Landmines: Why the Korea Exception Should Be the Rule

John F. Troxell

Follow this and additional works at: https://press.armywarcollege.edu/parameters

Recommended Citation

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by USAWC Press. It has been accepted for inclusion in The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters by an authorized editor of USAWC Press.
Landmines: Why the Korea Exception Should Be the Rule

JOHN F. TROXELL

From Parameters, Spring 2000, pp. 82-101.


As the sole remaining superpower in the changed international security environment of the post-Cold War era, the United States is struggling in its efforts to balance humanitarian and security interests. The contentious nature of this struggle is nowhere more prevalent than in the controversial issue of US policy concerning antipersonnel landmines. The emotional and political rhetoric surrounding this weapon over the past several years has been intense. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, in the preface to the State Department's report Hidden Killers 1998: The Global Landmine Crisis, addresses the nature of this issue:

Near the start of this century, 90 percent of wartime casualties were soldiers. As the century wanes, 90 percent are civilians. That stunning statistic is not attributable to the landmine crisis alone. But antipersonnel landmines have added greatly to the devastating impact of modern conflict on noncombatants. These hidden killers are cheap to buy, easy to use, hard to detect, and difficult to remove.[1]

It has been virtually impossible to compete in the public arena with the memory of Princess Diana, the heart-rending pictures of young landmine victims, or the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize recognition of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. In fact, the United States has been committed to ending the devastation caused by antipersonnel landmines since President Clinton called for the eventual global elimination of these mines in a 1994 speech before the UN General Assembly. Despite intense political pressure and in seeming disregard to stated policy, however, the United States has not yet become a signatory to the Ottawa Treaty banning all antipersonnel landmines. In the United States, calls for the elimination of antipersonnel landmines have been tempered with concerns about maintaining the ability to deter conflict and reduce risk to US armed forces. Pursuing the parallel tracks of addressing humanitarian concerns and security requirements has been a challenging balancing act.

The purpose of this essay is to examine US national security policy formulation in the context of the antipersonnel landmine debate. Two critical issues emerge from this examination: the role of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in policy refinement and decisionmaking, and the nature of future conflicts that US forces may be expected to fight. NGO involvement in this issue and their success may change forever the way that security policy agendas are established and the direction that policy takes. The United States, however, should guard against losing control of the national security policy agenda to NGOs and their associated special interests. Likewise, understanding the nature of future conflicts and the manner in which US forces will fight is critical to determining the capabilities those forces will need for mission accomplishment and force protection.

Throughout the antipersonnel landmine debate in the United States, there has been a general recognition and acceptance of the "Korea exception." The Korea exception argues that because of the nature of the threat and geography on the Korean peninsula, antipersonnel landmine requirements in Korea must be excluded from any ban until such time as suitable alternatives are developed and fielded. The logic behind the need for antipersonnel landmines in Korea should be viewed not as an exception, but as the rule. Military forces deployed worldwide in the defense of US national security interests should not be denied the critical military capabilities inherent in antipersonnel landmine systems and their associated mixed antitank mine systems.
The Use of Landmines and the Landmine Problem

Since the mid-19th century, landmines have been integral to military operations. It was not until World War II, however, that antipersonnel landmines reached full maturity. They have been an important feature of almost every conflict since.[2] Landmines are vital battlefield tools to channel enemy forces into a specific area, or to defend flanks, restricted terrain, or border zones. Minefields result in increased protection for the defender and thus heighten the combat capability of the defending force. Mines also degrade the advance of the attacker, causing more casualties. The presence of a minefield improves the effectiveness of the defending force to such an extent that fewer forces are needed.[3] In addition to these general uses, antipersonnel landmines play an extremely important role in protecting antitank or vehicular mines from being disabled or quickly breached by enemy forces.

There are two categories of antipersonnel landmines in the US arsenal--non-self-destructing, and self-destructing or self-deactivating. Non-self-destructing antipersonnel landmines, or so-called "dumb" landmines, remain in the ground indefinitely and are the principal cause of the humanitarian crisis. Current versions are essentially holdovers from technology developed during World War II, with the exception that modern versions use plastic casings and fusing mechanisms which make them extremely difficult to detect with existing mine detectors.[4]

The introduction of electronics into the fuses of more advanced mines created the capability for the mine to neutralize itself, or self-destruct. Weapons development in the 1960s also made it possible to remotely deliver mines by rocket, artillery, or aircraft.[5] In the US arsenal, both of these features--self-destruction and remote delivery--are incorporated in the vast majority of mines. In addition, the self-destructing antipersonnel mine is normally combined with self-destructing antitank mines resulting in a "mixed-system," sometimes referred to as a mixed antitank system since the principal purpose of the antipersonnel landmine component is to protect the antitank mines from rapid enemy breaches. Self-destructing or "smart" mines are technologically advanced and are designed to self-destruct within a period of several hours or days. These systems either blow up automatically at a preset time (e.g., 4 hours, 48 hours, or 15 days) or, if they fail to do so, their battery rapidly runs out so they no longer function. They have a combined reliability rate of 99,9994 percent, leaving virtually no residual hazard to military or civilian personnel.[6] The self-destruct feature and the limited duration times not only protect noncombatants but also facilitate the maneuver of friendly forces on the battlefield.

