



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – PRESS RELEASE**

## **CMC condemns Thai use of cluster munitions in Cambodia**

*Thailand and Cambodia should join global treaty banning cluster munitions*

*(Bangkok / Geneva, 6 April 2011)* – Based on two separate on-site investigations, the Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC) has concluded that Thailand used cluster munitions on Cambodian territory during the February 2011 border conflict. Thai officials confirmed the use of cluster munitions in a meeting with the CMC on 5 April.

This is the first use of cluster munitions anywhere in the world since the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions entered into force and became binding international law. The CMC condemns any use of cluster munitions, and urges Thailand and Cambodia to immediately commit to no future use and to accede to the global treaty banning the weapons.

“It’s appalling that any country would resort to using cluster munitions after the international community banned them,” said Laura Cheeseman, director of the CMC. “Thailand has been a leader in the global ban on antipersonnel mines, and it is unconscionable that it used banned weapons that indiscriminately kill and injure civilians in a similar manner.”

In a meeting on 5 April, the Thai Ambassador to the UN in Geneva confirmed Thai use of 155mm Dual Purpose Improved Conventional Munition (DPICM) cluster munitions. The Ambassador said Thailand used cluster munitions “in self-defence”, using the principles of “necessity, proportionality and in compliance with the military code of conduct”. He alleged heavy use of rocket fire by Cambodian forces against civilian targets in Satisuk, in the Khun Khan district of Thailand.

In February and April of this year, CMC members conducted two separate missions to cluster munition contaminated areas in Cambodia including in Svay Chrum Village, Sen Chey Village and around the Preah Vihear temple hill, and witnessed unexploded submunitions and fragmentation damage caused by cluster munitions. Norwegian People’s Aid confirmed that unexploded M42/M46 and M85 type DPICM submunitions have been found.

Atle Karlsen of Norwegian People’s Aid said, “There are around 5,000 people living in Sen Chey village that are at risk from these unexploded weapons. Thailand must supply information to help clear affected areas and make them safe for civilians to return home.”

Sister Denise Coghlan, a CMC leader who took part in the first research mission said, “These cluster munitions have already robbed two men of their lives, two more have lost their arms and a further five were injured. The area must be cleared immediately to prevent more suffering. Cambodia must make every effort to ensure the safety of civilians.”

The CMC has urged Thailand to provide detailed information on the results of its inquiry, including the location of all cluster munition strikes, so that civilians can be adequately warned of the dangers and to assist the effective and efficient clearance of submunition remnants, which pose dangers like landmines. The CMC is also calling on Cambodia to accede

to the Convention on Cluster Munitions and as interim steps commit to no use, make known the types and quantity of cluster munitions in its stockpile and start destruction.

Cambodia and Thailand are not among the [108 countries](#) that have signed the [Convention on Cluster Munitions](#) but each has joined the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty. Both countries participated in the “Oslo Process” to negotiate the Convention on Cluster Munitions and attended its First Meeting of States Parties in neighbouring Lao PDR in November 2010.

“This conflict should spur both countries to take urgent action to denounce the weapons and join the ban treaty,” said Cheeseman.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions entered into force as binding international law on 1 August 2010, banning the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of cluster munitions, while requiring states to destroy stockpiles, clear contaminated land and assist victims and affected communities. Of the 108 countries that have signed the Convention since it opened for signature in December 2008, 55 countries have already ratified.

**Contacts:**

Sister Denise Coghlan

Cambodian Campaign to Ban Landmines and Cluster Munitions, **Cambodia**, +855-124-88950

Laura Cheeseman

Cluster Muniton Coalition, **UK**, +44-7515-575-175

**Photos of contamination in Cambodia**

© Stéphane de Greef, Landmine and Cluster Muniton Monitor

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/clustermunitioncoalition/sets/72157626310392061/with/5592080603/>

+++

**Detailed background**

From 4-7 February 2011, Thai and Cambodian troops exchanged fire over disputed territory along the border near Preah Vihear temple, a UNESCO World Heritage site. On 10 February, the state-sponsored Cambodia Mine Action Centre (CMAC) reported (<http://www.cmac.gov.kh/tblnews.php?id=68>) it had evidence that Thai forces had fired cluster munitions into parts of Preah Vihear province.

CMC members undertook a research mission to the Cambodian side of the border on 12 February, where they witnessed and photographed submunitions that had failed to explode in two areas – the military and police base in Svay Chrum village and the Preah Vihear temple hill. In Svay Chrum, CMC members photographed unexploded cluster submunitions lying out in the open and numerous cluster muniton remnants, as well as structures and a vehicle with physical damage consistent with that caused by cluster submuniton explosions.

A cluster submuniton allegedly exploded when a Cambodian policeman picked it up after the initial strike at the base, killing two policemen and injuring seven others. The research team interviewed two of the victims at Preah Vihear referral hospital in Tbeng Meanchey, who sustained fragmentation wounds to the arms, torso and head as well as interviewing two

other victims in Siem Reap Provincial hospital who had each lost an arm in the explosion. When asked if they could identify the device that caused their injuries, each independently pointed to a picture of an M46 cluster submunition.

On a separate assessment mission carried out from 1-2 April 2011 by CMC member Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), 5 cluster munition contaminated areas were visited: Sen Chey village, Preah Vihear temple hill, a new village development area in Northwest Sraaem, an open agricultural field behind a military camp, and a police camp in Svay Chrum village. NPA identified M42/M46 and/or M85 type submunitions in all of these areas. An additional 7 areas have been identified by the Cambodia Mine Action Centre (CMAC) as being contaminated by cluster munitions as a result of strikes but it has not been possible for NPA to access these areas. The 12 cluster munition strike areas are within a 300km<sup>2</sup> area according to CMAC.

CMC members photographed unexploded submunitions in the contaminated areas.

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/clustermunitioncoalition/sets/72157626310392061/with/5592080603/>

CMC analysis of the photographs indicates that the submunitions are M46-types, contained in NR-269 155mm artillery projectiles. Each projectile contains 56 submunitions, which are a copy of the United States M46 submunition. Upon subsequent inquiries by CMC members, Thailand acknowledged possessing the NR-269 projectiles with M46-type submunitions. Unexploded M85 type submunitions with a self-destruct mechanism have also been found in an agricultural field next to the military camp.

Both countries possess stockpiles of cluster munitions, but little is known about their status or composition. The Cambodian government has in the past cited an ongoing review of its defence and security situation as the reason for a delay in joining the treaty. Thailand has cited concerns over its ability to destroy its stockpile as a roadblock to joining the Convention, as well as security concerns. Thailand announced in 2008 that it had no intention of using the weapons in the future.

Cambodia and Thailand are States Parties to the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty and Cambodia will host that treaty's 11th Meeting of States Parties in November 2011.

South-East Asia is more heavily contaminated by cluster munitions than any other region after the United States dropped large numbers of cluster bombs on Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s.

**For more information on cluster munition policy and practice, please see the following *Cluster Munition Monitor 2010* country reports:**

- [Cambodia](#)
- [Thailand](#)