



APPEL DE GENÈVE GENEVA CALL

Geneva Call in the Press

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Mogadishu - A powerful Somali warlord on Monday handed over a stockpile of thousands of landmines to a Swiss-based lobby group and urged his colleagues controlling the bullet-scarred capital to follow suit.

Hussein Mohamed Aidid, also a deputy prime minister in the lawless nation's splintered transitional government, surrendered about 3 500 anti-personnel and anti-tank mines to officials from Geneva Call in Mogadishu.

Aidid said: "I am giving up the entire landmine stockpile under the control of Somali National Alliance (SNA)."

He was speaking at a ceremony where he became the first faction leader to respond to a global campaign to eradicate the deadly devices.

Aidid inherited the SNA and a fearsome array of firearms, landmines and heavy weaponry from his late father, the feared Mogadishu warlord Mohamed Farah Aidid, when he was killed in 1995.

He said: "I am urging other Somali factions to do the same and give up the storage, use and transfer of landmines. They are deadly weapons."

Geneva Call's representative, Mohamed Nur Ali, thanked Aidid for his willingness to rid landmines from the shattered Horn of Africa nation, which had been in chaos without any functioning central government since 1991.

He said the group, which advocated compliance by armed non-state actors with humanitarian law and a 1997 treaty calling for a worldwide ban on anti-personnel landmines, was willing to assist other Somali militia in the endeavour.

"Somali factions cannot technically afford to destroy landmines," the retired Kenyan army major said.

"They need to be assisted."

"There should be peace and also funds to neutralise landmines."

"I am urging civilians who trade on landmines to stop that exercise and handover these item to be destroyed and make Somalia a peaceful place," Ali said.