Landmines are not an inconsequential weapon system on the modern battlefield. It is estimated that 20 percent of tank losses in World War II were attributed to mines. In Vietnam this rose to 70 percent of US armor losses.[7] The advancements in mine technology noted above increase their effectiveness. One detailed study on mine warfare estimates that reinforcing a defensive position with mines enhances the effectiveness of all other defensive weapon systems by a factor of between 1.5 and 2.5.[8]

Conventional interstate conflict has generally regulated the employment and retrieval of landmines. Recent intrastate conflicts (e.g., Cambodia, Afghanistan, Angola, and Bosnia) have featured primarily undisciplined forces, however, and have focused the world's attention on the humanitarian problem created by the unrecorded and indiscriminate use of landmines. Mines have been freely employed in these internal conflicts because of their low cost and ease of use. These undisciplined and poorly trained soldiers are certainly not prone to use mines in a responsible way. A recent study commissioned by the International Committee of the Red Cross concludes that in these types of conflicts, "the informal or implicit doctrine which prevails seems aimed at achieving systematic depopulation of specific areas by harassment of the local population."[9] Unlike other types of weapons used in warfare, most landmines are target-activated--once emplaced, they pose an indefinite threat (unless of course they are of the self-destructing variety) and do not discriminate between military personnel or civilians. The result has been a humanitarian crisis of global proportions.

Global awareness of the problem increased significantly with the State Department's publication of the 1995 edition of *Hidden Killers: The Global Landmine Crisis*. This influential report estimated that more than 100 million mines in over 60 countries were causing 26,000 casualties annually, and that each year some 2.5 million new mines were being planted.[10] The humanitarian concern was clear--high numbers of civilian casualties and economic devastation resulting from the denial of land for farming and development.
Controlling Landmines--The Role of NGOs

International attempts to restrict or ban various weapons or military practices have a long history. In the modern era the disarmament community can point to the Hague Convention of 1899 as the first successful effort to ban a weapon, the dum-dum bullet.[11] Landmines first achieved scrutiny at the international level at a conference in Lucerne in 1974, called to explore possible bans or restrictions on several antipersonnel weapons that had gained international notoriety during the Vietnam conflict. These discussions continued for several years culminating in a new UN treaty in 1980, the first formal ban on conventional weapons since the 1899 Hague Declaration. The Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (commonly referred to today as the Convention on Conventional Weapons or CCW) consists of a main text and several protocols.[12] Protocol II addressed landmines and imposed restrictions on remotely delivered landmines, requiring that they either be accurately recorded or self-destruct, and also required that non-self-destructing landmines be recorded and marked.[13] The intent of these provisions was to minimize the potential harm to noncombatants.

The CCW represents a negotiated product among interested parties and as such it recognized the traditional notion of "military necessity," which is a basic notion to international humanitarian law.[14] According to the Red Cross:

> The law of armed conflict is a compromise based on a balance between military necessity, on the one hand, and the requirements of humanity, on the other. Military necessity means the necessity of measures which are essential to attain the goals of war, and which are lawful in accordance with the laws and customs of war.[15]

Consequently, the CCW process sought to restrict and control antipersonnel landmines while at the same time recognizing an inherent military requirement for these weapons.

As a reaction to the widespread use of mines and the resulting civilian casualties from the Angolan and Cambodian civil wars, and the Soviet occupation and later civil war in Afghanistan, and in growing frustration over the perceived slowness of the CCW process, the campaign to ban antipersonnel landmines began in earnest in 1991. In that year the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation formed an anti-landmine coalition including Handicap International, the US organizations Human Rights Watch and Physicians for Human Rights, the German organization Medico International, and the Mines Advisory Group, a nonprofit demining organization in Great Britain.[16] In 1992 a new nongovernmental organization, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), took the lead in this effort. The ICBL now comprises more than 1,000 organizations in 55 countries. The first NGO International Conference on landmines was held in London in May 1993 and brought together three types of organizations working toward the goal of achieving a landmine ban: demining NGOs, victim assistance groups, and so-called political campaigners.[17]

The effectiveness of the ICBL can be traced to two issues: its well-orchestrated public relations campaign and the boldness of its demands. Mobilizing the public conscience has always been an important factor in gaining support for international arms control agreements. The coalition of NGOs working together displayed some unique abilities that aroused the public conscience on the antipersonnel landmine issue: an ability to conduct field research quickly and publish the results of country surveys; and the ability and resources to compile essential information and make it available rapidly to activists.[18] The information age greatly assisted their efforts through interconnectedness provided by e-mail and web pages. In the months leading up to the Ottawa conference in December 1997, numerous "alerts" and newsletters circulated instantly and internationally, apprising groups of critical debating points and lobbying requirements. Indeed, the ICBL has been referred to as the "poster child for internet activism."[19] These various efforts provided the needed pressure and expertise to gain access to national decisionmakers and then persuade them to act quickly and decisively. Finally, the public relations campaign to generate global support for the campaign to ban antipersonnel mines clearly benefited from Princess Diana's star quality and hard work.[20]

