



U.S. Relations With Laos

BUREAU OF EAST ASIAN AND PACIFIC AFFAIRS

Fact Sheet

February 9, 2015

More information about Laos is available on the [Laos Page](#) and from other Department of State publications and other sources listed at the end of this fact sheet.

U.S.-LAOS RELATIONS

The United States established full diplomatic relations with Laos in 1955, following its full independence from France in 1954. Within a few years, Laos entered into civil war, and the United States supported the country's royal government. For nearly a decade beginning in 1964, Laos was subjected to heavy U.S. bombing as part of the wider war in Indochina. Following the change of regimes in Vietnam and Cambodia in 1975, a communist government also came to power in Laos. The government aligned itself with Vietnam and the Soviet bloc, implementing one-party rule and a command economy. U.S.-Lao relations deteriorated after 1975, and U.S. representation was downgraded. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Laos sought to improve relations with other countries. Full U.S.-Lao diplomatic relations were restored in 1992. In July 2012, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited Laos, marking the first visit by a Secretary of State since 1955.

Accounting for American personnel missing in Laos and clearing unexploded ordnance (UXO) from the war were the initial focuses of the post-war bilateral relationship. Since that time the relationship has broadened to include cooperation on a range of issues including counter-narcotics, health, child nutrition, environmental sustainability, trade liberalization, and English language training. This expansion in cooperation has accelerated since 2009, with the launch of the Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI), which serves as a platform to address complex, transnational development and policy changes in the Lower Mekong sub-region. The United States and Laos share a commitment to ensuring a prosperous and sustainable future for the Mekong sub-region.

U.S. Assistance to Laos

Though still under one-party communist rule, Laos' economy is now essentially a free market system building upon the 1986 introduction of some economic reforms. The overarching policy goals for U.S. assistance to Laos are to help the country meet its development goals, improve governance and the rule of law, and increase its capacity to integrate fully within the Association for Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the global economy.

A large part of U.S. bilateral assistance to Laos is devoted to improving health and child nutrition. The United States also helps improve trade policy in Laos, promotes sustainable development and biodiversity conservation, and works to strengthen the criminal justice system and law enforcement. The United States has provided significant support for clearance of UXO from the war, particularly cluster munitions, as well as for risk education and victims' assistance.

Bilateral Economic Relations

U.S. exports to Laos include diamonds, metals, aircraft, vehicles, and agricultural products. U.S. imports from Laos include apparel, inorganic chemicals, agricultural products, and jewelry. Laos acceded to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2013 and will join the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). Both of these processes require trade and regulatory reforms, which should make the investment climate more attractive to U.S. companies. WTO and AEC requirements also reinforce fuller implementation of the conditions of the 2005 U.S.-Laos bilateral trade agreement. The United States and Laos have a bilateral investment agreement and have signed a civil aviation agreement.

Laos's Membership in International Organizations

Laos and the United States belong to a number of the same international organizations, including the United Nations, ASEAN Regional Forum, International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organization, and World Bank.

Bilateral Representation

The U.S. Ambassador to Laos is [Daniel A. Clune](#); other principal embassy officials are listed in the Department's Key Officers List.

Laos maintains an embassy in the United States at 2222 S Street NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel: 202-332-6416).

More information about Laos is available from the Department of State and other sources, some of which are listed here:

[Department of State Laos Country Page](#)

[Department of State Key Officers List](#)

[CIA World Factbook Laos Page](#)

[U.S. Embassy: Laos](#)

[USAID Laos Page](#)

[History of U.S. Relations With Laos](#)

[Human Rights Reports](#)

[International Religious Freedom Reports](#)

[Trafficking in Persons Reports](#)

[Narcotics Control Reports](#)

[Investment Climate Statements](#)

[Office of the U.S. Trade Representative Countries Page](#)

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