

# Cluster bombs in Ukraine - and hypocrisy in the Morning Star

Tuesday 11 July 2023, by [DENHAM Jim](#) (Date first published: 11 July 2023).

**Cluster munitions are horrible weapons that can be delivered by rockets, missiles, and aircraft. They open in mid-air and disperse dozens and even hundreds of smaller submunitions, also called capsules or bomblets, over an area the size of a city block. Many submunitions fail to explode on impact, leaving duds that act like landmines, posing a deadly threat to civilians for years and even decades.**

The 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions comprehensively prohibits these weapons due to their indiscriminate effects and the long-lasting danger that they pose. It requires the destruction of stockpiles, clearance of areas contaminated by cluster munitions. The Convention has been signed by over 100 countries, including Britain, France and Germany but not the US, Russia or Ukraine.

Human Rights Watch confirms that since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine last year, Russian forces have used cluster munitions in attacks that have caused hundreds of civilian casualties and damaged or destroyed homes, hospitals, and schools: [Download the full briefing paper in English](#). Both Human Rights Watch and the Cluster Munitions Coalition have also monitored the extensive use of cluster bombs [by Russian and pro-Assad forces](#) in Syria since 2012.

The Ukrainian military has not denied its own use of cluster munitions and has publicly asked to be supplied with the weapon: a request that has now been granted by the Biden administration.

Biden's decision poses a real dilemma for those of us on the left who support Ukraine's right to fight the invaders and to obtain the weapons it needs in order to do so.

A [timeline](#) by the Cluster Muniton Coalition reveals that since WW II, cluster bombs have been mainly used in invasions or to put down a domestic rebellion. In nearly all those cases, they were dropped indiscriminately, without regard to the lives of civilians. In fact, in some cases it's clear that very often the intent was to attack the civilian population as well as enemy combatants. That is not the type of war Ukraine is fighting: on the contrary, the Ukraine government is fighting *against* an invasion. It seems highly unlikely that Ukrainian forces would use cluster bombs indiscriminately amongst their own population.

It is also the case that the decision to supply cluster bombs is at least in part because the US and other western nations have been reluctant to provide Ukraine with weapons and ammunition meaning that Ukraine is about to run out. It's been "no" to tanks, "no" to Patriot air-defence missiles, "no" to Himars and "no" to F-16 jets until slowly and reluctantly, some of these weapons have eventually been provided (but still no jets).

The *Morning Star*, which these days is increasingly open in its desire to see Ukraine defeated, ignores all this and - in particular - fails to mention, even in in passing, the rather important fact that Russia has been dropping cluster bombs on Ukraine since 2014\*. And while denouncing "Biden's latest \$800 million gift package of military hardware to the increasingly desperate

Ukrainian regime [including] of cluster bombs”, is actually much more excited about signs of backtracking within the US ruling class (“Cluster bombs grab the headlines, but backtracking may be underway too”, MS editorial July 10 2023):

It is a sign of the difficulties the Nato strategy is encountering in Ukraine that a top-level US delegation of foreign policy figures recently met with senior Russian figures including Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

“Outgoing Council on Foreign Relations president Richard Haass, CFR figure and Georgetown University professor Charles Kupchan, and Kissinger Associates managing director Thomas Graham, went to discover “where there might be room for future negotiation, compromise, and diplomacy over ending the war.”

According to National Broadcasting Corporation reporter Josh Lederman, the talks took place with the knowledge of the Biden administration, but not at its direction.

Later, the former officials involved in the Lavrov meeting briefed the Whitehouse National Security Council.

These moves highlight the importance of maintaining pressure on the US and our own government to create the optimum conditions for a ceasefire and a negotiated resolution to the Ukraine conflict.

As the existing US-Nato strategy loses both coherence and credibility, elements in the US are bound to seek a face-saving formula.

There follows the obligatory denunciation of the EU (“too many of the governments in Europe are prepared to sacrifice their own economies to the initiatives of the US hegemon and that the EU bureaucracy is the most compromised in this respect”) before a final appeal to “elements in British politics, on both left and right, and especially in the labour movement who allowed themselves to be incorporated in the effort to settle the Ukraine question on the battlefield, ... to recover their critical faculties and a sense of where British and European interests lie.”

“British and European interests”, you will note: no mention of the people of Ukraine and their right to defend themselves. If it wasn’t already obvious, it’s now obvious that the *Morning Star*, for all its occasional token criticisms of the invasion, wants Putin to prevail and holds the people of Ukraine in contempt.

\*In a brief article today (July 11), the Morning Star acknowledges: “Both Russia and Ukraine have reportedly been using cluster munitions since the start of Russia’s invasion in February 2022.”

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**P.S.**

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