



President Obama's Historic Announcement on UXO in Laos Frequently Asked Questions

What did the President announce?

During President Obama's historic visit to Laos in September 2016, he announced that the United States will commit an additional \$90 million over three years, or \$30 million a year (2016-2018), to conduct a comprehensive unexploded ordnance (UXO) survey of Laos and for continued UXO clearance operations. The U.S. will also continue to assist UXO victims in coordination with the Centre for Medical Rehabilitation under the Lao Ministry of Health.¹ As U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy said, "For the first time, an American president has publicly recognized that we have a responsibility to do more to end this tragic legacy, by increasing funding to support a national survey and clearance programs, assistance for victims, and risk education."

Why did the president commit this money?

President Obama said, "Over nine years -- from 1964 to 1973 -- the United States dropped more than two million tons of bombs here in Laos -- more than we dropped on Germany and Japan combined during all of World War II. It made Laos, per person, the most heavily bombed country in history. Given our history here, I believe that the United States has a moral obligation to help Laos heal."²

How will the money be used?

The \$90 million will fund humanitarian clearance and victim assistance groups in Laos and will be used to continue UXO clearance, victims' assistance, and risk education programs at the fiscal 2015 level of \$15 million annually; the balance of \$45 million will be used to support the comprehensive UXO survey. The survey is extremely important, as it will establish a baseline for contaminated land that remains to be cleared so the Lao government and international donors can plan future clearance activities and accurately forecast how much time and money it will take to make Laos UXO impact-free.³

How much of this money will go to Legacies of War?

Legacies of War will not receive any of these funds. Legacies' funding comes from our generous individual, foundation and corporate donors who support our education and advocacy strategies in the U.S. We leverage our \$200,000 annual budget to push for more U.S. funding for the UXO sector in Laos. Due to our efforts, U.S. funding has now reached \$30 million a year

¹ White House [Fact Sheet](#) - U.S.-Lao Relations, September 6, 2016

² Remarks of President Obama to the People of Laos, September 6, 2016

³ U.S. Senator Leahy [Press Release](#), September 9, 2016

-- that's a nearly 15,000% return on our donors' investment! Read more about our successful strategy [here](#).

Who will receive all of this money?

The funds will continue to go directly to clearance operators on the ground in Laos, as well as agencies providing services to survivors of UXO accidents. You can find the list of humanitarian organizations, including Sterling Global Inc, HALO Trust, Mines Advisory Group (MAG), Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), World Education, COPE and the Center for Medical Rehabilitation, Health Partnership International, Spirit of Soccer, currently receiving funding in the U.S. State Department's report, [To Walk the Earth in Safety](#). **Legacies of War does not receive ANY of these funds.**

What is Legacies of War's perspective on the president's announcement?

Legacies of War is thrilled by the announcement, but we know that it does not mean the problem of UXO in Laos is solved. We see this new funding as a down payment. The funding will provide a comprehensive survey of UXO in Laos. After this critical survey is completed, we need to ensure that additional funding is available to clear the land. We also must not forget about the much needed long-term support to the 12,000 UXO survivors still living in Laos. There is no doubt that more funding will be needed. We will work tirelessly to make sure the UXO sector in Laos gets the funding needed to get the job done.

How long will it take to finish the job?

Our goal is not to find and destroy every last unexploded bomb in Laos. There are simply too many. However, we believe that a comprehensive survey will allow the Lao government and its partners to formulate a clear strategy for clearance that reduces risks to the people of Laos and provides assistance to those already affected. Our current goal is to bring the number of casualties every year to zero, and ensure access to comprehensive services for every UXO survivor throughout the country for as long as they need it.

Are you worried the money will be misspent?

The funds are managed through the U.S. Department of State and go directly to independent humanitarian organizations (see above) working on the ground. These funds do not go to the Lao government. Each humanitarian group receiving funds must comply with rigorous procedures. You can find the list of humanitarian groups currently receiving funding in the Department's report, [To Walk the Earth in Safety](#). Legacies of War plays no role in selecting which humanitarian organizations receive this funding.

Legacies' budget is used for education, research, policy and advocacy activities, including staffing and office resources for coordination of community outreach (exhibits, film screenings, panel discussion, speakers tour), Congressional visits in Washington, D.C. and around the country, and communications and media outreach.