

# Research on China-Laos Cooperation to Combating Cross-Border Telecom Network Fraud

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## Abstract

Telecom network fraud has arisen as a significant transnational crime impacting China and Laos, capitalizing on legal, jurisdictional, and technical discrepancies between the two nations. This paper analyzes the collaborative initiatives between China and Laos to address cross-border telecom network fraud, highlighting significant joint operations carried out from 2016 to 2024. The magnitude of telecom network fraud is shown by the extradition of over 2,500 criminals from Laos to China, which has averted millions of dollars in financial damages via collaborative law enforcement initiatives. The study analyzes significant hurdles, including jurisdictional limitations, technology inadequacies, and political factors that influence the effectiveness of joint operations. This paper proposes improved strategies for real-time digital evidence-sharing, the formation of joint task forces, enhanced financial intelligence monitoring, and expedited extradition processes through the analysis of case studies and ongoing collaborative efforts. By enhancing technological capabilities, offering training, and bolstering political support, China and Laos can establish a more robust framework for addressing telecom network fraud and ensuring regional security.

**Keywords:** China and Laos, cooperation, cross-border telecom network fraud, telecommunication fraud

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, cross-border telecom network fraud has emerged as a significant threat for nations globally, including China and Laos. This type of transnational crime capitalizes on technology innovations and legal ambiguities to deceive victims, frequently targeting individuals in one nation while functioning from another. The physical proximity of China and Laos, along with differences in legal systems, financial regulations, and technological competencies, has made this region particularly vulnerable to telecom network fraud. As a result, collaborative law enforcement efforts have begun to address this growing threat, leading to the arrest of approximately 2,500 criminals from 2016 to 2024\* and the recovery of millions of dollars in fraudulent activities.

The imperative for China-Laos collaboration transcends mere crime-fighting initiatives; it is also essential for sustaining regional stability. Growing complexity of telecom network fraud networks has driven both countries to improve their legal, financial, and technological systems. Still, there are many difficulties even with the successes of various group projects. Investigations and prosecutions are hampered by the jurisdictional restrictions limiting Chinese officials from autonomous action in Laos as well as by technological shortcomings affecting Lao law enforcement.

Political factors have a significant impact on the efficacy of these collaborative initiatives. Although diplomatic relations between China and Laos are typically strong, shifting political agendas and regional forces may limit the extent of cooperation. The disparities in financial legislation between the two nations exacerbate the challenges in monitoring and prosecuting telecom network fraudsters who use these loopholes for money laundering. This paper analyzes the present condition of China-Laos collaboration in addressing telecom network fraud and suggests strategies to mitigate these challenges. Through the examination of particular case studies and the provision of comprehensive recommendations, this research aims to improve the efficacy of cross-border crime-fighting

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\* The author conducted open-source intelligence research on cases of suspects involved in cross-border telecom fraud being repatriated through police cooperation between China and Laos, using information from government websites and mainstream news outlets. The web search was carried out using the keywords "Laos China + telecom fraud."

initiatives and bolster regional security.

## **2. The Necessity of China-Laos Cooperation to Combating Cross-Border Telecom Network Fraud**

Cross-border telecom network fraud poses a substantial threat to both China and Laos, affecting their economic stability and the security of their inhabitants. Criminals utilize the geographical closeness and legal inconsistencies between the two nations to perpetrate fraudulent activities. The increasing complexity of these crimes necessitates urgent and close collaboration between China and Laos to attain significant outcomes. The following are the principal justifications for enhancing collaboration between the two countries:

### *2.1 Globalization and Transnational Crime*

The globalization and proliferation of digital technology have significantly heightened the prevalence of transnational crime, especially telecom network fraud. Criminals exploit disparities in legal systems, technology, and financial regulations across nations to facilitate cross-border fraudulent activities with relative ease. China and Laos, owing to their geographical proximity and economic connections, are especially susceptible to these offenses. Fraudsters frequently develop operations in Laos, targeting Chinese nationals through telephonic scams, investment fraud, and phishing schemes. From 2016 to 2024, more than 2,500 people were apprehended and extradited from Laos to China for trial, illustrating the magnitude of the issue. Cross-border telecom network fraud constitutes not merely an economic concern but also a peril to national security, as it erodes public confidence in financial institutions and law enforcement agencies. These offenses lead to considerable financial detriment for people and corporations, simultaneously undermining social stability. The collaboration between China and Laos is essential in addressing these crimes, as neither nation can effectively tackle the issue in isolation due to the transnational character of the activities.

