

“Paul McCartney Hangs Out With
Some Really Bad Companions”

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The invitation was for an “Evening with Paul McCartney” at the apartment of the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations at the Waldorf-Astoria – and who could resist that. McCartney was with his companion Heather Mills and the dinner for 40 included a number of high profile celebrities from the world of journalism, entertainment and diplomacy, including Michael Douglas, Catherine Zeta Jones, Diane Sawyer, Barbara Walters and Arthur Ochs Sulzburger, to mention just a few.

Then McCartney and Mills introduced everyone to their really bad companions – an aggregation of the different types of landmines (rendered inert for this social situation) which are causing such enormous human suffering around the world. Having these hideous killers lined up on the coffee table in the Ambassador’s living room juxtaposed against the stunning Jasper Johns original paintings and the glitzy assemblage of invitees, highlighted the truly evil nature of these artifices and the stunning human toll they exact.

Mills, who is herself an amputee (having lost a leg in an auto accident in Britain), spoke with great empathy and emotion of the agony landmine survivors – almost all of whom have lost limbs. Her valor in the face of this devastating trauma has inspired McCartney to devote much of his time and energy to promoting the “Adopt-A-Minefield® Campaign, which links donors large and small through the United Nations to organizations involved in clearing mines in hamlets and villages, in countries around the world.

Worldwide, landmines are a problem of epidemic proportions. There are between 70 and 100 million strewn across 69 countries of the world, and each year, an estimated 26,000 people are killed either by landmines or their dangerous cousins unexploded ordnance - bombs and shells leftover from warfare, known by the shorthand "UXO". That means that on average, each day, approximately 70 people die as a result of landmines, and millions more are held hostage by these hidden killers, afraid to venture from their homes, unable to plant their fields, or even walk to school, a medical clinic, or the market.

While landmines are produced as "weapons of war," in fact, only about 10 percent of landmine victims are soldiers. The other 90 percent are innocent civilians, mostly women and children, mowed down as they seek to go about their everyday lives, collecting water, or harvesting their fields. In most of these 69 affected countries, mines render large tracts of agricultural land unusable, wreaking environmental and economic devastation. Refugees returning to their war-ravaged countries often face this life-threatening obstacle to rebuilding their lives.

At present, anti-personnel landmines remain the weapons of choice especially for many insurgent groups. Today, conflicts in Angola, Chechnya, Sierra Leone, the Horn of Africa, and Sudan all involve the planting of new mine fields. Landmines are cheap, easy to manufacture and use, difficult to detect, and expensive and dangerous to remove. But, what makes antipersonnel mines so particularly abhorrent is the indiscriminate destruction they cause, and the fact that landmines are usually not removed after armed conflict ends.

These indiscriminate killers can lie dormant for years or even several decades until a person or animal triggers their detonation mechanism. For example, anyone who caught news coverage of President Clinton's trip to Vietnam may have seen footage of his visit to areas in South Vietnam still being cleared of UXOs more than 25 years after the war. Even more startling may be the fact that live mines and UXOs continue to be discovered in Berlin, and Egypt still has about 22.5 million landmines left in the ground from World War II. El Alamein, the site of one of the more famous battles in the early years of the war, still harbors millions of these potential killers. In that regard, it is sobering to contemplate that the last casualties of World War II may still not have occurred.

Leftover landmines are also a threat in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Cambodia, Croatia, Iraq, Laos, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Rwanda, Somalia, and dozens of other countries, including Chad, that land-locked country in Central Africa that was partially occupied by Libya which left behind up to a million landmines. The U.S. government has provided assistance to help demine Chad. It is intriguing to think that the U.S. may soon be seeking assistance to help us de-Chad Florida.

There are generally two categories of landmines: anti-personnel (AP) and anti-tank or anti-vehicle (AT):

- An anti-personnel (AP) landmine is defined as "A mine designed to be exploded by the presence, proximity or contact of a person, which will incapacitate, injure or kill one or more persons." Many mines are designed to maim rather than kill, in part because the spectre of disfigured and handicapped veterans is believed to sap the will of an adversary.

- An anti-tank (AT) landmine is a device designed to detonate by more than 100 kilograms of pressure – AT mines cannot distinguish between a tank and tractor. The force of their explosion is extremely powerful. While visiting a demining operation in northeastern Cambodia, I was about 100 yards from an anti-tank mine when it was detonated. I still recall being rocked backwards by the blast, even at that distance. There are seldom any survivors of these explosions.