The second unique aspect of this campaign was the boldness of its demands. Initially the ICBL was working through the United Nations and in support of a review conference for the CCW, which was designed to strengthen restrictions against antipersonnel landmines and possibly lead to an eventual ban. Yet it was precisely the failure of the CCW review to bring about a ban that gave birth to what became known as the Ottawa process. During the January 1996...
session of the CCW review conference, a small group of nations attended a meeting organized by the ICBL to discuss strategies to achieve a landmine ban. They were willing to step outside of the normal process and forge a close, cooperative relationship with the ICBL to build momentum for a total ban.[21] The Ottawa process was referred to as the "fast-track" approach aimed at achieving quick results and a global response to this pressing humanitarian crisis. The CCW came to be referred to as the "go slow" approach, and perhaps the governing bureaucracies in the larger countries, including the United States, were too slow and ponderous to keep pace with the more efficient ICBL organization. Ann Marie Clark, in *The Journal of International Affairs*, argues, "Commitment to a very focused set of concerns, in contrast to the obligations of states to respond to a greater range of demands, allows NGOs to gain leverage on selected policy issues."[22]

The campaign's efficiency was enhanced by the simplicity of its demand--a total ban: all antipersonnel landmines, in all circumstances, for all countries, as soon as possible.[23] Dr. Eric Prokosch argues that the "demand for a complete ban on use neatly undercuts the traditional logic to such discussions, where the outcome has normally been thought of as the result of a balancing exercise between humanitarian considerations and military needs."[24] The intent of the campaign was to stigmatize antipersonnel mines. Senator Patrick Leahy, the most vocal US public official supporting a landmine ban, stated that an "effective international agreement that is based on stigmatizing a weapon cannot have different standards for different nations."[25]

The Canadian government, working with the ICBL, assembled representatives from interested countries in October 1996 and challenged them to return in December 1997 to sign an agreement banning antipersonnel landmines by the year 2000. The Ottawa Treaty banning antipersonnel landmines was opened for signature on 3 December 1997. This international treaty specifically recognizes in its preamble the critical role that NGOs played in its enactment, alluding to:

> . . . the role of public conscience in furthering the principles of humanity as evidenced by the call for a total ban of antipersonnel mines and . . . the efforts to that end undertaken by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, and numerous other nongovernmental organizations around the world.[26]

The treaty bans the manufacture, storage, transfer, and use of antipersonnel mines. Antipersonnel mines are defined as mines designed to be exploded by the presence, proximity, or contact of a person and which will incapacitate, injure, or kill one or more persons. Signatories are to destroy all stockpiles within four years and clear all mined areas within ten years after the treaty's entry into force.[27] It entered into force on 1 March 1999 and currently has 135 signatory countries, 81 of which have ratified the treaty. The end result is a treaty, in Senator Leahy's words, "that is based on stigmatizing a weapon" and will rid the world of this global scourge.[28]

Proponents of the treaty have praised the process and the role of the ICBL, claiming it represents a new way of conducting international diplomacy and a model for the future. The Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lloyd Axworthy, expressed his belief that "NGOs can no longer be relegated to simple advisory or advocacy roles. They are now part of the way decisions have to be made."[29] The ICBL claims the Ottawa process "will surely serve for years to come as a dynamic post-Cold War model of a new style of diplomacy, one driven not by 'superpowers,' but by a coalition of small and middle-sized states, working with and responsive to the desires of civil society."[30]

The activist agenda-setting model for NGO involvement in the security policy formulation process remains clearly evident. The next global crisis being addressed by an NGO coalition is the "epidemic spawned by military small arms and light weapons." Numerous groups have joined together to form the International Action Network on Small Arms, hoping to compel governments to face this issue.[31] NGO attempts to be involved in the decisionmaking process also were evident at the December 1999 World Trade Organization conference in Seattle. Numerous environmental and labor organizations demonstrated to gain access to the organization's deliberative bodies. President Clinton chastised the World Trade Organization's governing body, challenging it to become "more open and accessible," to open the hearing room doors and "invit[e] in a more formal fashion public comment on trade disputes."[32] As a final example concerning the potential role of nongovernmental organizations, a recent editorial in *The Nation* addressed a topic of immense importance to the security of the United States:
Abolition of nuclear weapons is not a pipe dream. The progress of the anti-landmine campaign suggests the possibility of citizen activism with a global reach: one in which grassroots advocates and nongovernmental groups, linked by the Internet into an informal communications and action network, join governments on the losing end of the weaponry game to bring worldwide pressure through the UN and other arenas.[33]

Other analysts and decisionmakers are very concerned about a future in which security policy is decided by interests groups and CNN-amplified publicity campaigns. A recent majority opinion from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on a related landmine issue concluded:

The [Ottawa] Convention served unique political purposes, rather than humanitarian needs. It was negotiated without any serious consideration to security concerns. It also was negotiated in a forum with large numbers of NGOs protesting aspects of the US negotiating position and otherwise criticizing the United States as being part of the land mine problem. Additionally, a number of small countries such as the Seychelles, funded and emboldened by the various activist organizations, repeatedly sought to embarrass the United States. It was, in short, an environment where serious consideration of national security issues could not occur.[34]

