

Cluster Bombs

A cluster bomb or cluster munition is a term heard in the news with regard to weapons and weapons systems. In this article, you can learn all about cluster bombs and also about the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) for the [IAS exam](#).

What is a Cluster Bomb?

A cluster bomb or munition is a weapon containing many explosive submunitions.

- It is often dropped from aircraft, opening up mid-air to dispense multiple (up to hundreds) of submunitions.
- Cluster bombs are also dispatched from the ground or sea.
- They release many small submunitions (also called bomblets) over a wide area, often running up to the size of a few football fields.
- They are generally used to target a large enemy area such as an airfield, or infantry formations, etc.
- Because a wide area is covered, they pose a huge risk to a large number of people, including civilians who come within the firing range.
- Anyone who falls within the strike area would be killed or grievously injured.
- States have produced over 200 kinds of cluster bombs.
- Cluster munition was first used in the [Second World War](#).

Arguments against the use of cluster bombs

Cluster bombs are very dangerous for a number of reasons. Many international human rights groups are demanding a complete ban on the use of these weapons and advocate a world free of cluster munition. Some of the arguments against cluster bombs are given below.

- Their effects are spread over a very wide area. Anyone within its strike area is killed or injured or maimed.
- They do not distinguish between civilians and combatants.
- Oftentimes, when the cluster munition is released, many of the bomblets do not explode in the manner they are intended to explode. (It is estimated that at least 40% do not explode). They fall to the ground and remain as dangerous duds. This poses great risks to the population of that area. Even long after hostilities or conflicts are over, the people living there are exposed to the risk of these canisters which can explode at the slightest movement. There have been children at the receiving end of such a situation in many countries. This also renders the region uninhabitable and leads to economic, livelihood losses and displacement for many people.
 - It is estimated that the country of Laos has the maximum number of unexploded cluster munitions in the world. Although the country was bombed between 1964 and 1973, the sad effects continue to this day.

Convention on Cluster Munitions

The Convention on Cluster Munitions is a United Nations-adopted legal instrument that prohibits all use, production, transfer and stockpiling of cluster munitions.

- In addition, it establishes a framework for cooperation and assistance to ensure adequate assistance to survivors and their communities, clearance of contaminated areas, risk reduction education and destruction of stockpiles.

- The convention was adopted in Dublin, Ireland in 2008, and was opened for signature in Oslo, Norway. It entered into force in 2010 after the requirement of 30 ratifications was complete.
- Currently, the convention has 110 State Parties and 13 Signatory States.
- Countries that ratify the convention are obliged to never use cluster munitions, and also to never develop, produce, otherwise acquire, retain, stockpile or transfer to anyone cluster munitions.
- India has not signed the convention and is not a party to it. Other countries that are not parties are the US, Russia, China, Pakistan and Israel, among others.

Cluster Munition and India

India is not a signatory to the Convention on Cluster Munition but the government acknowledges the humanitarian concerns associated with these weapons.

- India views cluster bombs as legitimate weapons and produces and exports them.
 - India also imports these weapons but has never used them.
 - Pakistan, on one occasion in 2019, insinuated that India used cluster munition along the Line of Control (LOC) and targeted civilians.
 - The Indian Army denied these allegations as lies by the Pakistani establishment.
-