Secretary of Commerce for Economic Affairs; Arun Venkataraman, of the District of Columbia, to be Assistant Secretary of Commerce and Director General of the United States and Foreign Commercial Service; Moshin Raza Syed, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Commerce; and Laurie E. Locascio, of Maryland, to be Under Secretary of Commerce for Standards and Technology en bloc.

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will now resume legislative session.

MORNING BUSINESS

RUSSIAN LANDMINES

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, among the many barbaric atrocities committed by Russian soldiers in Ukraine where civilian infrastructure including hospitals and apartment buildings have been repeatedly bombed and shelled and countless civilians have been summarily executed in the streets, the New York Times reports today that the Russians are using a new kind of landmine. This mine, called the POM-3, is inherently indiscriminate like other mines in that it cannot distinguish between a civilian and a combatant, and it is apparently equipped with a sensor that triggers the explosive when a person approaches. With a kill radius of 50 feet, it is even more deadly than a typical anti-personnel mine. And, unlike typical landmines, it cannot be disarmed by a human deminer because anywhere it is stepped on it will become a victim before reaching it. So it will be necessary to use robots to clear these mines, at great additional time and expense. As in other countries affected by armed conflict, it will be many years and almost certainly decades after the fighting ends, before the people of Ukraine can walk safely without fear of mines and other unexploded ordnance.

Human beings seem to have an unlimited capacity to devise new ways of destroying the lives of others. Landmines are especially insidious because they maim or kill whoever comes into contact with them, or, in the case of the POM-3, whoever its footsteps it detects. It could be anyone, including a young child.

No matter how “sophisticated” the technology, mines are an exceedingly primitive weapon because they are designed to be indiscriminate in an age of so-called precision munitions.

Mines are the opposite. While landmines are so easy to make that it will never be possible to completely eliminate them, in 1997, the international community took an historic step, thanks in large part to the leadership of former Canadian Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy and the tireless advocacy of the International Campaign to Ban landmines.

In December of that year, countries came together to sign the Convention on the Prohibition of Use, Stockpiling, Production, and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction, known informally as the Ottawa Treaty or the Mine Ban Treaty. Today, the treaty has 164 states parties. But reasons anti-personnel mines have yet to be universally stigmatized is because key countries including Russia, China, India, Pakistan, and the United States have not joined the treaty.

Of course, when one country joins a treaty, it does not guarantee that others will. But the more countries that do, the harder it is for others to fail to do so, as they become the outliers, the pariahs. So if the United States, which has not unilaterally mines since 1991, were to join the treaty it would not guarantee that Russia would. But it would greatly enhance our credibility to call out their use of mines, their devastating effects on innocent civilians, and the need to universalize the treaty.

In 1994, President Clinton, at the United Nations, called for ridding the world of anti-personnel mines. He also directed the Pentagon to develop alternatives. They never did. While we can stockpile landmines for decades or even thousands of damaged munitions, at times of crisis, our landmines, like Russian landmines, cannot tell the difference.

If anything good can come of this catastrophic and senseless war in Ukraine, it would be for the international community to bring to justice those responsible for war crimes and for the United States to once and for all renounce the use of anti-personnel landmines. There are not weapons that belong in the arsenals of civilized nations and certainly not in the arsenal of the most powerful, modern military on Earth. Let us be the country that can detect and destroy unexploded munitions in warfare.

Mr. Cowan. Mr. President, among the many barbaric atrocities committed by Russian soldiers in Ukraine, but denounces and renounces not only denounces their use in Ukraine, but denounces and renounces their use everywhere. What a gift to the world that would be.

I ask unanimous consent that the New York Times article entitled “New Russian Land Mine Poles Special Risk in Ukraine” 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, April 6, 2022]

NEW RUSSIAN LAND MINE POSES SPECIAL RISK IN UKRAINE

(Washington, D.C.)—WASHINGTON—Russian forces in Ukraine appear to be using a new type of weapon as they step up attacks on civilian targets: an advanced land mine equipped with sensors that can detect when people walk nearby.

Ukrainian bomb technicians discovered the device, called the POM-3, last week near the eastern city of Kharkiv, according to Human Rights Watch, a leading human rights group, which has reviewed photos provided by Ukraine’s military.

Older types of land mines typically explode when victims accidentally step on them or disturb attached tripwires. But the POM-3’s seismic sensor picks up on approaching footprints and can effectively distinguish between humans and animals.

Humanitarian deminers and groups that campaign against the use of land mines said the POM-3 would make it easier to locate and destroy unexploded munitions in Ukraine, which has required more deminers.

Mr. Cowan. Mr. President, among the many barbaric atrocities committed by Russian soldiers in Ukraine, but denounces and renounces not only denounces their use in Ukraine, but denounces and renounces their use everywhere. What a gift to the world that would be.

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