The United States has unique responsibilities around the world for the security of friends and allies requiring it to pursue humanitarian issues, but not at the expense of important security concerns. Addressing those responsibilities, columnist Charles Krauthammer makes the following point:

For serious countries facing serious risks, however, a land mine ban could be a fatal luxury. It is the safe and parasitic--those countries living comfortably behind the protection of others who act as their shield, their land mine--who do not need land mines. It is they who are leading the charge against those, like the Americans, who must calculate how many of their soldiers will die on the altar of yet another disarmament delusion.[35]

Communications channels and access are extremely important for nongovernmental organizations to operate effectively in the policy environment. As evidenced by the international success of the ICBL, international nongovernmental organizations not only cross formal national boundaries, they also create independent networks of their own.[36] The following discussion does not seek to characterize the ICBL in any sinister manner, but building on the activist NGO model of a media-based grass-roots advocacy campaign, the potential for serious harm is clear. Concerning visions of future warfare, John Arquilla, David Ronfedlt, and Michele Zanini, in a chapter in RAND's Strategic Appraisal 1998, have introduced the concept of "netwar" in which networked enemies will be made up of dispersed nonstate, paramilitary, and other irregular forces potentially including peaceful social activists. Adversaries will emphasize "information operations" and "perception management"--that is, media-oriented measures that aim to attract rather than coerce.[37] Steven Metz, an analyst with the US Army's Strategic Studies Institute, has developed this concept further and notes that if this concept is correct, the most likely future enemy for America will be a network of opponents unified only by their opposition to Washington or to an American-dominated world economic or political system. This network would be made up of violent as well as nonviolent, legal entities.

The nonviolent, legal components would, among other things, lead campaigns to weaken the US military by having certain technologies or methods banned or proscribed. This tendency is evident today: as the United States seeks to develop effective nonlethal weapons, a global anti-nonlethal weapon movement is coalescing.[38]

The prospect of focused and networked coalitions of nongovernmental organizations, divorced from national security considerations yet attempting to influence US security policies, must be guarded against.

**US Antipersonnel Landmine Policy**

Before discussing the details of the military necessity of landmines, it is appropriate to briefly review US antipersonnel landmine policy. The US policy tightrope act has followed a dual track of unilateral actions and multilateral efforts to control antipersonnel landmines. As would be expected, US policy initially focused on the non-self-destructing variety
of antipersonnel landmines. Presidential Decision Directive 48, issued on 16 May 1996, prohibited the use of non-self-destructing antipersonnel landmines by US forces, except for the defense of Korea (the "Korea exception") until the threat no longer exists or adequate alternative systems are developed. It also committed the United States to pursue a ban on antipersonnel landmine use, production, and transfer, and it directed the demilitarization of all non-self-destructing antipersonnel landmine stocks, except those required for Korea, by the end of 1999. Finally, it reserved the option to use self-destructing or self-deactivating antipersonnel landmines in military hostilities, if necessary, to safeguard American lives and hasten an end to any conflict.[39]

The next policy refinement coincided with the US refusal to sign the Ottawa treaty in September 1997. US negotiators failed to gain acceptance of two key provisions: an adequate transition period in which to develop alternatives to the non-self-destructing antipersonnel landmines needed for the defense of Korea, and acceptance of self-destructing antipersonnel landmines as part of a mixed system. The last provision was key because virtually all US self-destructing antitank mines are contained in mixed systems, which are prohibited under the Ottawa Treaty. Opponents of a ban on antipersonnel landmines point out that if the Ottawa treaty had not insisted on banning all antipersonnel landmines as a matter of ideological purity (stigmatization), these "smart" mines would be recognized as a responsible alternative to the long-duration "dumb" antipersonnel landmines.[40] The President stated, "Unfortunately, as it is drafted, I cannot in good conscience add America's name to that treaty. As Commander-in-Chief, I will not send our soldiers to defend the freedom of our people and the freedom of others without doing everything we can to make them as secure as possible."[41] His announcement, however, also established a policy to end the use of all pure antipersonnel landmine systems by 2003, even those that self-destruct, except in Korea for which the goal of fielding alternatives by 2006 was established. The policy articulated by the President continued to maintain a balance between humanitarian and security concerns.

The most recent policy refinement is contained in Presidential Decision Directive 64, issued on 23 June 1998. Despite the directive's opening comment that while pursuing humanitarian goals, the United States will take whatever steps are necessary to protect the lives of US military personnel and those civilians they may be sent to defend, two new policy provisions could potentially upset the balance and jeopardize US forces. The first is a directive to aggressively search for alternatives to mixed anti-tank systems, and the second is the statement that the United States will sign the Ottawa Convention by 2006 if we succeed in identifying suitable alternatives to antipersonnel landmines and mixed antitank systems.[42] The principal concern with this last provision is that the search for suitable alternatives to both non-self-destructing and mixed systems in a military sense may be overtaken by a desire to develop Ottawa-compliant alternatives.[43] The provisions of the Ottawa Treaty are such that an Ottawa-compliant alternative and a suitable military alternative are mutually exclusive, at least for the foreseeable future.

