APLs has increased dramatically within the last few years. Some significant laws and policy announcements are summarized below:

In 1996, a law sponsored by Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vermont) was passed that requires a 1-year moratorium on APL use to take effect beginning 12 February 1999. This law (Public Law 104-295) still authorizes the use of APLs in perimeter marked and monitored areas on international borders or demilitarized zones (DMZ). It does not distinguish between nonself-destructing and self-destructing APLs. Therefore, this law effectively prohibits the use of mixed, scatterable systems because they contain antipersonnel submunitions.

In May 1996, President Clinton directed that the United States unilaterally cease using all nonself-destructing APLs not needed for either demining, countermine training, or for the defense of the United States and its allies from armed aggression that crosses the Korean DMZ. The president also stated that the United States reserves the option to use self-destructing/self-deactivating APLs in military hostilities to safeguard American lives and hasten the end of fighting.

**Facts and Figures.** With all of the controversy surrounding APLs, it is important that engineers be able to articulate the significance of our national policy. Furthermore, engineers must be able to relate relevant facts and figures pertinent to their combined arms team regarding APLs.

- When used responsibly, landmines are a combat multiplier. Employed correctly, they enhance the use of other weapon systems.

- The Army strongly supports the fundamental objective to eliminate or minimize the maiming of innocent civilians by APLs. To this end, the military has proposed ending reliance on nonself-destructing APLs since February 1952.

- The Army does not support the objective of eliminating reliance on nonself-destructing APLs without first minimizing the risks American soldiers must endure without them.

- Without proven and fielded alternatives in place prior to eliminating APLs, a capability gap would be created, especially in Korea.

- Scatterable mine systems can be employed as directed, situational, or reserve tactical obstacles. Commanders place required limitations on their location, duration, and release as they develop a scheme of employment for each mission. The mines remain on the surface and self-destruct at preset durations. These mine systems have a combined reliability rate of 99.9994 percent and typically have a high metallic content.

- Field Manual 20-32, *Mine/Countermining Operations*, will be updated in May 1998 to incorporate mandated changes in APL policy. The fix, disrupt, turn, and block effects remain unchanged.

- Our mixed systems include antitank mines that are protected by antipersonnel submunitions to inhibit the rapid dismantled breaching of antitank mines by the enemy.

- The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency continues to investigate innovative maneuver denial approaches that are based on advanced technology. However, these efforts will take time and money to develop, test, and field.

**Summary.** Landmine policy is a dynamic subject. Warfighters must understand and support the policy changes that affect the way we shape the battlefield. Engineers must be intimately familiar with the characteristics, specifications, and employment parameters of the available scatterable mine systems.



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