



Department of Social Development and World Peace

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October 31, 2005

Dear Conferee:

On behalf of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, I write to support the “landmines alternatives” language in Senate Report No. 109-141 to the 2006 Department of Defense Appropriations Bill (HR 2863).

The language in the Senate Report expresses support for programs “to develop technologies to replace anti-personnel landmines that cannot distinguish between an innocent civilian and an enemy combatant” and expresses concern about systems that have a feature that would bypass “a man-in-the-loop, discriminating capability.” Most importantly, the Senate language requires “a review of the potential indiscriminate effects” of such weapons “prior to any full rate productions decision for these systems.”

For many years the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has joined the Holy See and Catholic bishops from around the world in calling for a ban on landmines as indiscriminate and deadly weapons. Catholic moral teaching on just war requires that noncombatant immunity be respected and that the use of force be discriminate.

I urge the Conference Committee on the Department of Defense Appropriations Bill to adopt this important language to protect innocent civilians from new landmine systems that fail to distinguish between combatants and noncombatants.

Sincerely yours,

Most Reverend John H. Ricard, S.S.J.
Bishop of Pensacola-Tallahassee
Chairman, Committee on International
Policy