US antipersonnel landmine policy is also being pursued through the CCW Amended Mines Protocol, ratified by the United States in May 1999. The amended protocol strengthens the existing treaty by requiring that minefields containing non-self-destructing antipersonnel landmines be marked and monitored and that all antipersonnel landmines be detectable using standard detection equipment. These restrictions are consistent with the standard operating procedures of the US armed forces. The Amended Mines Protocol also does not preclude the responsible use of self-destructing or "smart" landmines. The congressional committee reviewing the protocol concluded, "By restricting the use of long-duration antipersonnel landmines while allowing full military use of short-duration antipersonnel landmines, the protocol strikes an appropriate balance between humanitarian concerns and military requirements."[44] Senator Joseph Biden indicated, "Adherence to these provisions should end the senseless postwar slaughter inflicted by so many mines today."[45] An important added benefit of the CCW is that it imposes conditions on countries that have not signed the Ottawa Convention nor have any immediate plans to sign the accord. China and Pakistan, for example, have already ratified the new protocol but refuse to sign the Ottawa Convention.[46]

The final element of US policy concerns the Demining Initiative 2010. The solution to the existing landmine problem is not solved by either additional restrictions or a ban, but by the difficult task of removing mines and clearing land. Working with mine-affected countries, international agencies, and private groups, the US government has dedicated more than $375 million to demining activities since 1993, with a goal of eliminating the threat of landmines to civilians worldwide by 2010.[47] The demining effort is beginning to make significant progress. The latest edition of *Hidden Killers* reports that landmines are not being planted anywhere near the 1994 estimate of 2.5 million each year. In fact, more mines are being removed each year than are being emplaced. "While the problem is still huge, many
experts now believe that the antipersonnel landmines crisis can be solved in years rather than decades."[48] US policy, which has attempted to balance humanitarian concerns with military requirements, appears to be relatively successful.

**The Korea Exception**

The military necessity of antipersonnel landmines is currently wedded to the Korea exception. The security situation in Korea is deemed to be unique in justifying the use of antipersonnel landmines. President Clinton alluded to those unique circumstances in a press conference on 17 September 1997, announcing the US decision not to sign the Ottawa Treaty. He noted the short distance from Seoul to the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and the preponderance of North Korean troops compared to the relatively few US defenders in their outposts, concluding, "There is no place like it in the world."[49]

Should Pyongyang attempt to reunify the Korean peninsula by force, North Korea's huge army represents a formidable offensive force. With approximately one million active duty forces and a reserve force of more than five million, North Korea is the most militarized nation on earth, and its army is currently the third largest in the world. If war does return to Korea, it will not be a replay of Operation Desert Storm. Timing, terrain, and the nature of the enemy all argue against a painless and swift outcome. American military planners believe a North Korean attack would begin simultaneously along two fronts. Backed by a massive artillery barrage, hundreds of thousands of infantry troops would pour south along perhaps six invasion routes across the DMZ. Meanwhile, North Korean special operations forces would attack ports, air bases, and logistics facilities in South Korea, disrupting efforts to reinforce the front line.[50]

One of the strengths of the North Korean army is its ability to attack with an overwhelming number of infantry soldiers supported by the likely use of chemical weapons and unprecedented concentrations of artillery. The opening stage of this fight would likely be more similar to World War I than to the post-Desert Storm view of warfare presented in glossy pamphlets coming out of the Pentagon. Moreover, the restrictive terrain that characterizes the bulk of the peninsula not only makes dismounted attacks necessary but gives the infantryman a distinct advantage.

North Korean infantry would serve two primary purposes in the attack. First, their chief aim would be to penetrate, dislodge, and destroy the defending units. Second, they would clear the valleys to make way for North Korean armored forces, including clearing obstacles that impede mechanized maneuver. This close-combat infantry fight is sometimes referred to as a machine-gun war. It is typified by this example from the Korean War:

> At about 8:00 p.m. the Chinese Communists attacked in massive force. They swarmed over the hills, blowing bugles and horns, shaking rattles and other noisemakers, and shooting flares into the sky. They came on foot, firing rifles and burp guns, hurling grenades, and shouting and chanting shrilly. The total surprise of this awesome ground attack shocked and paralyzed most Americans and panicked not a few.[51]

The mission of the United Nations Command (UNC) and the Combined Forces Command (CFC) would be to stop the North Korean army's advance into the south and prevent the capture of Seoul, and to destroy the North Korean forces.[52] Allied forces would have to accomplish their mission in a shallow defensive zone between Seoul and the DMZ. Fourteen million South Koreans (35 percent of the population) live in Seoul, which lies only 27 miles south of the DMZ. These elements--massive infantry attacks, restrictive terrain, and a shallow defensive zone--require a unique form of warfare that mandates a strong reliance on antipersonnel landmines. The uniqueness of Korea, and the allied requirement for antipersonnel landmines, are indisputable features of being prepared to wage that form of warfare today.

