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Patrick J. Leahy War Victims Fund

JOURNAL: Patrick J. Leahy War Victims Fund



In 1989, Sen. Patrick Leahy started a fund to get medical aid to victims of landmines. There are an estimated 100 million unexploded landmines in over 60 countries, where they kill or maim an estimated 26,000 people each year. Vast areas of countries like Cambodia, Bosnia and Angola have become death traps.

In 1992, Leahy sponsored an amendment to stop U.S. exports of anti-personnel landmines: the first law of its kind anywhere in the world. In 1993, the amendment to extend the export ban passed the Senate 100-0, and in 1997, President Clinton adopted it as permanent U.S. policy. The senator sponsored a 1995 amendment to halt U.S. use of anti-personnel mines for one year, beginning in 1999. That amendment was passed in the Senate 67-27, and was signed into law by Clinton on February 12, 1996. The law reads as follows:

Leahy Amendment Moratorium on Use of Anti-personnel Landmines

Sec. 583. (a) UNITED STATES MORATORIUM: For a period of one year beginning three years after the date of enactment of this Act, the United States shall not use anti-personnel landmines except along internationally recognized national borders or in demilitarized zones within a perimeter marked area that is monitored by military personnel and protected by adequate means to ensure the exclusion of civilians.

(b) DEFINITION AND EXEMPTIONS: For the purposes of this section:

(1) ANTI-PERSONNEL LANDMINE: The term "anti-personnel landmine" means any munitions placed under, on, or near the ground or other surface area, delivered by artillery, rocket, mortar, or similar means, or dropped from an aircraft and which is designed, constructed or adapted to be detonated or exploded by the

presence, proximity or contact of a person.

(2) EXEMPTIONS: The term "anti-personnel landmine" does not include command detonated Claymore munitions.

In June 1997, Leahy sponsored legislation with Sen. Chuck Hagel to ban U.S. deployments of anti-personnel mines after January 1, 2000. That bill now has 60 co-sponsors. Currently he is working with Jody Williams of Brattleboro, Vermont, the coordinator of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL).

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