

motion. President Trump reacted with anger and disgust, as he should have, when Syria's President Assad used chlorine gas against his own people. He should react the same way toward anti-personnel landmines and set an example for the rest of the world.

I ask unanimous consent that a January 6, 2018, New York Times editorial on this subject be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the New York Times, Jan. 6, 2018]

#### WHY DO LAND MINES STILL KILL SO MANY?

(By the Editorial Board)

The world is rolling backward, and at a disturbingly faster pace, in the struggle to limit carnage from land mines and other booby-trap explosives. The most recent numbers, covering 2016, are appalling.

Known casualties that year came to 8,605, including 2,089 deaths, according to a new report by Landmine Monitor, a research arm of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. The toll was nearly 25 percent higher than the 6,967 maimed and dead counted a year earlier, and more than double the 3,993 in 2014. And these numbers are almost assuredly an undercount. "In some states and areas, numerous casualties go unrecorded," Landmine Monitor said.

Much of the 2016 mayhem stemmed from conflicts in Afghanistan, Libya, Ukraine and Yemen, but people in 56 countries and other areas were killed or wounded by improvised explosive devices and other ordnance placed by governments or, more commonly, by insurgent groups. The sheer indecency of it is self-evident. Nearly 80 percent of the victims were civilians; children accounted for 42 percent of civilian casualties in situations where the ages were known.

One subset of the menace, cluster munitions, is singularly vicious. A single cluster bomb can contain dozens, even hundreds, of baseball-size bomblets that spray in all directions, ripping apart anything in their path. All too often, they fail to detonate right away and thus become time bombs that imperil unwary civilians who pick them up, including curious children. Cluster munitions alone caused 971 known casualties in 2016, more than twice the toll of the previous year, according to Cluster Munition Monitor. Most victims were Syrians, nearly all of them civilians, but Saudi Arabia has also used American-supplied cluster bombs in Yemen.

Perhaps the saddest part of all this is that for well over a decade the world seemed to have gotten a grip on what are referred to generically as the "explosive remnants of war." Thanks to an international treaty that came into force in 1999—now signed by 163 countries and banning the production, stockpiling and transfer of land mines—casualties declined steadily worldwide. They reached a low of 3,450 in 2013, compared with 9,228 in 1999. (A companion treaty outlawing cluster munitions, joined by 119 countries, went into effect in 2010.) As the death and injury toll for 2016 shows, nearly all that hard-won progress has been erased by the brutal conflicts of recent vintage.

The picture is not irredeemably bleak. The Landmine Monitor said that 32 donors, led by the United States, contributed nearly \$480 million in 2016 for mine clearance and victim aid. That was an increase of 22 percent from the year before. More than 232,000 anti-personnel mines were reportedly destroyed in 2016, and about 66 square miles—an area nearly the size of Brooklyn—were cleared of explosive hazards.

The grim reality, though, is that the land mine and cluster munitions treaties are undercut by the refusal of some of modern warfare's most powerful players to sign them. Among those countries are China, Iran, Israel, North Korea, Russia and Saudi Arabia. And the United States. The Pentagon has long insisted that eliminating cluster bombs could put soldiers at risk. As for land mines, they are deemed by Washington to be a useful tool in the demilitarized zone separating North and South Korea—a first-line defense for the South against a possible invasion. But given the North's nuclear buildup, a mined DMZ seems to be a Cold War vestige of diminished value.

Washington is not immune to international suasion. Land mines are so stigmatized that American forces have barely used them since the 1991 Persian Gulf war. The United States stockpile, estimated at three million mines, is significantly reduced from pre-treaty years; it's puny compared with the 26 million mines that Russia has on hand, according to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. Similarly, American reliance on cluster munitions, which peaked in the early stages of the 2003 Iraq war, has all but disappeared.

In 2014 the Obama administration even signaled it might be willing to join the anti-mine treaty. Regrettably, that step never came. It might have been a moral statement encouraging others to follow suit. Now, with President Trump openly disdainful of international agreements, the likelihood of Washington's signing the treaty would seem to be about zero. The Pentagon, under his ultimate control, recently authorized the military to restock older cluster munitions, whose immediate failure rate can be high, leaving bomblets that can explode and kill civilians even years later.

For countries like Afghanistan, Libya, Ukraine and Yemen, the risks may endure long after the guns go silent. Vietnam provides an example. Since the war there ended in 1975, at least 40,000 Vietnamese are believed to have been killed and another 60,000 wounded by American land mines, artillery shells, cluster bombs and other ordnance that failed to detonate back then. They later exploded when handled by scrap-metal scavengers and unsuspecting children.

The lesson is stark for today's war-torn countries. They could reap the same whirlwind in coming decades.

(At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

#### VOTE EXPLANATION

• Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for the votes on the confirmation of Executive Calendar No. 371 and the motion to invoke cloture on Executive Calendar No. 389.

On vote No. 5, had I been present, I would have voted yea on the confirmation of Executive Calendar No. 371.

On vote No. 6, had I been present, I would have voted yea on the motion to invoke cloture on Executive Calendar No. 389. •

#### REMEMBERING ANNE MICHELE IRBY

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, today, with sadness in my heart, I wish to pay tribute to a very special person, Anne Michele Irby, a member of my staff for over 25 years and a dear friend who died on December 18, 2017.

Anne was born in Baltimore and raised in Parkville. She was the daughter of Basil T. Irby, a sales representative for the Baltimore Stationery Co., and Jean Craig, a homemaker. She attended St. Thomas More School and was a 1979 graduate of the old Seton High School in Charles Village. She received a diploma from what was then Villa Julie College and earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Baltimore. Early in her career, she worked for the Baltimore Jewish Council and then became a lobbyist for Associated Catholic Charities of Baltimore.

Anne joined my office in 1990 when I was a Member of the U.S. House of Representatives and remained a member of my team when I became a U.S. Senator. She was a dedicated case-worker in my Baltimore office and was an invaluable resource to my staff and the citizens of Maryland. She was an indefatigable advocate for veterans and their families and helped them navigate a complicated system to obtain disability, medical, and educational benefits. She also helped veterans obtain much-needed medical appointments and lost medals. In addition to her work with veterans, she also worked tirelessly to help Marylanders save their homes as the foreclosure crisis spread across the State during the recession.

Anne was very knowledgeable about the agencies and personnel available to serve the needs of my constituents. Agency professionals knew Anne and respected her willingness to assist those constituents in need. Anne considered her position in my office as a career, not just "a job." She was a true professional who wanted to make life better for as many people as she could. That is the essence of public service.

Anne would be best described as a "gentle soul." She was a devoted caregiver to her parents and close family members. She was a huge football fan. I think the only person she ever had a "beef" with was John Elway. The Baltimore Colts drafted him in 1983, but he refused to play for the Colts, so they had to trade him to Denver. Even though she was from Baltimore, she later cheered hard for the team from Washington after the Colts left town under the cover of darkness on March 29, 1984. She spent many Mondays talking about how her team fared on Sunday. In addition to her love of football, Anne enjoyed a good book and a hot cup of coffee. She would often visit Washington's Politics and Prose bookstore to pick up the latest bestseller or meet her favorite author. She frequented Baltimore's Woodlea Bakery and was known for bringing their donuts and cakes to the office for the rest of the staff and visitors.

Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "To laugh often and much; To win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; To earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; To appreciate