

Multifaith Voices for Peace and Justice's Steering Committee is compelled to stand with many other Americans and people of faith and goodwill around the world against the President's decision to provide cluster bombs to Ukraine. [1,2] We find that the arguments given by the President for doing so are based on expediency, flying in the face of universal condemnation of weapons of mass destruction. To resort to cluster munitions as a "temporary" solution to delayed production of other weapons does not make them less reprehensible. [3]

Major differences exist between cluster munitions and precisely targeted "smart" bombs and artillery shells; cluster bombs are intended to kill over a wide area, and not just a single target. The claim that only munitions with very low "dud rates" - where unexploded bomblets remain lethal - will be sent to Ukraine is subject to scrutiny, because variations between batches cannot be predicted in advance of use on the battlefield. Claims that Ukraine would not use these weapons where its own citizens would be endangered and that post-war clearing of landmines and unexploded ordnance is required anyway ignore the change of citizenship in disputed territory and the risk that not all bomblets will be found in time to prevent injury to the innocent. The argument that Russia has already used cluster munitions is hardly moral justification for the US and its allies to begin using them. [4]

The fact that the US even has large quantities of cluster weapons to give to Ukraine is evidence of American exceptionalism in selective retention of weapons other nations have renounced as morally repugnant - nuclear weapons not least among them. Landmines are an example of such rejection of international decisions: despite a UN treaty passed in 1997 [5] the US only in 2022 "aligned" itself with terms of the treaty but still will deploy landmines in Korea [6]. Similarly, in 1997 the US ratified the UN Chemical Weapons Treaty, but only finished destroying its huge stockpile of neurotoxic bombs and shells this month [7, 8]. It is too coincidental that the White House announced the Ukraine cluster bomb decision and simultaneously proclaimed that the US stock of chemical weapons has been destroyed [9] - as if the latter laundered the ethical stain of the former.

Multifaith Voices for Peace and Justice strongly urges that our government immediately cease supplying cluster munitions to Ukraine. US efforts to build unity among its allies in opposing the Russian conquest of Ukraine can only be aided if we abide by their standards of warfare for minimizing risk to noncombatants. Even better would be for the US to lead in finding nonviolent means to stop this imperialistic conflict. Only by consistently doing so will the US ever gain any "moral high ground."

[1]

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/07/10/opinion/cluster-munitions-ukraine-biden.html>

The Flawed Moral Logic of Sending Cluster Munitions to Ukraine

July 10, 2023

[2]

<https://jayapal.house.gov/2023/07/07/house-progressives-on-biden-administrations-cluster-munitions-transfer-to-ukraine/>

7.07.2023 | NEWS

House Progressives on Biden Administration's Cluster Munitions Transfer to Ukraine

[3]

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/07/07/us/politics/ukraine-cluster-munitions-biden.html>

Biden Defends 'Difficult' Decision to Send Cluster Munitions to Ukraine

By Katie Rogers and Eric Schmitt

July 7, 2023

[4]

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/press-briefings/2023/07/07/press-briefing-by-press-secretary-karine-jean-pierre-and-national-security-advisor-jake-sullivan-5/>

JULY 07, 2023

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan

[5]

https://treaties.unoda.org/t/mine_ban

Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction

[6]

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/06/21/fact-sheet-changes-to-u-s-anti-personnel-landmine-policy/>

JUNE 21, 2022

FACT SHEET: Changes to U.S. Anti-Personnel Landmine Policy

[7]

<https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/demil/history.htm>

History of U.S. Chemical Weapons Elimination

[8]

<https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3451920/us-completes-chemical-weapons-stockpile-destruction-operations/>

US Completes Chemical Weapons Stockpile Destruction Operations

July 7, 2023

[9]

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/07/07/statement-from-president-joe-biden-on-completing-the-destruction-of-the-united-states-chemical-weapons-stockpile/>

JULY 07, 2023

Statement from President Joe Biden on Completing the Destruction of the United States' Chemical Weapons Stockpile

[10]

<https://afsc.org/action/tell-congress-dont-send-cluster-munitions-ukraine>

American Friends Service Committee page for petitioning Congress to oppose giving Ukraine cluster bombs