



## ***Committee on International Justice and Peace***

3211 FOURTH STREET NE • WASHINGTON DC 20017-1194 • 202-541-3160

WEBSITE: WWW.USCCB.ORG/JPHD • FAX 202-541-3339

March 2, 2020

The Honorable Robert C. O'Brien  
National Security Advisor  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20506

Dear Mr. O'Brien:

On January 31, the Trump Administration and the U.S. Department of Defense announced a new policy that would allow the U.S. military forces to “employ advanced, non-persistent landmines” in areas beyond the Korean peninsula. As chairman of the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, I write to oppose this new policy and instead ask that the White House reconsider and take steps to join the 1997 “Convention on the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction,” otherwise known as the Mine Ban Treaty. This treaty enjoys the support of 164 countries, including all other members of NATO.

Joining the Mine Ban Treaty is a moral issue as landmines are indiscriminate weapons that kill and maim innocent civilians during and long after hostilities end. While the Administration has said that the non-persistent nature of these advanced landmines mean that they will self-destruct after a short period of time, they are still indiscriminate and are unable to distinguish between civilian or military targets, or even between a U.S. soldier or an enemy combatant. They have been used in countries such as Iraq, Laos, Cambodia, Afghanistan, Angola, Colombia, Lebanon, and more recently in Syria with devastating consequences.

Over the years, the Holy See has spoken against the use of landmines, noting the “deplorable humanitarian consequences of anti-personnel mines.” In 2009, the Holy See appealed to all nations to join and adopt the Mine Ban Treaty. In 2012, Pope Benedict XVI launched an appeal to raise awareness about the problems of landmines saying, “I encourage everyone to be committed to freeing humanity from these terrible and devious weapons...” In 2014, Pope Francis, in supporting the Mine Ban Treaty, exhorted all countries to “commit themselves within the framework of the Convention (Mine Ban Treaty) so that there are no more mine victims! So there are no more regions planted with landmines and no child in the world has to live in fear of mines.”

Previous chairmen of the U.S. bishops' Committee on International Justice and Peace have written to your predecessors in 2010 and 2014 urging support for the Mine Ban Treaty. I hope that you will share my opposition to this policy of allowing expanded use of landmines with others in the Administration and encourage the United States to exercise our moral leadership on the global stage by joining the Mine Ban Treaty.

Sincerely,

+ *David J. Malloy*

Most Reverend David J. Malloy  
Bishop of Rockford  
Chairman, Committee on International Justice and Peace

cc: The Honorable Mark Esper, Secretary of Defense