

Natural resources:

timber, hydropower, gypsum, tin, gold, gemstones

Land use:**agricultural land:** 10.6%

arable land 6.2%; permanent crops 0.7%; permanent pasture 3.7%

forest: 67.9%**other:** 21.5% (2011 est.)**Irrigated land:**

3,100 sq km (2012)

Total renewable water resources:

333.5 cu km (2011)

Freshwater withdrawal (domestic/industrial/agricultural):**total:** 3.49 cu km/yr (4%/5%/91%)**per capita:** 588.9 cu m/yr (2005)**Natural hazards:**

floods, droughts

Environment - current issues:

unexploded ordnance; deforestation; soil erosion; most of the population does not have access to potable water

Environment - international agreements:**party to:** Biodiversity, Climate Change, Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol, Desertification, Endangered Species, Environmental Modification, Law of the Sea, Ozone Layer Protection**signed, but not ratified:** none of the selected agreements**Geography - note:**

landlocked; most of the country is mountainous and thickly forested; the Mekong River forms a large part of the western boundary with Thailand

• **People and Society :: LAOS****Nationality:****noun:** Lao(s) or Laotian(s)**adjective:** Lao or Laotian**Ethnic groups:**

Lao 54.6%, Khmou 10.9%, Hmong 8%, Tai 3.8%, Phuthai 3.3%, Lue 2.2%, Katang 2.1%, Makong 2.1%, Akha 1.6%, other 10.4%, unspecified 1% (2005 est.)

Languages:


Lao (official), French, English, various ethnic languages

Religions:

Buddhist 66.8%, Christian 1.5%, other 31%, unspecified 0.7% (2005 est.)

Population:

6,911,544 (July 2015 est.)

country comparison to the world: 104**Age structure:****0-14 years:** 34.1% (male 1,190,119/female 1,166,774)**15-24 years:** 21.31% (male 731,531/female 741,107)**25-54 years:** 35.54% (male 1,211,600/female 1,245,010)**55-64 years:** 5.23% (male 177,142/female 184,409)**65 years and over:** 3.82% (male 119,392/female 144,460) (2015 est.)**population pyramid:** **Dependency ratios:****total dependency ratio:** 62.8%**youth dependency ratio:** 56.6%**elderly dependency ratio:** 6.2%**potential support ratio:** 16.1% (2015 est.)**Median age:****total:** 22.3 years**male:** 22 years**female:** 22.6 years (2015 est.)**country comparison to the world:** 176**Population growth rate:**

1.55% (2015 est.)

country comparison to the world: 79**Birth rate:**

24.25 births/1,000 population (2015 est.)

country comparison to the world: 60**Death rate:**

7.63 deaths/1,000 population (2015 est.)

country comparison to the world: 110**Net migration rate:**

-1.09 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2015 est.)

country comparison to the world: 149**Urbanization:****urban population:** 38.6% of total population (2015)**rate of urbanization:** 4.93% annual rate of change (2010-15 est.)**Major urban areas - population:**

VIENTIANE (capital) 997,000 (2015)

Sex ratio:**at birth:** 1.04 male(s)/female**0-14 years:** 1.02 male(s)/female**15-24 years:** 0.99 male(s)/female**25-54 years:** 0.97 male(s)/female**55-64 years:** 0.96 male(s)/female**65 years and over:** 0.83 male(s)/female**total population:** 0.99 male(s)/female (2015 est.)**Maternal mortality rate:**

197 deaths/100,000 live births (2015 est.)

