

Ambassador's Remarks at VNMAC Groundbreaking Ceremony
Monday, April 27, 2015, 08:00 am – 10:00 am
Artillery Training Field, Thach Hoa Commune
Thach That District

Deputy Prime Minister Hoang Trung Hai, Vice Minister of Defense Nguyen Chi Vinh, Vietnam Mine Action Center Director Major General Tran Hong Minh, Ambassador Jun Dae Joo, ladies and gentlemen.

It is an honor to be here today to witness the groundbreaking for the Vietnam National Mine Action Center (VNMAC).

I want to commend the efforts and leadership of Prime Minister Dung, Minister of National Defense Phung Quang Thanh, Vice Minister of Defense Vinh, and the countless others who helped move the VNMAC project forward.

In order to tackle UXO contamination, in Vietnam or elsewhere, you of course need resources, equipment, and a trained group of professionals.

But I would argue that having accurate, evidenced-based information and a clear plan are equally important.

That is why the VNMAC is so important. This Center will bring together all of these things to help achieve the main goal: Make Vietnamese citizens safe from the explosive remnants of war.

A Center that combines a public and transparent UXO database system, an evidenced-based approach to survey and clearance in-line with international standards, equipment and training for its personnel, and the technical assistance to help implement a game plan.

The United States is committed to working with Vietnam to help make this happen.

This year we are celebrating the 20th anniversary of the normalization of relations between Vietnam and the United States.

Our work together over the last 20 years on war legacy issues, including cleaning up UXO, has been and will continue to be a fundamental part of building trust and moving the relationship forward to new heights.

In 2013, President Obama and President Sang signed the U.S.-Vietnam Comprehensive Partnership.

This Partnership highlighted our two countries commitment to addressing war legacy issues.

We believe that goal is best achieved by working together to make the VNMAC effective and sustainable.

U.S.-funded NGOs in Vietnam have a wealth of experience and expertise, both in Vietnam and internationally. We want to be sure these partners are closely linked with the VNMAC in order for everyone to learn and share their experiences.

The challenge of making Vietnam safe from UXO is a daunting one. But it's one that we can and should achieve together.

Again, thank you very much for the honor of attending this historic groundbreaking ceremony in an historic year in U.S.-Vietnam relations.

My Embassy team and I look forward to working closely with the VNMAC.