



## For Immediate Release

### **U.S. Funding to Remove Millions of Bombs from Laos Reaches Historic High** *A Decade of Advocacy by Legacies of War Results in Milestone*

**Washington D.C. June 29, 2015** – Legacies of War applauds the increase in U.S. funding for the unexploded ordnance (UXO) sector in Laos to \$15 million, the highest level in history. It is a five-fold increase since 2009, when Legacies of War first called for an increase in U.S. commitment to remove unexploded bombs leftover from the Vietnam War-era. The funding, appropriated by Congress and administered by the State Department, goes to support the dozen groups working in Laos on demining, victim assistance and risk education.

“The tragic legacy of cluster munitions in Laos was ignored for years but is finally getting the attention it needs. These additional funds for fiscal year 2015 should be part of an ongoing program to finally overcome this cruel history and enable the Laotian people to reclaim their land and rebuild their lives,” said **Senator Patrick Leahy** (D-VT), ranking member of the Appropriations subcommittee that funds UXO clearance programs around the world.

From 1964 to 1973, an intensive bombing campaign, as part of the “secret war”, was waged in Laos as a corollary to the Vietnam War. As a result, over 270 million cluster bomblets were dropped on Laos, making it the most heavily bombed country (per capita) in history. An estimated 80 million of those bomblets did not explode upon impact, littering much of the country with lethal ordnance.

“This increase is a step in the right direction, but 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. She added, “Every single accident is a heartbreaking reminder that the injuries and deaths caused by UXO 40 years after the war are unacceptable and preventable. But 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.”

The funding, which was announced during the annual U.S.-Lao PDR Comprehensive Bilateral Dialogue on June 19th in Washington, DC, will be allocated toward the removal of UXO in the remaining contaminated areas of Laos, as well as for victim assistance programs, mine risk education initiatives and capacity-building.

[Legacies of War](#) is a Washington D.C.-based NGO dedicated to raising awareness about UXO in Laos and advocating for the removal of UXO and increased assistance to survivors. Legacies has been instrumental in the steady uptick in funding from the U.S. for the UXO sector in Lao since its inception in 2004, at which time just an average of \$2 million per year was being allocated by the U.S. for UXO clearance and victim assistance efforts.

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