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country comparison to the world: <u>21</u>	
Infant mortality rate:	
total: 52.97 deaths/1,000 live births	
male: 58.52 deaths/1,000 live births	
female: 47.21 deaths/1,000 live births (2015 est.)	
country comparison to the world: <u>32</u>	
Life expectancy at birth:	
total population: 63.88 years	
male: 61.88 years	
female: 65.95 years (2015 est.)	
country comparison to the world: <u>181</u>	
Total fertility rate:	
2.82 children born/woman (2015 est.)	
country comparison to the world: <u>62</u>	
Contraceptive prevalence rate:	
49.8% (2011/12)	
Health expenditures:	
2% of GDP (2013)	
country comparison to the world: <u>181</u>	
Physicians density:	
0.18 physicians/1,000 population (2012)	
Hospital bed density:	
1.5 beds/1,000 population (2012)	
Drinking water source:	
improved:	
urban: 85.6% of population	
rural: 69.4% of population	
total: 75.7% of population	
unimproved:	
urban: 14.4% of population	
rural: 30.6% of population	
total: 24.3% of population (2015 est.)	
Sanitation facility access:	
improved:	
urban: 94.5% of population	
rural: 56% of population	
total: 70.9% of population	
unimproved:	
urban: 5.5% of population	
rural: 44% of population	
total: 29.1% of population (2015 est.)	
HIV/AIDS - adult prevalence rate:	
0.26% (2014 est.)	
country comparison to the world: <u>91</u>	
HIV/AIDS - people living with HIV/AIDS:	
11,100 (2014 est.)	
country comparison to the world: <u>91</u>	
HIV/AIDS - deaths:	
500 (2014 est.)	
country comparison to the world: <u>86</u>	
Major infectious diseases:	
degree of risk: very high	
food or waterborne diseases: bacterial and protozoal diarrhea, hepatitis A, and typhoid fever	
vectorborne diseases: dengue fever and malaria	
note: highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza has been identified in this country; it poses a negligible risk with extremely rare cases possible among US citizens who have close contact with birds (2013)	
Obesity - adult prevalence rate:	
3% (2014)	
country comparison to the world: <u>179</u>	
Children under the age of 5 years underweight:	
26.5% (2012)	
country comparison to the world: <u>22</u>	
Education expenditures:	
2.8% of GDP (2010)	
country comparison to the world: <u>147</u>	
Literacy:	
definition: age 15 and over can read and write	
total population: 79.9%	
male: 87.1%	
female: 72.8% (2015 est.)	
School life expectancy (primary to tertiary education):	
total: 11 years	
male: 11 years	
female: 10 years (2013)	
Child labor - children ages 5-14:	
total number: 175,138	
percentage: 11% (2006 est.)	
• Government :: LAOS	
• Country name:	
conventional long form: Lao People's Democratic Republic	
conventional short form: Laos	
local long form: Sathalanalat Paxathipatai Paxaxon Lao	
local short form: Pathet Lao (unofficial)	
etymology: name means "Land of the Lao [people]"	

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Government type:

communist state

Capital:

name: Vientiane (Viangchan)

geographic coordinates: 17 58 N, 102 36 E**time difference:** UTC+7 (12 hours ahead of Washington, DC, during Standard Time)**Administrative divisions:**

17 provinces (khoueng, singular and plural) and 1 capital city* (nakhon luang, singular and plural); Attapu, Bokeo, Bolikhamxai, Champasak, Houaphan, Khammouan, Louangnamtha, Louangphabang, Oudomxai, Phongsali, Salavan, Savannakhet, Viangchan (Vientiane)*, Viangchan, Xaignabouli, Xaimsomboun, Xekong, Xiangkhouang

Independence:

19 July 1949 (from France)

National holiday:

Republic Day, 2 December (1975)

Constitution:

previous 1947 (preindependence); latest promulgated 13-15 August 1991; amended 2003, 2015 (2016)

Legal system:

civil law system similar in form to the French system

International law organization participation:

has not submitted an ICJ jurisdiction declaration; non-party state to the ICCt

Citizenship:**citizenship by birth:** no**citizenship by descent only:** at least one parent must be a citizen of Laos**dual citizenship recognized:** no**residency requirement for naturalization:** 10 years**Suffrage:**

18 years of age; universal

Executive branch:**chief of state:** President BOUNNYANG Vorachit (since 20 April 2016); Vice President PHANKHAM Viphavan (since 20 April 2016)**head of government:** Prime Minister THONGLOUN Sisoulit (since 20 April 2016); Deputy Prime Ministers BOUNTHONG Chitmani, SONXAI Siphandon, SOMDI Douangdi (since 20 April 2016)**cabinet:** Council of Ministers appointed by the president, approved by the National Assembly**elections/appointments:** president and vice president indirectly elected by the National Assembly for a 5-year term (no term limits); election last held on 20 April 2016 (next to be held in 2021); prime minister nominated by the president, elected by the National Assembly for 5-year term**election results:** BOUNNYANG Vorachit (LPRP) elected president; PHANKHAM Viphavan (LPRP) elected vice president; percent of National Assembly vote - NA; THONGLOUN Sisoulit (LPRP) elected prime minister; percent of National Assembly vote - NA**Legislative branch:****description:** unicameral National Assembly or Sapha Heng Xat (132 seats; members directly elected in multi-seat constituencies by simple majority vote from candidate lists provided by the Lao People's Revolutionary Party; members serve 5-year terms)**elections:** last held on 20 April 2016 (next to be held in 2021)**election results:** percent of vote by party - NA; seats by party - LPRP 128, independent 4**Judicial branch:****highest court(s):** People's Supreme Court (consists of NA judges)**judge selection and term of office:** president of People's Supreme Court elected by National Assembly on recommendation of National Assembly Standing Committee; vice president of People's Supreme Court and judges appointed by National Assembly Standing Committee; judge tenure NA**subordinate courts:** provincial, municipal, district, and military courts**Political parties and leaders:**