### *2.2 High Incidence of Cross-Border Telecom Network Fraud*

Telecom network fraud has escalated to frightening levels in recent years. Recent evidence indicates that criminals based in Laos have swindled Chinese citizens out of millions of dollars via several methods, including fake investment platforms and phishing scams. The economic ramifications surpass mere cash losses; they undermine the integrity of digital financial systems and erode customer faith in reputable online businesses. The collaboration between China and Laos has been crucial in alleviating these losses. Joint actions in 2024 resulted in the apprehension of 268 individuals implicated in more than 2,500 fraud charges. These operations underscore the imperative for sustained cooperation between the two nations to efficiently destroy telecom network fraud networks and recuperate misappropriated monies.

### *2.3 Geopolitical Considerations*

The political relationship between China and Laos profoundly impacts their collaboration in addressing cross-border telecom network fraud. Both nations have created diplomatic accords to enhance law enforcement cooperation; nevertheless, political fluctuations or regional unrest may undermine the efficacy of these initiatives. For example, alterations in financial legislation or leadership in Laos may either facilitate or obstruct collaboration, especially in the monitoring and confiscation of illicit cash. Furthermore, the legal and diplomatic structures regulating extradition and transnational investigations are frequently intricate and bureaucratic. These frameworks necessitate ongoing diplomatic interaction to guarantee effective coordination of law enforcement efforts between both countries. Improving political coordination can provide more efficient methods for addressing cross-border crimes, so simplifying the prosecution of offenders and the recovery of assets.

## **3. Forms of China-Laos Cooperation to Combating Cross-Border Telecom Network Fraud**

### *3.1 Ongoing Joint Operations*

The collaboration between China and Laos in addressing cross-border telecom network fraud has involved a succession of carefully coordinated joint actions throughout the years. These operations highlight the allocation of intelligence, technological proficiency, and synchronized law enforcement initiatives. Due to the characteristics of telecom network fraud, which frequently transcends national borders and utilizes advanced digital platforms, both countries have significantly depended on each other's resources to effectively combat these offenses. The Ministry of Public Security of China has constantly offered sophisticated technological assistance to Lao authorities. This assistance encompasses communication monitoring, IP tracing, and financial oversight, which have been crucial in detecting and dismantling intricate fraud networks originating from Laos but aimed at Chinese nationals. Lao law enforcement has conducted on-site raids and arrests, employing local expertise and jurisdictional power to detain suspects. In 2023, a significant joint operation occurred when China and Laos collaborated to initiate a comprehensive assault on telecom network fraud networks. This investigation concentrated on multiple fraud centers in Laos, resulting in the identification of key individuals and the dismantling of ten fraudulent networks.

The operation's efficacy mostly relied on real-time intelligence dissemination and China's technological prowess, culminating in the arrest of 179 individuals and the seizure of over 640 digital devices, including mobile phones and laptops utilized in fraudulent activities. Alongside rigorous enforcement efforts, the two nations maintain an ongoing collaboration through frequent training and capacity-building initiatives. Chinese law enforcement routinely trains Lao personnel in advanced cybercrime techniques, digital forensics, and financial crime investigations. This empowers Lao authorities to autonomously tackle telecom network fraud incidents and react to evolving fraud schemes with improved efficacy. Alongside targeted operations, the two nations have established mechanisms for the exchange of financial intelligence, particularly concentrating on the monitoring and freezing of illicit funds. Collaborative financial intelligence units coordinate to oversee dubious transactions, thwarting the transfer of funds via illicit routes. This degree of collaboration has markedly enhanced the capacity of both governments to apprehend offenders and recover misappropriated assets.

### *3.2 Case Study: 2023 China-Laos Joint Operation Against Cross-Border Telecom Network Fraud*

#### 3.2.1 Context for the 2023 China-Laos Collaborative Operation

In 2023, China and Laos had a significant surge in cross-border telecom network fraud occurrences targeting Chinese persons, with operations carried out from within Laos. Fraudsters used techniques such as counterfeit investment programs and phishing attempts to trick people into transferring funds through phony platforms. The severity of these schemes necessitated a coordinated response from both nations, as they resulted in substantial financial losses. The Chinese Ministry of Public Security, in recognition of the severity of the situation, collaborated with Lao authorities to dismantle these fraudulent networks. The collaborative task force utilized China's technology dominance in communication monitoring, IP tracing, and financial surveillance to pinpoint significant fraud centers in Laos. The alliance seeks to identify significant criminals and dismantle their activities at the origin, highlighting the necessity of international law enforcement cooperation.

