



ICRC

Report on observations and conclusions from a review of the ICRC study

“Anti-personnel landmines, Friend or Foe?”

1. A Group of senior serving and retired officers formally met during the Nairobi Summit¹ on a Mine Free World to review the 1996 ICRC Study “Anti-personnel Landmines, Friend or Foe?” with an aim to elaborate on the study based on experiences over the eight years since that study was completed. The Group consisted of 10 officers from Argentina, Austria, Canada, Jordan, Kenya, Thailand, Ukraine and the United States, representing together a combined total of more than three hundred years of experience in all regions of the world in peace and war.
2. The Group reaffirmed the ICRC study as valid. In summary, it was the view of the Group that the use of anti-personnel mines is not justifiable under any circumstances. Similarly, there is no military advantage or situation offered by these indiscriminate weapons that can possibly, in any measure, warrant their human cost. They, like the sword, the pike and the horse are obsolete weapons on the modern battlefield.
3. While all of the conclusions are strongly supported, specific observations have been made to many of them as listed below.
4. The original ICRC study identified that few if any studies had been conducted regarding the relative military value of anti-personnel mines. The Group was made aware of several studies conducted since that time. In the view of the Group, these studies found that anti-personnel mines have a role but that role can be replaced through either a combination of new weapons and/or new equipment or by using current weaponry in a different way. In other words weapons should be considered as part of an anti-personnel system. If one weapon is removed, the use of others should be adjusted to compensate. The Group found that no new studies known by them since the ICRC study make a persuasive case for the military value of anti-personnel mines. This fact supports the argument that these weapons should be universally banned.
5. The ICRC study made certain conclusions regarding the use of border minefields and the cost of minefields in general in terms of friendly casualties. The Group reaffirmed these conclusions and also found that the use of AP mines as a barrier to prevent infiltration without continuous observation and direct fire renders these minefields

¹ The "Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World" is the name given to the landmark First Review Conference of the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines, held in Nairobi, Kenya, 29 November – 3 December 2004.

ineffective. Their use under these conditions on unprotected borders offers little if any military value. The Group also found that these minefields lend a false sense of security, since they will not prevent infiltration. Additionally it has been found that these unmanned mined areas may often be the preferred routes of infiltration.

6. Casualties are often caused to friendly forces as a result of the requirement to maintain their minefields. This was evident in Jordan, which, prior to joining the Convention experienced a significant number of casualties from the maintenance of their own minefields.
7. Regarding the conclusion from the ICRC study on the value of anti-personnel mines to protect anti-tank mines and their value for harassment, the Group found that Military technology in use for decades renders AP mines obsolete. More effective methods such as anti-lift devices to protect anti-tank mines (often called anti-vehicle mines) are in common use. The Group is also of the opinion that the use of these anti-personnel mines for harassment constitutes an illegal use of this weapon and is incompatible with International Humanitarian Law (Protocol 1, 1977, Additional to the Geneva Conventions, Article 51).
8. The ICRC Study drew several conclusions with regard to remotely delivered mines. The Group agreed with those conclusions. In some circumstances, remotely delivered AP mines can pose an even greater threat to civilians than hand emplaced mines. Additionally they can significantly impede movement of friendly forces. In the 1991 Gulf War, use of remotely delivered mines by coalition forces caused those same forces to exercise extreme caution in movement. In fact there is evidence that orders were issued to coalition forces to avoid areas previously struck from the air because remotely delivered mines had been dispersed on airfields, supply routes, approaches, bridges and assembly areas. This sort of directive indicates a lack of information as to the exact location of "friendly" minefields; and given the types of areas targeted, manoeuvre of friendly forces was seriously restricted.
9. Concerning the issue of alternatives to anti-personnel mines, the Group agreed with the conclusion of the study. Moreover, we believe that of the current 144 States Parties to the Convention, none is known to have assigned a high priority to the issue of the development of alternatives, material or non-material. This confirms the fact that such alternatives are no longer considered necessary.
10. Basic improvements in military weapons and equipment ranging from more and better automatic weapons through a greater use of protected vehicles to basic sensor suites have rendered anti-personnel mines redundant. The technology fielded by most armies since the mid-seventies has largely "replaced" the limited value offered by anti-personnel mines.
11. In regard to the need to improve mine clearance technology for humanitarian demining, the Group recognized that some progress has been made in improving mine clearance technology and strongly encourages further development of mine clearance equipment. It was also noted that some mines in stockpiles are very difficult to destroy safely. In Ukraine and Belarus only, there are more than 9.5 million PFM mines in stock awaiting destruction. Technology to solve this problem should be addressed as a matter of priority.

12. The final and overarching conclusion of the ICRC Study was that “The limited military utility of AP mines is far outweighed by the appalling humanitarian consequences of their use in actual conflicts”. The Group strongly believes the horrific impact on the innocent civilian population far outweighs the marginal and limited military value anti-personnel mines may have in limited situations.

Unanimously endorsed in their personal capacity by the following Group of Senior Military Officers, 30 November – 1 December 2004;

General (Retd) Zabala	Argentina
General (Retd) Greindl	Austria
General (Retd) Baril	Canada
Lieutenant-Colonel (Retd) MacBride	Canada
Brigadier-General Al-Maiteh Faleh	Jordan
Brigadier Tonui	Kenya
Major-General Tumrongsak Deemongko	Thailand
Lieutenant-General (Retd) Tereschenko	Ukraine
Lieutenant-Colonel (Retd) Shved	Ukraine
Lieutenant- General (Retd) Gard	United States of America

+++