Lao People's Revolutionary Party or LPRP [BOUNNYANG Vorachit]

note: other parties proscribed**Political pressure groups and leaders:**

NA

International organization participation:

ADB, ARF, ASEAN, CP, EAS, FAO, G-77, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICRM, IDA, IFAD, IFC, IFRCS, ILO, IMF, Interpol, IOC, IPU, ISO (subscriber), ITU, MIGA, NAM, OIF, OPCW, PCA, UN, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNIDO, UNWTO, UPU, WCO, WFTU (NGOs), WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO

Diplomatic representation in the US:**chief of mission:** Ambassador MAI Xaignavong (since 3 August 2015)**chancery:** 2222 S Street NW, Washington, DC 20008**telephone:** [1] (202) 332-6416**FAX:** [1] (202) 332-4923**consulate(s):** New York**Diplomatic representation from the US:****chief of mission:** Ambassador David A. CLUNE (since 16 September 2013)**embassy:** Thadeua Road, Kilometer 9, Ban Somvang Tai, Hatsayfong District, Vientiane**mailing address:** American Embassy Vientiane, Unit 8165, APO AP 96546**telephone:** [856] 21-48-7000**FAX:** [856] 21-48-7190**Flag description:**


















three horizontal bands of red (top), blue (double width), and red with a large white disk centered in the blue band; the red bands recall the blood shed for liberation; the blue band represents the Mekong River and prosperity; the white disk symbolizes the full moon against the Mekong River, but also signifies the unity of the people under the Lao People's Revolutionary Party, as well as the country's bright future

National symbol(s):

elephant; national colors: red, white, blue

National anthem:**name:** "Pheng Xat Lao" (Hymn of the Lao People)**lyrics/music:** SISANA Sisane/THONGDY Sounthonevichit**note:** music adopted 1945, lyrics adopted 1975; the anthem's lyrics were changed following the 1975 Communist revolution that overthrew the monarchy





























