

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE US ARSENAL: Cluster Bombs Units (CBUs)



Brightly colored, submunitions are attractive to children. Above left, a bomblet with parachute next to a candy dispenser.

Facts on Cluster Bombs

(See Glossary of Terms for definitions)

- There are over 32 varieties of CBUs – cluster bomb units - in US military arsenals. They may be antipersonnel (APERS), antimateriel (AMAT), antitank (AT), dual-purpose (DP), **incendiary**, or **chemical**.
- Regardless of its type or purpose, **ordnance** can be dropped from aircraft or ground-launched and is divided into three subgroups: bombs, dispensers (containing submunitions) and **submunitions**.
- Using either **mechanical time or proximity fuze**, aircraft dispensed bombs are stabilized by fins and explode at predetermined heights above targets. Frequently, unexploded bombs are picked up by curious children and explode in their hands.
- Each CBU's **payload** is composed of 200 to 700 bomblets that fragment upon explosion and "can spray incendiary material to start fires, chunks of molten metal that can pierce tanks and other armor, or shrapnel that can slice with ease through 1/4-inch plate -- or human flesh and bone."
- 'The United Nations estimates that it would take seven years and cost about \$660 million to clear Afghanistan of its unexploded ordnance and mines. Finishing the job in three years would raise the price tag to about \$ 900 million.'

Cluster Bombs: Drop today, kill tomorrow



U.S. fired M-42 cluster munitions ready for demolition on the Hussain Mansour farm near the Baghdad airport, February 2004. Clearance teams found nearly 400 of these submunitions on the Mansour farm. Photos from Mennonite Central Committee ([see more pix](#) from MCC)

[For articles on CBUs](#)

Glossary of Terms

Chemical weapon: (a) Toxic chemicals and their precursors (b) Munitions and devices, specifically designed to cause death or other harm through the toxic properties of those toxic chemicals (c) Any equipment specifically designed for use directly in connection with the employment of munitions and devices.

Fuze, time or proximity fuze: an electronic device for detonating a warhead as it approaches a target.

Incendiary weapon: designed to start fires. Many cluster bomb submunitions have this effect and are specifically designed for this with payloads of white phosphorus or napalm.

Ordnance: quantity usually specifying the ammunition for artillery, bombs, or other large weapons.

Payload: the contents of a transport system, bomb dispenser, etc.

Submunition: munition that separates from a parent munition to perform its task.

Email your concerns about CBUs to the US Department of Defense. Find address on the [More Update](#) page.

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