There are also different types of antipersonnel mines according to the types of injuries they inflict:

- “Blast mines” are usually hand placed either on or under the ground. The explosive force of these mines causes foot, leg, and groin injuries as well as secondary infections that usually result in amputation.
- Fragmentation mines (such as hand grenades or mortar rounds) are usually placed on or above the ground. They are most often activated by tripwire or other means. In Cambodia, some were placed up in trees and could be released simply by someone pushing his way through heavy vegetation in the jungle. When detonated, the explosion projects a spray of hundreds of fragments at ballistic speed 50 meters in every direction, resulting in numerous wounds and possible death to anyone in that radius. Some truly insidious fragmentation mines may contain a primary charge to first lift the mine about 3 to 4 feet above the ground before it detonates. In Vietnam, they were called “bouncing Bettys” and they were more feared than almost any other weapon, because they were designed to explode into an adult’s abdomen and genitals. But, they can also take off a small child’s head should they be so unfortunate as to trigger the device. I still have vivid recollections when walking through the jungle on operations, of being especially careful to always step in exactly the same place as the man in front of me in order

to avoid stepping on a mine. And, I recall the incredible pain of seeing those who had the gross misfortune of stepping in the wrong place and setting off an explosion.

Those who survive the initial blast of a landmine usually require amputations, long hospital stays, and extensive rehabilitative services. Mine deaths and injuries in the past few decades total in the hundreds of thousands worldwide. In Cambodia alone there are over 35,000 amputees injured by landmines. In fact, one out of every 238 persons in that beleaguered country is an amputee – and they are the survivors. Many, many others die in the fields from loss of blood, severe infection, or the lack of transport to get medical help. In Angola, where civil war has raged for 30 years, and some 10 million mines remain, about one in 280 persons has lost one or more limbs. And, in the former Yugoslavia, an estimated four million mines are still buried, injuring or killing approximately ten children a week, according to the Save the Children Foundation.

Some things can be done to alleviate this problem. Thanks in part to international assistance, including from the U.S., and the work of dedicated NGOs and indigenous deminers, the number of Cambodian mine victims has been reduced by 90 percent in the past several years. Training and publicity about mine awareness has made civilians and children more cognizant of the threat mines pose. And, mine marking of known areas containing landmines have succeeded in warning people not to venture into these “no man zones.” One of the other ways the U.S. has helped achieve this humanitarian improvement is training deminers to safely destroy mines. The U.S. Humanitarian Demining Program works to clear mines in more than 30 countries and since 1993 has spent almost \$400 million to fight the landmine problem. In 1997, the

U.S. government undertook its Demining 2010 Initiative. The goal of this initiative is to end the threat of landmines to civilians by the year 2010. But, this assistance is spread thin and relatively small. When compared to other aid programs the U.S. carries out, both in terms of total funds committed and the inability to make long-term commitments to complete mine removal. U.S. programs are designed to train and equip countries to develop a mine action capability, but do not fund extensive long-term mine removal. Landmine clearance is an expensive process. A mine that costs as little as \$3 to produce can cost up to \$1,000 to remove. Therefore, other means have to be found to finance the actual mine removal. Because landmines are most frequently found in countries that lack the resources to address the problem, greater international assistance is crucial in filling the gap.

Humanitarian demining is accomplished by manual clearance teams, mechanical systems, mine detection dogs, or some combination of the three. Over one-quarter of the world's humanitarian deminers have been trained by the U.S. military. These humanitarian deminers use a variety of devices to accomplish this dangerous task: a sensitive metal detector to detect mines with metallic content; vegetation cutters to clear the terrain; a metal prod to hand probe the ground, and sometimes dogs to locate the scent of the mine's explosive. It is dangerous, time-consuming and costly work, as I can personally attest.

I still recall the shiver that went down my back when I heard the metallic clank sound when the trowel of the U.S. trained deminer with whom I was observing in Cambodia, struck a mine buried six inches under the road. It was one of more than 300 he and other deminers had discovered in just 100 yards of road. He then spent an excruciating 15 minutes carefully scooping sand and dirt from around the mine to

expose it, so it could eventually be blown up in place by a remote control detonation device. Other times heavy equipment, such as flails and rollers are used, but usually with limited success.

Governments, NGOs, and commercial firms are pursuing several new humanitarian-demining technologies. While it remains unlikely that anyone will find the “silver bullet” demining tool, evidence suggests that present research and development (R&D) of demining technologies will result in enhancements that will improve landmine detection, clearance, and neutralization.

Finding landmines is the most difficult aspect of humanitarian demining. The means of detecting landmines has not changed greatly since World War II. The major problem in finding mines is the difficulty in discriminating between a mine in the ground and other objects buried in the same soil. Modern anti-personnel landmines are small and made of various substances, which makes it nearly impossible for the standard metal detector to distinguish them from metallic debris, or even the metallic content of the soil surrounding them. Many newer landmines are also made of plastic, making them virtually undetectable by a metal detector.