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•	Economy :: LAOS	
•	Economy - overview:	
	The government of Laos, one of the few remaining one-party communist states, began decentralizing control and encouraging private enterprise in 1986. Economic growth averaged 6% per year from 1988-2008 except during the short-lived drop caused by the Asian financial crisis that began in 1997. Laos' growth has more recently been amongst the fastest in Asia and averaged nearly 8% per year for the last decade.	
	Nevertheless, Laos remains a country with an underdeveloped infrastructure, particularly in rural areas. It has a basic, but improving, road system, and limited external and internal land-line telecommunications. Electricity is available to 83% of the population. Agriculture, dominated by rice cultivation in lowland areas, accounts for about 25% of GDP and 73% of total employment.	
	Laos' economy is heavily dependent on capital-intensive natural resource exports. The economy has benefited from high-profile foreign direct investment in hydropower dams along the Mekong river, copper and gold mining, logging, and construction, although some projects in these industries have drawn criticism for their environmental impacts.	
	Laos gained Normal Trade Relations status with the US in 2004 and applied for Generalized System of Preferences trade benefits in 2013 after being admitted to the World Trade Organization earlier in the year. Laos began a one-year chairmanship of ASEAN in January 2016. Laos is in the process of implementing a value-added tax system. The government appears committed to raising the country's profile among foreign investors and has developed special economic zones replete with generous tax incentives, but a small labor pool remains an impediment to investment. Laos also has ongoing problems with the business environment, including onerous registration requirements, a gap between legislation and implementation, and unclear or conflicting regulations.	
	GDP (purchasing power parity):	
	\$37.5 billion (2015 est.)	
	\$34.87 billion (2014 est.)	
	\$32.46 billion (2013 est.)	
	note: data are in 2015 US dollars	
	country comparison to the world: <u>116</u>	
	GDP (official exchange rate):	
	\$12.55 billion (2015 est.)	
	GDP - real growth rate:	
	7.5% (2015 est.)	
	7.4% (2014 est.)	
	8% (2013 est.)	
	country comparison to the world: <u>12</u>	
	GDP - per capita (PPP):	
	\$5,400 (2015 est.)	
	\$5,100 (2014 est.)	
	\$4,700 (2013 est.)	
	note: data are in 2015 US dollars	
	country comparison to the world: <u>164</u>	
	Gross national saving:	
	26.5% of GDP (2015 est.)	
	25.3% of GDP (2014 est.)	
	25.8% of GDP (2013 est.)	
	country comparison to the world: <u>42</u>	
	GDP - composition, by end use:	
	household consumption: 58.2%	
	government consumption: 14.4%	
	investment in fixed capital: 36.6%	
	investment in inventories: 1.6%	
	exports of goods and services: 42.9%	
	imports of goods and services: -53.7% (2015 est.)	
	GDP - composition, by sector of origin:	
	agriculture: 23.1%	
	industry: 33.4%	
	services: 43.5% (2015 est.)	
	Agriculture - products:	
	sweet potatoes, vegetables, corn, coffee, sugarcane, tobacco, cotton, tea, peanuts, rice; cassava (manioc, tapioca), water buffalo, pigs, cattle, poultry	
	Industries:	
	mining (copper, tin, gold, gypsum); timber, electric power, agricultural processing, rubber, construction, garments, cement, tourism	
	Industrial production growth rate:	
	10% (2015 est.)	
	country comparison to the world: <u>5</u>	
	Labor force:	
	3.532 million (2015 est.)	
	country comparison to the world: <u>99</u>	
	Labor force - by occupation:	
	agriculture: 73.1%	
	industry: 6.1%	
	services: 20.6% (2012 est.)	
	Unemployment rate:	
	1.3% (2012 est.)	
	1.4% (2013 est.)	
	country comparison to the world: <u>7</u>	
	Population below poverty line:	
	22% (2013 est.)	
	Household income or consumption by percentage share:	
	lowest 10%: 3.3%	
	highest 10%: 30.3% (2008)	
	Distribution of family income - Gini index:	
	36.7 (2008)	

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34.6 (2002)
country comparison to the world: [83](#)
Budget:
revenues: \$3.095 billion
expenditures: \$3.723 billion (2015 est.)
Taxes and other revenues:
 24.7% of GDP (2015 est.)
country comparison to the world: [124](#)
Budget surplus (+) or deficit (-):
 -5% of GDP (2015 est.)
country comparison to the world: [169](#)
Public debt:
 48.6% of GDP (2015 est.)
 47.6% of GDP (2014 est.)
country comparison to the world: [85](#)
Fiscal year:
 1 October - 30 September
Inflation rate (consumer prices):
 1.3% (2015 est.)
 4.1% (2014 est.)
country comparison to the world: [77](#)
Central bank discount rate:
 4.3% (31 December 2010)
 4% (31 December 2009)
country comparison to the world: [85](#)
Commercial bank prime lending rate:
 19% (31 December 2015 est.)
 19.2% (31 December 2014 est.)
country comparison to the world: [15](#)
Stock of narrow money:
 \$1.166 billion (31 December 2015 est.)
 \$1.154 billion (31 December 2014 est.)
country comparison to the world: [147](#)
Stock of broad money:
 \$6.509 billion (31 December 2015 est.)
 \$6.461 billion (31 December 2014 est.)
country comparison to the world: [120](#)
Stock of domestic credit:
 \$6.529 billion (31 December 2015 est.)
 \$6.241 billion (31 December 2014 est.)
country comparison to the world: [114](#)
Market value of publicly traded shares:
 \$1.012 billion (2012 est.)
 \$576.8 million (2011)
country comparison to the world: [106](#)
Current account balance:
 -\$3.55 billion (2015 est.)
 -\$3.242 billion (2014 est.)
country comparison to the world: [161](#)
Exports:
 \$3.115 billion (2015 est.)
 \$2.662 billion (2014 est.)
country comparison to the world: [128](#)
Exports - commodities:
 wood products, coffee, electricity, tin, copper, gold, cassava
Exports - partners:
 China 34.2%, Thailand 27.4%, Vietnam 15.7% (2014)
Imports:
 \$4.912 billion (2015 est.)
 \$4.271 billion (2014 est.)
country comparison to the world: [125](#)
Imports - commodities:
 machinery and equipment, vehicles, fuel, consumer goods
Imports - partners:
 Thailand 55.2%, China 25.6%, Vietnam 6.6% (2014)
Reserves of foreign exchange and gold:
 \$976.3 million (31 December 2015 est.)
 \$889.7 million (31 December 2014 est.)
country comparison to the world: [132](#)
Debt - external:
 \$9.552 billion (31 December 2014 est.)
 \$8.615 billion (31 December 2013 est.)
country comparison to the world: [108](#)
Stock of direct foreign investment - at home:
 \$15.14 billion (31 December 2012 est.)
 \$12.44 billion (31 December 2011 est.)
country comparison to the world: [86](#)
Exchange rates:
 kips (LAK) per US dollar -
 8,151.6 (2015 est.)
 8,049 (2014 est.)
 8,049 (2013 est.)
 8,007.3 (2012 est.)
 8,035.1 (2011 est.)


