



## PRESS RELEASE

### In Historic Visit to Laos, President Obama to Address Leftover U.S. Bombs from Vietnam Era

**September 5, 2016 (Vientiane, Laos)** – President Barack Obama will land in Laos today and make history by becoming the first sitting U.S. president to visit the country. Legacies of War celebrates the visit, which is a capstone to the Obama Administration’s deep commitment to improving bilateral relations with the Lao PDR and taking steps to address the legacy of unexploded ordnance (UXO) in Laos. We look forward to the President’s announcement of a significant increase in U.S. funding for bomb removal and victim assistance in Laos, and we call for a sustained, multi-year U.S. commitment to serving the thousands of UXO survivors living in Laos today—and finally bringing the number of UXO casualties in Laos each year to zero.

“The President’s visit to Laos carries enormous significance, potentially signaling a determination to finally end the impact of a long-ago war that still lurks along village paths in the form of UXO,” noted Legacies of War Advisory Board Chair, Titus Peachey. “The war is also present in the daily struggles of 12,000 UXO survivors whose physical and emotional challenges will stay with them for the rest of their lives. We applaud the President’s visit and his attention to this sad legacy of war. Surely it is our nation’s moral obligation to help create a new legacy of peace, safety and well-being for the people of Laos.”

During the Vietnam War, a secret U.S. bombing campaign was taking place next door in Laos. The U.S. flew 580,000 bombing missions over Laos, the equivalent of one bombing mission every eight minutes, around the clock, for nine years. The U.S. dropped more than 270 million cluster munitions, many the size of a tennis ball. With a failure rate of 25-30%, tens of millions of these bombs failed to explode. They still litter the fields, gardens and village paths of Laos today. Since the bombing ended, there have been more than 20,000 casualties due to unexploded bombs in Laos.

Thanks to strong support from Congressional allies like Senator Patrick Leahy, Representatives Honda, McCollum, Nita Lowey, and many others, U.S. support for bomb removal and victim assistance in Laos reached an unprecedented \$19.5 million in 2016. However, less than one percent of the estimated 80 million leftover bombs in Laos has been cleared.

“We still have a long road ahead before the people of Laos – especially children and future generations – are safe from the dangers of unexploded bombs,” said Channapha Khamvongsa, executive director of Legacies of War. “Even if the yearly accident toll were reduced to zero, there are still an estimated 12,000 UXO survivors in Laos whose injuries require life-long care and increased assistance.”

**Legacies of War** ([www.legaciesofwar.org](http://www.legaciesofwar.org))

Legacies of War was founded in 2004 to raise awareness about the history of the Vietnam War-era bombing of Laos and advocate for greater U.S. funding to address its legacy. For interviews in Vientiane or additional information please contact Channapha Khamvongsa, Executive Director at 856-20-5832-1926 (in Laos) or [channapha@legaciesofwar.org](mailto:channapha@legaciesofwar.org).