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Fields of Sorrow

The decision by the United States to not sign the treaty banning the use of land mines could perpetuate the use of these deadly weapons

AN EMERALD EDITORIAL



CHRIS HUTCHINSON/Emerald

Bill Clinton has his priorities. Apparently, those priorities include propping up a thriving arms manufacturing industry and continuing the senseless U.S. involvement in South Korea.

The latter of these two was the reason Clinton gave for refusing to sign on to a treaty calling for the worldwide ban of land mines. The former is a far more likely culprit.

Land mines, of which there are 100 to 300 million deployed throughout the world, are a deadly threat, especially to civilians. Clinton claims that because the mines will be used in the clearly marked zone between North Korea and South Korea, the mines do not present a civilian threat.

Unfortunately, this very situation has led to thousands of past civilian deaths. The mines are clearly marked for the moment, but the passage of time will erase the fences and flags that mark mine fields, converting those areas to farms and rural roads where children walk to school.

To counteract this, Clinton has proposed using mines that decay over time, no longer posing a threat after a number of years. This technology is risky, however. Not only is it largely untested in the field, but even 20 years is too long for an ex-

plosive to lie unseen in the ground.

Clinton claims the use of mines are crucial to U.S. interests in South Korea. Sadly, this might be true.

If the United States intends to continue its military involvement in the Koreas for the next twenty or thirty years, what better excuse could they have than the deployment of mines? You can't pull the troops out while the mines are in the ground and a danger to civilians, and you can't leave the troops there without planting more mines.

While this self-perpetuating cycle is dangerous, a far more hazardous one might lurk unspoken in Clinton's decision. The United States is a massive manufacturer of all manner of arms, including anti-personnel mines.

Mines are deployed in about 60 nations throughout the world. Most of these were built by a few industrial powers, namely the United States, Russia and China.

Notably, those last two nations have followed the United States in refusing to sign on to the treaty. Without U.S. approval of the ban, there is little chance these other nations will sign on, leaving huge gaps in the treaty's effectiveness.

By insisting the United States needs to build and purchase mines, Clinton is helping the defense industry continue to rake in record profits. Worse, he is making it far more likely that mines will continue to be used throughout the world, further boosting the profit line and the death count.

Clinton was probably influenced by the hawks in the Pentagon, who fear giving up use of any weapon might suddenly leave the United States vulnerable to an unseen (and unforeseeable) attack. He was also most likely influenced by the slim possibility this treaty had of making its way through an equally short-sighted Senate.

What he was apparently not influenced by are the nearly 26,000 people who are killed or maimed each year because of leftover land mines.

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses may be sent to ode@oregon.uoregon.edu.

Thumbs



TO THE UNIVERSITY'S RECYCLING PROGRAM: The University recycled more than 1,000 tons of waste, saving money and helping the planet. This by itself deserves praise, but the program has received

additional laurels as well: the National Recycling Coalition awarded the program a top award for the school's efforts in reducing waste output.

TO THE ROTARY DUCK RACE: The Willamette River turned yellow as a flotilla of little yellow rubber ducks raced their way downstream this weekend. The ducks cost five dollars to sponsor, money which went to charity.



TO THE U.S. CONGRESS: Their latest political error was voting down a proposal to end subsidizing the building of roads in federal forests. The U.S. Forest Service already sells timber

at discount rates, often marking huge swaths of healthy trees as "salvage" simply to boost sales. All this comes at the expense of taxpayers, who lose valuable resources and help a huge industry increase profits. Paying to build roads so these companies can exploit the land only worsens the situation. With the vote (influenced largely by Northwest senators who receive massive campaign contributions from timber inter-

ests) citizens will continue to pay to make it easier for their natural resources to be abused.

TO PERFUME: Whether it be finding those little inserts in magazines or walking downwind of swarms of students drenched in the stuff, we're sick of the stench. Many of us are allergic, but even those of us who don't sneeze would rather not have to inhale artificial flowers all day. The day when

perfume was necessary is over; these days, people actually bathe. Running water. Look into it.

LETTERS POLICY
 The Oregon Daily Emerald will attempt to print all letters containing comments on topics of interest to the University community. Letters must be limited to 250 words or less. The Emerald reserves the right to edit any letter for length, clarity, grammar and style.