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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Energy :: LAOS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electricity - production: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12.1 billion kWh (2012 est.) country comparison to the world: 92 Electricity - consumption: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.874 billion kWh (2012 est.) country comparison to the world: 136 Electricity - exports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.537 billion kWh (2013 est.) country comparison to the world: 42 Electricity - imports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.127 billion kWh (2012 est.) country comparison to the world: 61 Electricity - installed generating capacity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.217 million kW (2013 est.) country comparison to the world: 91 Electricity - from fossil fuels: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.7% of total installed capacity (2012 est.) country comparison to the world: 208 Electricity - from nuclear fuels: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0% of total installed capacity (2012 est.) country comparison to the world: 125 Electricity - from hydroelectric plants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 98.3% of total installed capacity (2012 est.) country comparison to the world: 7 Electricity - from other renewable sources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0% of total installed capacity (2012 est.) country comparison to the world: 192 Crude oil - production: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 bbl/day (2014 est.) country comparison to the world: 155 Crude oil - exports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 bbl/day (2012 est.) country comparison to the world: 149 Crude oil - imports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 bbl/day (2012 est.) country comparison to the world: 212 Crude oil - proved reserves: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 bbl (1 January 2015 est.) country comparison to the world: 154 Refined petroleum products - production: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 bbl/day (2012 est.) country comparison to the world: 199 Refined petroleum products - consumption: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3,200 bbl/day (2013 est.) country comparison to the world: 180 Refined petroleum products - exports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 bbl/day (2012 est.) country comparison to the world: 194 Refined petroleum products - imports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3,160 bbl/day (2012 est.) country comparison to the world: 173 Natural gas - production: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 cu m (2013 est.) country comparison to the world: 209 Natural gas - consumption: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 cu m (2013 est.) country comparison to the world: 162 Natural gas - exports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 cu m (2013 est.) country comparison to the world: 131 Natural gas - imports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 cu m (2013 est.) country comparison to the world: 90 Natural gas - proved reserves: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 cu m (1 January 2014 est.) country comparison to the world: 157 Carbon dioxide emissions from consumption of energy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.623 million Mt (2012 est.) country comparison to the world: 156 Communications :: LAOS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Telephones - fixed lines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> total subscriptions: 920,000 subscriptions per 100 inhabitants: 14 (2014 est.) country comparison to the world: 81 Telephones - mobile cellular: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> total: 4.6 million subscriptions per 100 inhabitants: 68 (2014 est.) country comparison to the world: 122 Telephone system: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> general assessment: service to general public is improving; the government relies on a radiotelephone network to communicate with remote areas domestic: 4 service providers with mobile cellular usage growing very rapidly 	                           
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international: country code - 856; satellite earth station - 1 Intersputnik (Indian Ocean region) and a second to be developed by China (2012)

Broadcast media:

6 TV stations operating out of Vientiane - 3 government-operated and the others commercial; 17 provincial stations operating with nearly all programming relayed via satellite from the government-operated stations in Vientiane; Chinese and Vietnamese programming relayed via satellite from Lao National TV; broadcasts available from stations in Thailand and Vietnam in border areas; multi-channel satellite and cable TV systems provide access to a wide range of foreign stations; state-controlled radio with state-operated Lao National Radio (LNR) broadcasting on 5 frequencies - 1 AM, 1 SW, and 3 FM; LNR's AM and FM programs are relayed via satellite constituting a large part of the programming schedules of the provincial radio stations; Thai radio broadcasts available in border areas and transmissions of multiple international broadcasters are also accessible (2012)

Radio broadcast stations:

AM 3, FM 34, shortwave 3 (2010)

Television broadcast stations:

28 (2010)

Internet country code:

.la

Internet hosts:

1,532 (2012)

country comparison to the world: 166

Internet users:

total: 300,000

percent of population: 5.8% (2009)

country comparison to the world: 142

- **Transportation :: LAOS**

- **Airports:**

41 (2013)

country comparison to the world: 103

Airports - with paved runways:

total: 8

2,438 to 3,047 m: 3

1,524 to 2,437 m: 4

914 to 1,523 m: 1 (2013)

Airports - with unpaved runways:

total: 33

1,524 to 2,437 m: 2

914 to 1,523 m: 9

under 914 m: 22 (2013)

Pipelines:

refined products 540 km (2013)

Roadways:

total: 39,586 km

paved: 5,415 km

unpaved: 34,171 km (2009)

country comparison to the world: 89

Waterways:

4,600 km (primarily on the Mekong River and its tributaries; 2,900 additional km are intermittently navigable by craft drawing less than 0.5 m) (2012)

country comparison to the world: 23

- **Military and Security :: LAOS**

- **Military branches:**

Lao People's Armed Forces (LPAF): Lao People's Army (LPA; includes Riverine Force), Air Force (2011)

Military service age and obligation:

18 years of age for compulsory or voluntary military service; conscript service obligation - minimum 18-months (2012)

Military expenditures:

NA% (2012)

0.23% of GDP (2011)

NA% (2010)

Military - note:

serving one of the world's least developed countries, the Lao People's Armed Forces (LPAF) is small, poorly funded, and ineffectively resourced; its mission focus is border and internal security, primarily in countering ethnic Hmong insurgent groups; together with the Lao People's Revolutionary Party and the government, the Lao People's Army (LPA) is the third pillar of state machinery, and as such is expected to suppress political and civil unrest and similar national emergencies; there is no perceived external threat to the state and the LPA maintains strong ties with the neighboring Vietnamese military (2012)

- **Transnational Issues :: LAOS**

- **Disputes - international:**

southeast Asian states have enhanced border surveillance to check the spread of avian flu; talks continue on completion of demarcation with Thailand but disputes remain over islands in the Mekong River; concern among Mekong River Commission members that China's construction of dams on the Mekong River and its tributaries will affect water levels; Cambodia and Vietnam are concerned about Laos' extensive upstream dam construction

Trafficking in persons:

current situation: Laos is a source and, to a lesser extent, transit and destination country for men, women, and children subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking; Lao economic migrants may encounter conditions of forced labor or sexual exploitation in destination countries, most often Thailand; Lao women and girls are exploited in Thailand's commercial sex trade, domestic service, factories, and agriculture; a small, possibly growing, number of Lao women and girls are sold as brides in China and South Korea and subsequently sex trafficked; Lao men and boys are victims of forced labor in the Thai fishing, construction, and agriculture industries; some Lao children, as well as Vietnamese and Chinese women and girls are subjected to sex trafficking in Laos; other Vietnamese and Chinese, and possibly Burmese, adults and children transit Laos for sexual and labor exploitation in neighboring countries, particularly Thailand

tier rating: Tier 2 Watch List – Laos does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so; authorities sustained moderate efforts to investigate, prosecute, and

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convict trafficking offenders; the government failed to make progress in proactively identifying victims exploited within the country or among those deported from abroad; the government continues to rely almost entirely on local and international organizations to provide and fund services to trafficking victims; although Lao men and boys are trafficked, most protective services are only available to women and girls, and long-term support is lacking; modest prevention efforts include the promotion of anti-trafficking awareness on state-controlled media (2015)

Illicit drugs:

estimated opium poppy cultivation in 2008 was 1,900 hectares, about a 73% increase from 2007; estimated potential opium production in 2008 more than tripled to 17 metric tons; unsubstantiated reports of domestic methamphetamine production; growing domestic methamphetamine problem (2009)

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