Non-self-destructing antipersonnel landmines form a key component of the static, integrated barrier system designed to block, fix, and turn enemy attacks and to enhance the effectiveness of friendly weapons fire. While these systems are not technologically advanced, they provide a vital capability along the most heavily fortified region in the world. This barrier system serves as a significant deterrent to any North Korean attack. Long-duration active mines along the DMZ help deter the third largest army in the world from resuming an attack with little or no notice. The psychological effect of active mines cannot be overemphasized. This account from an American infantryman encountering the Siegfried Line in World War II typifies the soldier's reaction:
By now I had gone through aerial bombing, artillery and mortar shelling, open combat, direct rifle and machine gun firing, night patrolling and ambush. Against all of this we had some kind of chance; against mines we had none. The only defense was to not move at all.[53]

As defensive weapons, antipersonnel landmines are a force multiplier, capable of increasing the defender's chances of success. They do this by providing alert and early warning to friendly forces, denying unrestricted maneuver to the enemy, and producing direct casualties. Mines allow the battlefield commander to control more terrain with the same force or the same terrain with fewer forces. An integrated barrier system containing antipersonnel landmines provides time to allow combined forces to quickly transition to wartime footing without significant loss of ground. According to Secretary of Defense William Cohen, "In the event of an attack, the North's overwhelming numerical advantage can be countered only by slowing its advance to allow time for our reinforcements to arrive and organize . . . [O]ur antipersonnel landmines are critical to this task."[54]

The final major contribution of antipersonnel landmines to the success of the Korean war plan is force protection. Minefields protect friendly flanks against enemy maneuver, unit positions during close combat, and key infrastructure nodes and combat support and logistics units from North Korean special operations forces deep in the South Korean rear area. The concept of protection extends beyond immediate tactical considerations. As General John Tilelli, former Commander in Chief of the UNC/CFC and United States Forces Korea, eloquently pointed out, "As the commander on the ground, I think protecting the lives of the soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines--and the civilians--on the southern side . . . is a humanitarian issue."[55]

**Landmine Use in the 21st Century**

It should be clear from the above discussion that the Korea exception remains valid. Antipersonnel landmines are critical to the successful execution of the UNC/CFC campaign to deter a North Korean attack, and to defeat their attack should deterrence fail. However, the capabilities antipersonnel landmines provide US and Republic of Korea forces are not unique to the Korean peninsula. They extend anywhere US forces may have to fight. This point has been clearly articulated by the country's senior military leadership. In July 1997, an unprecedented "64-star" letter (signed by 16 four-star generals and admirals) delivered to the US Congress argued that landmines are indeed a combat multiplier for US land forces, especially since the dramatic reduction in force structure. Self-destructing landmines are particularly important to the protection of early entry and light forces, which must be prepared to fight outnumbered during the initial stages of a deployment.[56]

The current US National Military Strategy foresees a military force largely based in the United States, with some limited forward-deployed forces. This mandates requirements for rapid deployment to distant regions around the globe to defend US national interests. Despite improvements in US deployment capabilities, early entry forces will remain vulnerable until additional forces are deployed. One concept being discussed for the employment of these early entry forces is referred to as "strategic preemption." In this operational maneuver, early arriving ground forces would simultaneously occupy multiple points throughout the enemy's area of operations and saturate the enemy's most vital areas with small, discrete, autonomous, and highly lethal mobile combat elements.[57] During this period of operations, passive defenses will be extremely important. These passive defenses include antitank and antipersonnel mine systems. Even after follow-on forces are deployed, anti-vehicle and antipersonnel landmine systems will be essential adjuncts to tactical schemes and operational-level campaign plans. According to General Donn Starry, former commander of the US Army Training and Doctrine Command, "Mines of all kinds are an integral and necessary part of any tactical weapons employment scheme. They are essential to minimizing soldier casualties, and maximizing those of the enemy."[58]

One of the reasons the importance of landmines is discounted is a general misperception of the nature of future conflicts that US forces will be engaged in. The success of Operation Desert Storm presents a vivid picture of a highly trained, technologically dominant military gaining unprecedented success with few losses. Michael Desch, author of the book *Civilian Control of the Military*, argues that "the public doesn't see us going to war or, if they do see us going to war, they think it will be another ground war like Desert Storm and be over in 100 hours. So I don't think the public understands how dependent our military would be on these mines."[59]
Future conflict is expected to consist of long-distance engagements with precision strike forces minimizing the requirement to commit US land forces into close combat situations. When forces are committed they will engage enemy armored forces and rapidly defeat them. An example of this logic is found in a recent editorial from *Defense News*: "New weaponry may make such last-minute defenses nearly obsolete. For example, the US Air Force's Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System (JSTARS) aircraft can track tanks from miles away, and precision-guided weapons can hit them before they get close enough to be a threat."[60] This view of future warfare was endorsed by landmine ban activist Jody Williams when she visited Korea in 1998: "US and South Korean forces are not going to sit here and wait for the North Koreans to come across the line. You're going to strike very deep into North Korea and pulverize what's left of that country."[61]

The error of this approach gets compounded when analysts and authors fail to recognize the nature of warfare in restricted terrain and instead envision the "highway of death" experience that closed out Operation Desert Storm. Recall the discussion of the nature of any future war in Korea and contrast the close infantry, machine-gun war that is expected with this misguided view from Caspar Weinberger's recent book, *The Next War*, in which he portrays an entirely different scenario for the opening North Korean assault:

