

The Legacies of War Recognition and Unexploded Ordnance Removal Act

Purpose: To recognize the refugee and immigrant communities from Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam including the Hmong, Cham, Cambodian, lu-Mien, Khmu, Lao, Montagnard and Vietnamese Americans who supported and defended the United States Armed Forces during the conflict in Southeast Asia, and to authorize assistance to support activities relating to clearance of unexploded ordnance and other explosive remnants of war.

Background: Many among the Hmong, Cham, Cambodian, lu-Mien, Khmu, Lao, Montagnard and Vietnamese communities fought and died with United States Armed Forces during the conflict in Southeast Asia in the 1960s and 1970s while suffering high rates of casualties—often with little or no recognition. Members of those communities saved thousands of lives by evacuating allied refugees and rescuing United States pilots shot down in enemy-controlled territory. Additionally, they gathered and provided intelligence to the U.S. Armed Forces about enemy troop positions, movement, strength and provided food, shelter, and support.

For their support of the United States during the conflict, members of those communities faced immense persecution from their host countries. More than 3 million people were forced to flee and seek refuge in other countries, with about 2.5 million SE Asians being resettled mostly in North America, Australia, and Europe.

Finally, more than 40 years after the end of the Vietnam War, unexploded ordnance (UXO) from numerous conflicts but primarily dropped by U.S. forces over Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam during the Vietnam War, continues to cause casualties in those countries. Laos is the most heavily bombed country per capita in the world and much of the country's land remains contaminated with tens of millions of more than 80,000,000 small, unexploded cluster munitions. Cambodia suffers from one of the highest rates of landmine and UXO accidents in the world. Over 64,000 Cambodians have been killed or injured by unexploded ordnance UXO and other explosive remnants of war since 1979, with an average of one casualty every week.

Summary:

- Honors the contributions and sacrifices made by SE Asians in support of United States Armed Forces during the conflict in South East Asia in the 1960s and 1970s.
- Recognizes the tragic legacies of war left from this conflict, such as landmines, unexploded ordnance and other explosive remnants of war, and the toll it continues to have on civilians to this day.
- Acknowledges the United States longstanding commitment to provide financial support for demining and UXO removal in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.
- Authorizes \$100,000,000 for each of the fiscal years 2021 through 2025 to be provided for humanitarian assistance programs to support:
 - Developing national surveys of unexploded ordnance UXO and other explosive remnants of war in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia
 - Providing for clearance of such unexploded ordnance UXO and other explosive remnants of war.
 - Providing assistance for capacity building, risk education, and survivor support, in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia related to both unexploded ordnance UXO and other explosive remnants of war.

The bill is supported by: Legacies of War (LoW); The HALO Trust (USA), MAG America, Inc., LaoSD, Asian American Alliance, Healing Out Lao'd (HOL), Center for Civilians in Conflict, War Legacies Project, Channapha Khamvongsa (Founder, LoW), Vietnam Agent Orange Relief & Responsibility Campaign, OCA-Asian Pacific American Advocates, National Center Asian Services in Action (ASIA INC), Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, Iu-Mien Association of Oregon, LaosAngeles, Article 22, The SEAD Project, US ASEAN Youth Council, Lao Health Initiative, Humanity & Inclusion, Caring for Textiles, Bounthanh Phommasathit, Laotian American National Alliance (LANA), Friends Committee on National Legislation, Lao American Senior Mutual Assistance, Connecting Lao American Youth (CLAY), Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC), Asian American Community Services, DFW Lao Heritage, Idaho Chinese Organization, Idaho Lao Community, Multicultural Affairs, Discover Laos, John Jones, Noam Chomsky, The Khmer Student Association, Win Without War, Cambodian Awareness Organization at UCI (CAO), Vietnam War Veteran Reconciliation & Healing, Idaho Museum of International Diaspora (IMID), PSALM: Proud Students Against Landmines and Cluster Bombs, West Virginia Campaign to Ban Landmines and Cluster Bombs, and more than 100 individual community activists in Wisconsin and throughout the country.