



PRESS RELEASE

Congress Approves \$30 Million for the UXO Sector in Laos in 2018 Budget Continued U.S. Commitment Moves Laos towards a Safer Future

March 29, 2018 (Washington, D.C.) -- Congress has allocated \$30 million to the unexploded ordnance (UXO) sector in Laos for fiscal year 2018, fulfilling a multi-year pledge made in 2016 totaling \$90 million over three years. This funding will be used for ongoing bomb clearance, victim assistance, and education about the risks of unexploded bombs. The funding will also be integral in completing a countrywide survey of UXO-contaminated areas in Laos, a country beset with 80 million unexploded cluster bomblets dropped more than 40 years ago as part of a secret U.S. bombing campaign.

"More than four decades after the end of the Vietnam War, innocent Laotians are still being killed and maimed by U.S. cluster munitions," said Senator Leahy, Vice Chairman of the Appropriations Committee. "That is a travesty, and it reminds us that noncombatants suffer the brunt of the misery caused by today's wars. I am pleased that for the third year in a row, the Congress included \$30 million to remove cluster munitions in Laos. I hope we can do even more next year, because no people should bear the burden of such a deadly legacy."

In February, a U.S. Congressional delegation visited Laos, the largest such delegation in the history of U.S.-Lao relations. There, the delegation learned about how UXO left over from U.S. bombings continue to kill civilians and make land unavailable for agriculture or development.

"Just days after Congressional Members visited the capital of Vientiane, a man in northern Laos was clearing his yard to host friends and family for a gathering. The man started a fire to burn trash when a bomb exploded. Shrapnel shot into his hip and legs, severing one of his organs," said Titus Peachey, Chair of the Legacies of War Board of Directors. "Fortunately, a family member found him and they were able to get him to the local hospital, where he received help supported by victim assistance funds provided by the U.S. and other international donors."

The FY19 White House budget proposal would decrease UXO funding to Laos by 65 percent, from \$30 million to just \$10 million. Legacies of War urges the U.S. to maintain its long-term investment in a safer Laos, **by providing funding for UXO clearance and victim assistance as long as there is a clearly demonstrated need.** The evidence-based survey, which is not expected to be completed before 2020, has already identified 100,000 acres of contaminated land in need of clearance. Only through sustained investment can we help create a new legacy of peace and stability in a region once associated with the sad burden of war.

Since its inception in 2004, the core mission of **Legacies of War (legaciesofwar.org)** has been to increase awareness about the legacy of the U.S. secret war in Laos and to advocate for the clearance of unexploded bombs that remain there. Since then, U.S. funds for UXO clearance have increased tenfold, and casualties have dropped from over 300 per year to an average of 50 per year.