*The Chorwon Valley, South Korea:*

Lieutenant Choi Lui stared through his field glasses with horror, his eyes wide with panic. In the early dawn light he saw scores of armored vehicles moving rapidly through the Chorwon Valley toward him. He knew instantly what it was: the advanced guard of an attacking [North Korean] tank formation.[62]

The 1950 Korean War began with a blitzkrieg attack by North Korean armored forces, but that was because there were no prepared defenses, including landmines, that had to be breached and cleared prior to the commitment of armor and mechanized forces. The opening onslaught in any future Korean War, however, is more likely to resemble the tough infantry fights of World War I. In a much more realistic novel about a potential war in Korea, John Antal, a recent battalion commander with US forces in Korea, presents the following scenario concerning the North Korea war plan:

Once the artillery had stunned and destroyed the enemy, the infantry would infiltrate into the depths of the enemy's positions. The panic that this infiltration would cause, coupled with the devastating fire of the artillery, would enable the infantry to open huge gaps in the enemy's defenses. Once holes were punched through the first defensive line, the tanks and mechanized infantry would race through the gaps.[63]

Advanced warfighting concepts discussed in the Pentagon's *Joint Vision 2010* will certainly play an important part in the successful prosecution of the Korean campaign plan, but they can not be exclusively applied at the expense of foregoing critical capabilities such as antipersonnel and mixed mine systems, which are needed for a successful infantry fight. Dr. Steven Metz has recently characterized these two modes of warfare as "stand-off war" and "hands-on war."[64] War in Korea, and potentially in many other worldwide hotspots, would definitely be hands-on and require the defensive and force-multiplier contributions of antipersonnel landmines. In the words of Antal's fictional North Korean combat leader, "The Americans expect their technology to allow them to fight at a safe distance. They believe that wars can be fought with minimal casualties. They have no stomach for the deadly, close combat that we intend to wage against them."[65]

Operations in Kosovo and Serbia represent a cogent reminder that the complexity of future conflict situations requires that US military forces maintain their full array of capabilities. The Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, General Wesley Clark, made the following point in congressional testimony in 1998:

I am concerned about the potential military consequences of the Ottawa Convention on antipersonnel landmines (APLs). Self-destructing and self-deactivating APLs, and antitank/APL mixed systems constitute a critical force protection and counter-mobility asset. The requirement for such a capability is increasing in light of evolving and future operational concepts that envision our forces conducting dispersed operations over expanded battlespace.[66]

If ground operations had been conducted against Serbia, they would almost certainly have benefited from the force protection and force multiplier effects derived from the controlled use of antipersonnel landmine systems.
Conclusion

The foregoing discussion highlights the difficulties and complexities of the landmine issue. While there are legitimate humanitarian concerns related to the indiscriminate and undisciplined use of these weapons, there are equally valid concerns relating to the effectiveness and security of US forces and their ability to accomplish assigned missions throughout the world.

The efforts of nongovernmental organizations in addressing the landmine issue are certainly laudable, and these organizations deserve much credit for the progress made to date in minimizing the risks to noncombatants. However, the media-oriented Ottawa process, which allows no room for compromise or the legitimate review of military requirements, is a dangerous model to apply to national security policy formulation. Samuel Huntington, in a recent *Foreign Affairs* article titled "The Erosion of American National Interests," argues that foreign/security and domestic policymaking processes should not be the same. Foreign policy has traditionally been based on the consideration of the national interests, which "usually combine security and material concerns, on the one hand, and moral and ethical concerns, on the other."[67] Today, we are witnessing the domestication of foreign policy. "The institutions and capabilities--political, military, economic, intelligence--created to serve a grand national purpose in the Cold War are now being suborned and redirected to serve narrow subnational, transnational, and even nonnational purposes."[68] Former Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger concludes the argument by stating that the United States has "less of a foreign policy in a traditional sense of a great power than we have the stapling together of a series of goals put forth by domestic constituency groups."[69] In the foreign policy arena, US political leaders must guard against adopting positions driven by single-focused constituency groups that eschew balance and compromise. Failure to do so may make for good politics but poor policy.

Future combat scenarios involving US forces are extremely varied and complex. Most will entail the potential for close-in combat as adversaries will seek to operate either in complex terrain or otherwise attempt to offset US advantages in stand-off capabilities. Antipersonnel landmines and mixed antitank systems will be critical in such a fight. The Korea exception remains valid--landmines are an essential force multiplier contributing to the defense of the Republic of Korea and to the maintenance of deterrence and stability in Northeast Asia. In the words of General Tilelli before the House National Security Committee: "Let me be very clear here. These weapons, both the non-self-destructing and self-destructing types, are absolutely vital to the success of UNC/CFC's mission to deter North Korean aggression and defend the Republic of Korea."[70]

The utility of these systems goes beyond Korea, however, and thus the Korea exception should be viewed as the rule. As US antipersonnel landmine policy begins to lean toward acceptance of the Ottawa Treaty, we must be aware of the risks incurred. Under the guise of protecting noncombatants from the enduring hazards of antipersonnel landmines, the Ottawa Treaty effectively prohibits all antipersonnel mines, and for the United States virtually all antitank mines which are now part of a mixed system, whether they remain active for years or self-destruct hours after employment. This "all or nothing" approach would eliminate almost the entire US inventory of landmine systems, both antipersonnel and antitank, the bulk of which leave no residual hazards. At every turn, US senior military leaders have told Congress that without antipersonnel landmines, US soldiers will be placed at increased risk.

