

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

March 8, 2016

Dear Colleague:

Laos is the most heavily bombed country in history, on a per capita basis, as a result of the U.S. bombing campaign during the Vietnam War.

Now is the time to increase our support as Laos' chairmanship of ASEAN provides an important opportunity to strengthen U.S.-Lao relations. We hope you will sign on to the request for \$25 million in funding for unexploded ordnance (UXO) clearance in Laos in 2017. Let us not miss this chance to do what is right and help the people of Laos build a future in peace and safety.

In one of the most enduring yet least well-known legacies of the Vietnam War, UXO left over from the nine-year U.S. bombing campaign over Laos is still endangering villagers as they go about their daily tasks. Between 1964 and 1973, we released more than 2 million tons of U.S. cluster munitions, dropping tens of millions of bomblets, on Laos. This is more than was dropped on Germany and Japan combined during the Second World War. The U.S. flew more than 580,000 bombing missions over Laos, the equivalent of one bombing mission every 8 minutes around the clock for nine years. Less than one percent of the estimated 80 million leftover bombs in Laos has been cleared, resulting in more than 20,000 casualties since the war ended in 1975.

UXO in Laos continues to impede development in one of the poorest countries in the Asia Pacific. The UN Development Program has reported that "UXO/mine action is the absolute precondition for the socio-economic development of Lao PDR" and that because of UXO "economic opportunities in tourism, hydroelectric power, mining, forestry and many other areas of activity considered main engines of growth for the Lao PDR are restricted, complicated and made more expensive.

As members of Congress, we have a moral obligation to resolve this dark U.S. legacy in Laos, which still threatens the lives of the Lao people, many of whom were born two generations after the war ended. It is also in America's national interests to demonstrate our commitment to the Lao PDR, a key U.S. partner in Asia.

Much progress has been made to prevent future injuries, between 2010 - 2014, over 260 square kilometers of land have been cleared where between 75,000 and 100,000 pieces of UXO are cleared annually. The Lao people are now able to use the newly cleared areas for agriculture and development. Efforts to clear UXO have been one of the keystones of improved U.S.-Lao relations over the last decade, including U.S. investment and bilateral cooperation in an innovative survey methodology, which have reached new levels of efficiency.

We urge you to join us in supporting a funding level of \$25 million in the FY 2017 State and Foreign Ops Appropriations bill. The deadline to sign onto the letter is COB, Friday, March 18, 2016.

For additional information or to sign onto the letter, please contact Charlie Martin [charles.martin@mail.house.gov](mailto:charles.martin@mail.house.gov) (x56631) with Rep. McCollum or Helen Beaudreau, [helen.beaudreau@mail.house.gov](mailto:helen.beaudreau@mail.house.gov) (x52361) with Rep. Honda. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Betty McCollum  
Member of Congress



Michael M. Honda  
Member of Congress