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America in Asia: Arrogant, Unapologetic, and Ready for More Conflict

Tony Cartalucci

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The United States exists an entire ocean away from Asia, yet its policymakers, politicians, and even Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter have declared America's "primacy" over the region, vowing to assert itself and its interests above all nations actually located in Asia.

In a June 2016 Reuters article titled, "U.S. flexes muscles as Asia worries about South China Sea row," Secretary Carter is quoted as saying:

The United States will remain the most powerful military and main underwriter of security in the [Asian] region for decades to come – and there should be no doubt about that.

The US, by presuming to dictate all that takes place across Asia, has all but declared itself a hegemon.

Reiterating the notion of American primacy and exceptionalism is a full-time occupation for the US State Department's employees. This includes US Ambassador to ASEAN Nina Hachigian who pointed out to followers on Twitter that she had "*spoke to some Lao shop owners*" following US President Barack Obama's recent visit to the Southeast Asian nation, and "*they said [President Obama's] visit was the most exciting and significant event in decades.*"

Of course, for the nation of Laos, the most significant event regarding the US is undoubtedly the 2 million tons of munitions the US dumped on it between 1964 and 1973. These 2 million tons include cluster bombs consisting of some 266 million submunitions, an estimated 30% of which were left unexploded and remain to this day an enduring, deadly hazard to Laos and its 6.8 million people.

There are an estimated 80 million submunitions still littering the country, or about 11 for each man, woman, and child that lives in Laos. 20,000 people have been killed by unexploded US munitions and many more maimed which includes losing limbs.

According to the Lao National Unexploded Ordnance Programme (UXO LAO), 444,711 submunitions (about 0.55%) have been destroyed between 1996 and 2010. Despite the dangerous and exhausting work, eliminating 0.55% of the 80 million submunitions still littering the country amounts to virtually nothing.

When faced with these facts, Ambassador Hachigian assured Twitter followers that:

We've been spending hundreds of millions of dollars to clean them up and President Obama just doubled annual contributions.

Of course, an elementary student could have told the ambassador that doubling nothing still equates to nothing.

Establishment journal, The Diplomat, in an article titled, "Obama in Laos: Cleaning up After the Secret War," would claim:

In recent years, U.S. support for UXO clearance and victim assistance in Laos has dramatically increased. In response to steady pressure from NGOs like Legacies of War and their allies in Congress, U.S. funding for this work increased from \$5 million in 2010 to a record \$19.5 million this year. These resources, disbursed by the State Department's Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement, are used to support clearance efforts that destroy up to 100,000 pieces of lethal ordnance in Laos annually, employing 3,000 workers in the commercial and humanitarian sectors.

At 100,000 submunitions per year, Laos should be safe from US cluster bombs in just under 1,000 years. This is hardly “cleaning up.”

The Real Legacy of America in Asia

The Diplomat, US President Obama and US Ambassador Hachigian, however, are helping Asia understand the real legacy of America in the region – one of both catastrophic war, and of what are essentially deadly, enduring consequences that will haunt generations for 1,000 years to come – quite literally.

And not only has America done this to Asia, it does so unapologetically. The BBC in its article, “Laos: Barack Obama regrets ‘biggest bombing in history,’” would note:

Mr Obama did not offer an apology for the bombing.

However, President Obama’s “regrets,” and Ambassador Hachigian’s attempts to portray America as taking responsibility for the ongoing consequences of America’s actions could be interpreted as apologetic by some. However, one must remember that an apology must also be accompanied by a genuine desire never to repeat the offense in question again – something the US clearly has no intention of doing.

Even as President Obama and Ambassador Hachigian announce America’s desire to go from doing *virtually nothing* about the 80 million cluster bomb submunitions scattered across Laos, to doing *next to nothing* about them, the US is currently assisting their allies in Saudi Arabia to blanket the nation of Yemen with them.

According to an ABC News article titled, “House OKs Ongoing Cluster Bomb Sales to Saudi Arabia, Saying a Ban Would ‘Stigmatize’ the Weapons,” it was reported that:

Congress has opted to continue selling cluster bombs to Saudi Arabia, citing a need not to “stigmatize” the weapon. But human rights advocates pointed to the close vote, 216 to 204, as progress towards ending the U.S.-Saudi trade of cluster munitions, which advocates say causes indiscriminate carnage.

The US has also spent years scattering radioactive depleted uranium across various battlefields including Iraq, Afghanistan, and Bosnia.

According to the Guardian report titled, “Scientists urge shell clear-up to protect civilians,” it was stated that:

Up to 2,000 tonnes of DU has been used in the Gulf, a large part of it in cities like Baghdad, far more than in the Balkans. Unep has offered to go to Iraq and check on the quantities of DU still present and the danger it poses to civilians.

And while Laos faces 1,000 years of US cluster bomb munitions if current levels of disposal are maintained, nations like Iraq and Afghanistan facing US depleted uranium have several million years to wait until the danger subsides based on uranium's radioactive half-life.

It is obvious that should the US apply military force anywhere in Asia ever again, it will do so with equal or even greater consequences than it has already visited upon Laos, Iraq, Afghanistan, Bosnia, or that its allies have visited upon nations like Yemen.

Fact checking the US President and various US ambassadors' rhetoric regarding America's true record in Asia points out a nation of infinite arrogance, unapologetic for the enormous and enduring suffering it has brought quite literally from an ocean away, and proves with its current actions elsewhere throughout the world that it is ready and willing to sow yet even more chaos.

Considering this, one must be forgiven for wondering just what "security" Secretary Carter is referring to that the US is underwriting in Asia – it is certainly not security those in Asia are enjoying – certainly not in Laos – at least not for 1,000 years to come.
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