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www.banclusterbombs.org.nz



PRESS STATEMENT - For Immediate Release

New Zealand Coalition Condemns New U.S. Cluster Bomb Policy Calls on U.S. Secretary Rice to Ban these Weapons

(Wellington, 25 July 2008) In a letter delivered to U.S. Ambassador William McCormick, ahead of the New Zealand visit by U.S. Secretary of State Dr. Condoleezza Rice, the Aotearoa New Zealand Cluster Munition Coalition has condemned new US policy on cluster bombs and called on the United States to join the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

"We're calling on the United States to join the new treaty banning cluster munitions when it is opened for signature this December," said Mary Wareham, coordinator of the Aotearoa New Zealand Cluster Munition Coalition. "Such a signature would represent a long-awaited return by the U.S. to progressive multilateral diplomacy, as well as an acknowledgment that this crucial treaty enhances the humanitarian protections afforded to civilians."

More than 100 states - including New Zealand, and all major NATO allies – are expected to sign the Convention on Cluster Munitions, as they accept that these weapons have caused unacceptable harm to civilians wherever they have been used. In direct contrast, the new [policy](#) memorandum issued by Secretary of Defence Robert Gates (entitled "Cluster Munitions and Unintended Harm to Civilians"), contains a list of "military requirements" justifying U.S. use of cluster munitions. The list includes engaging "targets whose precise locations are not known" - a potential violation of international humanitarian law which prohibits indiscriminate use of weapons in order to prevent harm to civilian populations.

"It is extraordinary that the US government has stated its intent to continue to use its huge cluster bomb stockpile for at least another decade," said Wareham. "We're also very concerned that indicates the U.S. may use cluster munitions contrary to core provisions of international humanitarian law," she added.

The United States is the world's leading user, producer, and exporter of cluster bombs. The new policy will allow the U.S. unfettered use of the nearly 1 billion submunitions now in its stockpiles for the next decade, almost all of which are known to have very high failure rates and to be highly inaccurate, as shown in Lebanon, Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo, and Southeast Asia.

Cluster bombs are large weapons that contain dozens or hundreds of smaller submunitions. They cause unacceptable humanitarian harm in two ways. First, their broad-area effect kills and injures civilians during strikes. Second, many submunitions

do not explode, becoming de facto landmines that cause civilian casualties for months or years to come.

U.S. Secretary of State Dr. Condoleezza Rice is scheduled to visit Auckland, New Zealand on 25-27 July 2008.

- For more info please contact: ANZCMC Coordinator Mary Wareham, 021-996-905 (Wellington), wareham@hrw.org

See also:

- DoD Policy on Cluster Munitions and Unintended Harm to Civilians: <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/d20080709cmpolicy.pdf>
- ANZCMC Letter to U.S. Ambassador William McCormick: http://www.stopclusterbombs.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2008/07/anzcmc_ltr_usamb_24jul08.pdf
- Key facts on the U.S. and cluster munitions: <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2008/06/25/global19192.htm>
- U.S. Campaign to Ban Landmines and Cluster Munitions: <http://www.uscbl.org/>