

**Remarks by Ambassador David B. Shear  
Mines Advisory Group Program Launch  
Thang Binh District, Quang Nam, Vietnam  
Friday, October 12, 2012  
*As Delivered***

Vice Chairman Dinh Van Thu, Ms. Portia Stratton, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Thank you for the invitation to be here in lovely Quang Nam. I recently had the opportunity to visit the historic town of Hoi An. Today's ceremony launches the start of operations here by the Mines Advisory Group ("MAG") supported by the U.S. Department of State. Quang Nam Province, like many areas in Central Vietnam, saw heavy fighting during the Vietnam War. Heavy aerial and artillery bombardment has left a continuing legacy of unexploded bombs, artillery shells, grenades, and other ordnance that litter the landscape and endanger the lives of Quang Nam's people. These are painful reminders of the past, but also an opportunity for cooperation in the future.

The U.S. Embassy supports an active role for the United States in addressing contamination by explosive remnants of war in Vietnam. And we are committed to working with the government of Vietnam on cleaning up unexploded ordnance (UXO). These programs underscore a comprehensive effort to overcome the legacy of war, building trust and understanding between our two nations as we face this challenge together. This is part of our shared determination to embrace a closer relationship between the peoples of the United States and Vietnam.

UXO poses a physical threat to the health of the local population and it generates anxiety that prevents otherwise productive use of land and hampers socioeconomic development. In the coming months, MAG staff will work closely with provincial government officials and local residents in affected areas around Quang Nam. MAG personnel will visit every household in a comprehensive effort to locate, mark, and safely dispose of UXO.

The United States government has provided more than \$60 million dollars to address the UXO problem in Vietnam since 1989 spent on provision of equipment, capacity-building for national institutions, and grants made to non-governmental organizations. We have supported MAG's activities in Quang Binh since 2003. In Quang Nam, MAG will be the first non-governmental organization providing UXO clearance operations to local residents. The U.S. government has been offering support and assistance for rehabilitation of survivors of UXO-related accidents in Quang Nam for many years through the NGO Clear Path International. More recently, Catholic Relief Services

has begun working in Quang Nam local schools using a model developed in Quang Tri to teach young children to recognize, avoid, and report UXO.

This year the Department of State awarded over \$4 million in grants to NGOs to carry out demining-related assistance programs. I would like to recognize the special attention paid by Senator Leahy from the state of Vermont. His continuing interest in war legacy issues has been a pillar of support for demining programs in Vietnam. We are determined to maintain this strong commitment to providing humanitarian assistance. Our goal is to help Vietnam become as “impact-free” from UXO contamination as possible. The extent of contamination is still significant and there remains a need for many years of continued work, in Quang Nam and in many other provinces of Vietnam.

Vietnam has valuable experience in dealing with the challenges of extensive contamination by explosive remnants of war. The Vietnamese government has shown a strong determination and made substantial financial and human resource commitments to overcome the difficulties of UXO contamination. We highly respect and highly value the efforts and sacrifices made by Vietnam’s leaders and people to respond to this problem. I hope that Vietnam will serve as a future model for other UXO-affected countries in the region and around the world.

Today, as we mark the beginning to MAG’s work here, I look forward to a safer, brighter future for the men, women and children living in Quang Nam.

Thank you very much.

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