

Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary of State
 Celebrating 55 years of U.S.—Lao P.D.R.
 Diplomatic Relations
 August 10, 1955-August 10, 2010



On behalf of President Obama and the people of the United States, I extend my best wishes to the Lao People’s Democratic Republic as we celebrate 55 years of diplomatic relations between our two countries this August 10.

On this occasion, the United States reaffirms our commitment to the peaceful and prosperous development of Laos and our desire to work as partners on areas of mutual concern. We appreciate Lao assistance as we work toward accounting for our POW/MIAs and underscore our commitment to help Laos clear unexploded munitions. Our collaboration through the Lower Mekong Initiative to protect and preserve the environment, create healthy communities, support education and develop regional infrastructure further illustrates how close cooperation benefits both our countries and the region. I look forward to working with the Lao Government and people to continue strengthening our partnership and building on the successes we have achieved.

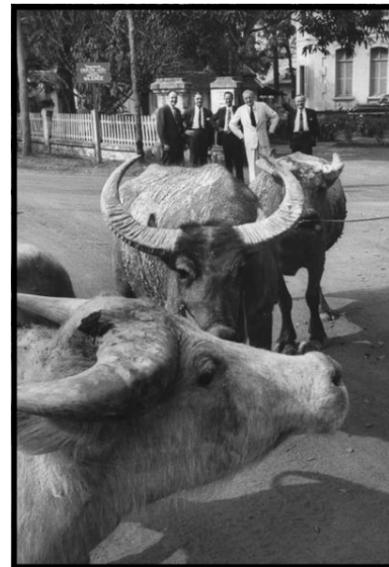
History overview of U.S.—Lao P.D.R. Diplomatic Relations

- **February 7, 1950** - The U.S. officially recognizes the Kingdom of Laos.
- **August 22, 1950** - The American Legation in Vientiane is established under Chargé d’Affaires ad interim Paul L. Guest.
- **August 10, 1955** - A joint announcement by the Governments of the United States and Laos elevates the U.S. diplomatic mission in Vientiane from a Legation to an Embassy.
- **July 27, 1955** - The United States Senate confirms Charles W. Yost, who was then Minister to Laos, to the post of Ambassador. He presents his credentials to the government soon after August 10.



Ambassador Charles Yost, 1955

- **1955** - Secretary of State John Foster Dulles visits Laos.



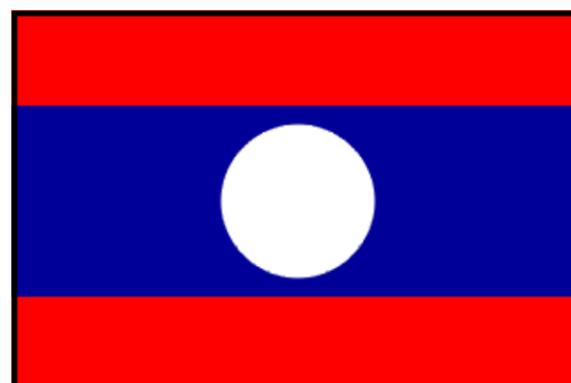
Water buffaloes amuse U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles (second from right) as he leaves the U.S. Embassy in 1955. Time Life photo

- **1962** – The U.S. and 13 other countries sign the Declaration on the Neutrality of Laos and its Protocol.
- **March of 1963** - King Sisavang Vatthana and Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma visit the United States and met with President John F. Kennedy.



King Sisavang Vatthana meets with U.S. President John F. Kennedy, 1963

- **1973** – U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and Vietnam’s Le Duc Tho sign a cease-fire agreement in Paris that, in the words of President Nixon, "brings peace with honor in Vietnam and Southeast Asia." And the last American combat forces leave Vietnam.
- **1973** - President Richard Nixon gives fragments from a moon rock collected by the astronauts aboard Apollo 17 to King Sisavang. That gift is now on display at the Luang Prabang National Museum.
- **April 30, 1975** - The Vietnam War ends.
- **December 2, 1975** – The Lao People's Democratic Republic is established.



- **1975** – The U.S. downgrades its chief of mission in Vientiane from Ambassador to Chargé d’Affaires ad interim.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, relations between the U.S. and the Lao P.D.R. begin to improve.

- **April 1988** – The government of Laos permits joint U.S.-Lao teams to search and recover the remains of servicemen missing in action from the Indochina conflict.
- **January 1990** - The U.S. and Lao P.D.R. sign a Memorandum of Understanding regarding Bilateral Cooperation of Narcotics Issues.



Ambassador Salmon observes a Lao People’s Army ceremony, 1993

- **1992** - Full diplomatic relations are restored with a return to ambassadorial-level representation. The United States posts its first Ambassador to the Lao P.D.R., Ambassador Charles B. Salmon, Jr.
- **1992** – The U.S.-Laos Fulbright Program is officially restored.
- **1995** – The government of Laos requests from the United States assistance with its UXO removal programs.



Signing ceremony for a trade relations agreement in 2003

- **December 2004** - President George W. Bush signs into law a bill extending normal trade relations to Laos
- **February 2005** - The Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) between the United States and Laos enters into force



- **2009** – The U.S. and Laos exchange Defense Attachés.
- **July 13, 2009** – President Barack Obama declares that Laos and Cambodia had each "ceased to be a Marxist-Leninist country," a designation that had prevented financial support from the Export-Import Bank of the United States for businesses operating in the two counties.



- **July 13, 2010** – The U.S. and the Lao P.D.R sign an “Open Skies” agreement, promoting increased travel and trade, enhancing productivity, and spurring high-quality job opportunities and economic growth



- **July 13, 2010** - Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Thongloun Sisoulith visits Washington, DC and meets with U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.