The President's goal of ending the tragic damage to innocent civilians due to antipersonnel landmines is most effectively pursued through a balanced approach represented by the restrictions contained in the Convention on Conventional Weapons and a search for antipersonnel landmine alternatives that replicate the essential military capabilities of antipersonnel landmines. In the absence of effective alternatives, critical antipersonnel landmine capabilities provided by both long-duration and self-destructing varieties must be retained. President Clinton has publicly stated that he "will not send our soldiers to defend the freedom of our people and the freedom of others without doing everything we can to make them as secure as possible." The United States should avoid adopting an Ottawa-compliant posture and continue to balance humanitarian and national security concerns.

NOTES

iii. Former Secretary of State Warren Christopher has gone one step further and characterized antipersonnel landmines as weapons of mass destruction because of indiscriminate civilian casualties and economic deprivation resulting from their employment.


5. Ibid., p. 16.

6. The White House, "Fact Sheet: Anti-tank Munitions," 17 September 1997. To date, only one of the 32,000 self-destructing antipersonnel landmines tested missed its self-destruct time. The one that missed was one hour late. One columnist remarked that the reliability of these systems is only .004 less reliable than God. See also Gregory L. Bier, "Antipersonnel Landmine Policy and Implications," Engineer, April 1998, p. 27. Dr. Bier states that 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 non-self-destructing APLs since February 1952."

7. Sloan, p. 2.

8. Ibid., p. 113.


10. US State Department, Hidden Killers, the Global Landmine Crisis, 1995. An intense debate has developed over the use of statistics in the landmine issue. For example, Colin King from Jane's Defense, argues, "Much of the justification for a ban is founded on assumptions and statistics that some consider fundamentally unsound." Landmine statistics are particularly significant because they are a major factor in the international perception of the situation, and therefore have a bearing on policy. Colin King, "Jane's Mines and Mine Clearance 1997-98," Internet, http://www.janes.com/defence/editors/mines.html, 21 January 1998. Refer to Landmine Monitor Report 1999--Toward Mine Free World, Internet, http://www.icbl.org/lm/1999/exec.html. With the publication of the 1998 edition of Hidden Killers, it seems certain that these initial estimates concerning the extent of the problem were in fact grossly exaggerated.


12. Ibid., pp. 149, 160-61.


27. Ibid., pp. 2-3.


43. Proponents of a landmine ban have made clear their view that PDD-64 paves the way for early accession to the Ottawa Treaty. Holly Burkhalter, cochair of the US Campaign to Ban Landmines, stated, "[This agreement] enables ban campaigners to push the White House on the 'when' question, now that the President has agreed in principle to sign." She goes on to note that Senator Leahy has said, "I think we can get [to signature of the Ottawa Treaty] sooner and I and others will be pushing them to do so." The Center for Security Policy, "Fourteen of America's Most Respected Military Figures Urge Senate to Protect U.S. Troops From Dangerous Landmine Ban," Decision Brief No. 98-D-111, 16 June 1998, p. 2.

44. The Center for Security Policy, "Flash: Senator Leahy Opposes Landmine Arms Control Treaty."


48. *Hidden Killers* (1998), p. v. A cover article in a recent edition of *Newsweek*, titled "Diana's Legacy at Risk," highlights the growing friction and internal trauma within the anti-landmine movement. The vast sums of money pledged at the time of the Ottawa accord have been held up by bureaucratic inertia, domestic politics, and some nasty squabbling among the same NGOs that had pulled together so harmoniously in the run-up to the treaty signing. Most of the fights are over money and how to spend it. The deminers claim they are getting short shrift as opposed to the political campaigners like Jody Williams. The number of mines to be cleared is also an issue. In addition to adjusting the number of mines being emplaced each year, the 1998 edition of *Hidden Killers* also significantly reduced the total number of landmines currently in the ground, from 110 million to as few as 50 to 60 million. Some deminers believe that the real number is 20 million or fewer. The deminers' concern is that the bigger numbers make their job look futile and therefore curtail their funding. *Newsweek*, 8 March 1999, pp. 14-16.


63. Antal, p. 71.

64. Dr. Steven Metz, *War in the 21st Century* (Carlisle, Pa.: US Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 6 May 1999).

65. Antal, pp. 15-16.


68. Ibid., p. 37.

69. Ibid., p. 40.
Colonel John F. Troxell is the Director of National Security Studies, US Army War College. He earned a bachelor's degree from the US Military Academy and a master's degree from the Woodrow Wilson School, Princeton University. He has held a variety of command and staff positions including assignments in the Department of Army War Plans Division, as a force planner for the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy, and command of the 3d Engineer Battalion, 24th Infantry Division. Before joining the War College faculty, he was Chief, Engineer Plans Division, Combined Forces Command, in Seoul, South Korea.