Some examples of detection technologies now in R&D include; 1) ground-penetrating radar, which emits electromagnetic waves into the ground, where they are reflected, measured, and, based on their variations, detect the presence of different types or shapes of buried objects; 2) infrared detection devices, which are able to measure the heat that landmines retain or release, and so detect their presence; 3) nuclear radiation, such as Thermal Neutron Activation (TNA), Nuclear Quadrupole Resonance (NQR), Nuclear Magnet Resonance (NMR), and X-ray backscatter imaging, all of which

are examples of technologies that detect explosive substances in the landmine, rather than trying to identify the mine by its shape or casing; and 4) chemical detection, which focuses on the one element common to all landmines – the explosive material.

But, such methods are still many years away from reliable application in the rice paddies of Cambodia, mountains of Afghanistan and dense vegetation of Mozambique. And even if they are perfected, the question remains whether high-tech solutions will ultimately ever be cheap enough and sufficiently accessible to help those who truly need it: the rural poor of the world's developing countries.

As a result of all this work, in several countries, the scourge of antipersonnel landmines and unexploded ordnance has been significantly reduced. In addition to progress in Cambodia, Rwanda has reached the "sustainment phase," which is the measure of success for U.S. humanitarian demining programs. In Namibia, deminers have restored much previously mined land to productive use. In Bosnia, a solid indigenous capability to manage and conduct mine action initiatives has been achieved and within the next few years, one or more nations in Central America may become generally mine-safe.

In addition to landmine removal, there has been an energetic movement to ban landmines around the world. The *Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production, and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and On Their Destruction* ("Mine Ban Treaty") was opened for signature on 3 December 1997. The Ottawa Convention as it is also known, entered into force in March 1999 and one hundred and thirty-seven countries have signed or acceded to the Mine Ban Treaty as of 31 July 2000. The convention was not signed by the United States because landmines are essential to its

defenses in Korea and because the Convention bans the mixed anti-tank systems currently used by the U.S. military. If these issues can be resolved, the United States has indicated it will sign the Convention by 2006.

The International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) has often been called the “engine” that has driven the antipersonnel mine ban movement that resulted in the Mine Ban Treaty. The ICBL received the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize for its contribution. Some two and one-half years after the Mine Ban Treaty opened for signature, it is apparent that the treaty and the ICBL are already making a significant difference. It appears that use of antipersonnel mines is on the wane globally. Production has dropped dramatically, trade has halted almost completely, stockpiles are being rapidly destroyed, funding for mine action programs is on the rise, and the number of mine casualties in some of the most affected states has fallen greatly. Moreover, the number of landmine producers has dropped dramatically in recent years, from 54 to 16.

While demining operations and the new treaty are major achievements, tens of millions of landmines remain in the ground threatening all those around them. The United Nations is promoting a global effort to address this problem. The Adopt-A-Minefield® Campaign, to which Paul McCartney and Heather Mills are lending their efforts, offers a unique opportunity for local communities to make a difference internationally by raising funds to clear minefields and by raising awareness about the global landmine crisis. The Campaign seeks sponsors to adopt minefields identified by the United Nations as being in urgent need of clearance. The cost of clearing these areas ranges from thousands to millions of dollars, depending on the size and complexity of the demining task. But, costs can also be calibrated in amounts

equivalent to the pay of one deminer working for one day. In Cambodia, this was \$5.00. Sponsors may adopt entire minefields or contribute smaller amounts, which are pooled with other contributions. Every dollar donated to The Adopt-A-Minefield® Campaign is forwarded to the United Nations Development Program, which coordinates with demining operations in affected countries around the world.

The United Nations Association of the USA (UNA-USA) headed by retired U.S. Ambassador William Leurs, is the nation's largest grassroots foreign policy organization. The Association is dedicated to informing the American public about the work of the United Nations and to enhancing U.S. leadership within that system. UNA-USA implements the Adopt-A-Minefield® Campaign in partnership with the following organizations:

Better World Fund

U.S. Department of State

Their address is:

Adopt-A-Minefield®

United Nations Association of the USA

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Website www.landmines.org

Twenty-one years ago, Iowa civic and religious organizations, school children, newspapers and governments combined to raise money to alleviate similar human suffering half way around the world. The descriptions then Governor Robert Ray brought back from the Cambodian border of refugees dying from starvation brought our state, still deeply divided by the Vietnam war, together in a common effort. The Governor's quote given to an enterprising young *Des Moines Register* reporter who came to the airport late at night, "I Watched People Die", ran across the top of the paper the next morning and sent an electric current of concern across the state. Out of this was born a fundraising effort called Iowa SHARES (Iowa Sends Help to AID Refugees and End Starvation). It started on Thanksgiving Day and by Christmas, a half million dollars was raised to procure food and medicine. Today, on the eve of Thanksgiving, perhaps it is time to look again at a similar effort by Iowans to once again SHARE – this time to Send Help to Assist the Removal of Explosives- through the Adopt-A-Minefield effort.