Congress Appropriates $9 Million for UXO Activities in Laos for FY12

Successful advocacy efforts result in increased funds to address the legacy of unexploded bombs in Laos

Legacies of War applauds Congress for appropriating $9 million for the clearance of UXO in Laos during FY12. According to Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Chairman of the Subcommittee on State and Foreign Operations who included the additional funding, “Congress recognizes that we have a responsibility to help clear UXO in areas where such ordnance was caused by the U.S., and Laos is a tragic example where U.S. cluster munitions continue to maim and kill civilians.” The $9 million represents a tripling of the UXO budget for Laos since 2006 and the largest amount ever allocated, marking significant progress toward ending the deadly threat of unexploded bombs that the citizens of Laos face every day in their own soil.

In the months leading up to the appropriations announcement, Legacies advocacy staff met with key allies in the House and Senate, including Senator Leahy, to urge higher funding for UXO removal in Laos from the originally requested $5 million. At Legacies’ request, former U.S. Ambassador to Laos Douglas A. Hartwick also joined five other former Ambassadors in a letter calling on Secretary of State to reaffirm the U.S. commitment to addressing the UXO issue in Laos. Ambassador Hartwick praised Congress for taking a stand on the issue through the appropriations process, but continues, “The Secretary of State has the opportunity to respond to this message from Congress by increasing the budget request for UXO in Laos in FY13. A significant, sustained commitment from the United States can contribute to a future of peace and safety for millions of young Lao citizens and solidify our friendship with an important ASEAN partner in Southeast Asia.”

Brett Dakin, chair of the Legacies of War board, joins Ambassador Hartwick in calling on the State Department to recognize the intent of Congress to prioritize UXO clearance in Laos. “Legacies of War asks that the State Department make a commitment of at least $100 million, or at least $10 million over the next 10 years, to support bomb removal, victim assistance, and mine risk education in Laos,” states Dakin. “The scale of the UXO problem is vast, but significant progress is attainable. The U.S. has the opportunity to close this chapter of its history in Southeast Asia by setting the stage for peace, prosperity, and economic development in Laos.”

About Legacies of War
Legacies of War is a non-profit organization whose mission is to raise awareness about the history of the Vietnam War-era bombing in Laos and advocate for the clearance of unexploded bombs, to provide space for healing the wounds of war, and to create greater hope for a future of peace.
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