Laos

Country Profile

Center for International Stabilization and Recovery at JMU (CISR)

Follow this and additional works at: https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal

Part of the Defense and Security Studies Commons, Emergency and Disaster Management Commons, Other Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration Commons, and the Peace and Conflict Studies Commons

Recommended Citation

Available at: https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal/vol5/iss1/32

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Center for International Stabilization and Recovery at JMU Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction by an authorized editor of JMU Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact dc_admin@jmu.edu.
LAOS

Laos, People's Democratic Republic

HISTORY

The first united kingdom of Laos, Lao Xang, was established in June 1354, when Fa Ngum was crowned king. The kingdom covered much of modern Thailand. In 1690, Lan Xang fell to a series of invasions and was split into three kingdoms. It was not reunited again until 1899, when France joined upper and lower Laos as part of French Indochina. Laos gained official independence from France in 1949, but the growth of communist and anti-communist factions prevented the formation of any unified government until 1975.

A protracted civil war broke out in 1960 between the Pathet Lao, a communist faction headed by the North Vietnamese, and government forces backed by the Thai and South Vietnamese. In 1973, a ceasefire was reached, and a new coalition government was formed. The Pathet Lao gained control in 1975, after a series of communist victories in Vietnam and Cambodia. The Pathet Lao established the first Lao People's Democratic Republic.

LANDMINES/UXO OVERVIEW

Laos is not known to produce or export AP mines. It is thought that Laos does maintain a stockpile of mines, but the amount is unknown. There is no evidence of recent use of AP mines by Lao military. Although there are AP mines present in Laos, the primary threat to civilians is UXO. Bombing during the Indochina War, especially from 1964-1973, resulted in the release of tons of cluster bomb units that did not explode on impact as planned. There is an unknown number of UXO in Laos, estimated by various sources to be between 500,000 and several million. Handicap International (HI) reported in 1997 that over 3,800 villages, with a population of 1.3 million, have been affected by UXO and mines. The serious landmine problem causes not only the risk of causality, but it also affects Laos by adding time, expense and hazard to new economic development. Landmines and barriers to development are pressing issues. The UXO problem has profound effects on food production, infrastructure development, water and sanitation, school and hospital additions, and other important economic development.

REALITY CHECK

A press release from the Laos Human Rights Council Inc. details reports in Laos that the Russian and Vietnamese governments have been supplying the Lao Communist government with "biological and chemical weapons." The weapons have been used to kill Hmong and Laotians in Laos since the end of the Vietnam War. Reports indicate that the Lao Communist government has used biological and chemical weapons to kill more than 50,000 people in Laos since 1975.

CASUALTIES

A survey done by HI in early 2000 stated that from 1975-1996, there were 1,371 casualties from landmine accidents and 9,473 victims of UXO accidents. During the first four years after the war, an average of three accidents occurred per day. The number has now dropped to an average of 240 accidents per year.

CONTACT INFORMATION

National Programme Director
UXO LAO
PO Box 345
Vientiane, LAO PDR
Tel: (856-21) 414696/415767
Fax: (856-21) 415766
E-mail: nplao@fdxinfo.co.th

MYANMAR

Burma

HISTORY

From 1942-1945, when British rule was restored, the Japanese occupied Myanmar, also known as Burma. In 1948, the British granted Myanmar independence, allowing the country to establish a policy of neutrality and isolation in international affairs. This policy was strained by Chinese pressure in the northeast. A 1960 boundary treaty between the two countries has eased tensions. A UN, elected prime minister ruled from 1963 to 1962, until Ne Win staged a coup. Win disbanded the parliament, abandoned the constitution and began nationalizing industry. In 1974, Myanmar became a one-party socialist republic. Win stepped down in 1981, but remained chairman of the Burma Socialist Program Party (BSPP).

LANDMINES/UXO OVERVIEW

Myanmar, also known simply as AP mines, is currently ruled by a military government known as the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). The 30 ethnic groups fighting against the SPDC are believed to possess the knowledge and supplies to construct landmines and improvised explosive devices, though only 10 groups are known to be mine users. Two stockpiles, numbering in the thousands, are in the hands of ethnic militias. Of Myanmar's 14 states and divisions, 10 are mine-infested with concentrations in eastern Myanmar. Karen, Karenni states and the Tenasserim Division, yet no reliable estimate of the number of mines contaminating the country exists. It is believed that the SPDC actively maintains mine fields along the border with Bangladesh, replacing exploded mines with new ones as necessary.

CASUALTIES

Estimates of landmine casualties in 1999 place the number at 1,500. In 1994, the U.S. Department of State stated that landmines produced 3,500 victims per year, which suggests that the number of landmine victims per year has remained at a high level for the past five years. Statistics from

CONTACT INFORMATION

The Union of Myanmar
2100 S Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20008
Tel: 202-332-9044

Published by IU Scholarly Commons, 2001