



United States Mission to the OSCE
U.S. Right of Reply for the
Forum for Security Cooperation:
Security Dialogue on Mine Action

As delivered by Arms Control Counselor Daniel Wartko
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Thank you, Madam Chair,

It is a useful first step that Russia wants to discuss the use of cluster munitions in Ukraine. The U.S. decision to provide cluster munitions to Ukraine reflects the situation on the ground as Ukraine seeks to defend itself and recapture territory occupied by Russia's forces.

Contrary to disinformation peddled by Russia, which has used cluster munitions extensively in Ukraine, the cluster munitions we are providing Ukraine are tested and designed to maximize effects while minimizing sub-munition "dud," or failure, rate. In addition, we are working closely with Ukraine to minimize the risks associated with these munitions.

The Government of Ukraine has provided written assurances on the responsible use of the cluster munitions the United States is providing. Ukraine has pledged not to use these rounds in urban areas and to record where they were used to facilitate post-conflict demining efforts. Ukraine knows that this is its own land and that its people will need to live and work there after the war. It cares about the long-term consequences. But I want to be clear: Ukraine would not need these weapons if Russia halted its aggression against Ukraine.

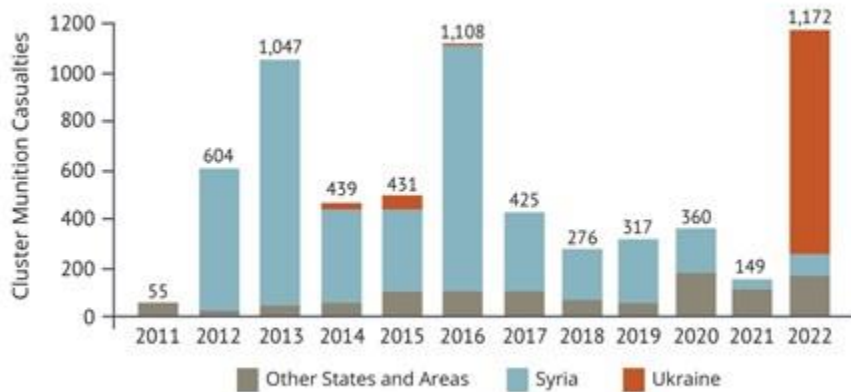
Russian cluster munitions, which Russian forces have used against Ukraine since the start of its full-scale invasion in 2022, have a failure rate of more than 30 percent. And what type of "strategic" locations did Russia use cluster munitions against?

- February 2022: Russian cluster munitions struck the Central City Hospital in Vuhledar, killing civilians, destroying ambulances, and destroying a hospital building.
- Also, in February 2022, Russian cluster munitions hit a preschool in the city of Okhtyka, killing and wounding adults and children.
- Russia's 79th rocket artillery brigade fired at least 11 cluster munitions missiles striking residential neighborhoods in Kharkiv on February 25 and 28, 2022.
- In March 2022, Russia returned to attacking hospitals, this time with its shells hitting the oncological hospital in Mykolaiv.

But we can see that these are not isolated incidents. I have here statistics from the Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, which has recorded the number of casualties from cluster munitions during the years of 2011-2022. You'll see that Russia and its partner, the Assad Regime in Syria, are responsible for the vast majority of worldwide cluster munitions

casualties over the past decade. We can see the drop in Syrian casualties during the time that Russia first invaded Ukraine in 2014 and 2015, and again, the Syrian numbers drop as Russia prepared for its illegal full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Worldwide Cluster munition casualties 2011–2022



Source: Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor

So how can Russia possibly complain about Ukraine using cluster munitions to defend itself (which is a recognized right reflected in the UN charter) at the same time it uses cluster munitions to attack a sovereign neighbor (in violation of that charter)? Well, in a July interview with Moscow TV, President Putin avoided that problem by simply claiming that Russia has never – not once -- used cluster munitions against Ukraine.

I invite the Russian delegation to directly address the claim by its president that Russia has not used cluster munitions against Ukraine.

If Russia is truly concerned about the consequences of unexploded ordnance to Ukrainian civilians, it should take these immediate steps: Russia should stop its illegal war against Ukraine, remove its forces from the territory of Ukraine, and return to respecting and abiding by the Helsinki Final Act principles.