#### 3.2.2 Execution of the 2023 Joint Operation

The execution of the 2023 operation necessitated careful planning and the amalgamation of the resources from both nations. In July 2023, China deployed a specialist task force to Laos, operating under the diplomatic oversight of the Chinese Embassy. The task force focused on prompt intelligence distribution and advanced surveillance methods to observe fraudulent activities. China's technological expertise—particularly in digital forensics and intellectual property tracking—facilitated the identification of the main suspects, while Lao officials executed the searches. The operation attained its initial notable success on July 19, 2023, when a coordinated raid in Savannakhet Province led to the arrest of 15 persons involved in large fraudulent activities. Aimed at many fraud networks, a sequence of coordinated operations over several provinces followed this. Ten major fraud networks were closed in the next months, leading to the arrest of 179 persons.

#### 3.2.3 Outcomes of the 2023 Collaborative Operation

The 2023 collaborative initiative that focused on telecom network fraud was remarkably successful, yielding significant results in the form of arrests, equipment confiscations, and case resolutions. The robust collaboration between the two nations in enforcing accountability for transnational crimes was underscored by the extradition of 179 suspects to China for prosecution. Furthermore, more than 640 items of equipment—including mobile phones, PCs, and various digital devices utilized in the fraudulent operations—were seized. The operation highlighted the efficacy of the China-Laos alliance in tackling the intricacies of cross-border crime and illustrated the significance of real-time intelligence sharing and technical cooperation.

### *3.4. Results and Impact of Collaborative Operations*

#### 3.4.1 Measurable Successes of Joint Operations

The effectiveness of coordinated China-Laos efforts in dismantling telecom network fraud networks is evidenced by the significant number of arrests and the recovery of big amounts of illicit funds. In recent years, cooperative efforts have led to the arrest of thousands of suspects, the dismantling of multiple fraud networks, and the resolution of hundreds of fraud cases. Following the 2023 China-Laos Joint Operation, over 640 fraud-related items were seized, 179 persons were arrested, and important fraud offenders were successfully prosecuted. These programs obviously have long-lasting consequences reflected in the disintegration of local fraud systems. The destruction of important criminal groups by joint efforts has greatly reduced the frequency of fraud cases targeted at Laotian Chinese nationals. Moreover, China's and Laos's joint approach has sent a strong message to other transnational criminal groups discouraging possible fraud attempts.

### 3.4.2 Enhancement of Regional Security and Trust

A significant effect of the China-Laos collaboration has been the enhancement of regional security and the reinstatement of confidence in financial institutions. The effective prosecution of fraud suspects has instilled confidence in both the public and private sectors on the proactive efforts of law enforcement agencies to safeguard them from transnational crime. The financial damage that was caused by these fraudulent schemes has been mitigated as a result of the recovery of stolen cash, which has consequently led to an increase in confidence in the regional financial institutions.

### 3.4.3 Enhanced Technological and Legal Proficiencies

This continued collaboration has enhanced the technological and legal competencies of both China and Laos in addressing transnational crime. Laos has notably gained from the flow of technology and expertise from China, facilitating the modernization of its cybercrime infrastructure. Joint activities have underscored the necessity of legal reforms to accelerate cross-border investigations and extradition procedures.

## 4. Challenges in Cooperation

Notwithstanding the achievements made possible by China-Lao cooperation in the fight against telecom network fraud, several obstacles prevent the whole fulfillment of these joint projects. The problems cover jurisdictional and legal barriers, technological limitations, and political factors impeding international inquiries.

### 4.1 Jurisdictional Limitations

A major barrier in China-Laos collaboration is the jurisdictional difference between the two countries. Transnational crimes such as telecom network fraud have participants functioning across boundaries, necessitating law enforcement organizations to maneuver through the intricacies of several legal systems. Chinese authorities are unable to execute arrests or investigations on Lao territory without the explicit consent and collaboration of Lao officials. This constraint may hinder evidence collection, impede the prosecution of offenders, and obstruct the dismantling of fraudulent networks, as evidenced in previous investigations.

The extradition procedure constitutes an additional source of apprehension. Extradition treaties between China and Laos facilitate the transfer of suspects; nonetheless, the process is sometimes prolonged and obstructed by bureaucratic complexities. An instance case occurred during the 2023 Joint Operation, in which Chinese detainees were incarcerated in Lao jails for about two months before their extradition to China was finalized. This postponement, resulting from administrative and diplomatic obstacles, underscores the necessity for more efficient extradition protocols. Initiatives to optimize extradition protocols, especially for prominent telecom network fraud cases, are in progress but necessitate additional enhancement to augment the efficacy of transnational legal proceedings.

### 4.2 Technological Gaps

The disparity in technology resources and capabilities marks a major mismatch in the cooperation between China and Laos. China has sophisticated digital forensics and cybercrime detection while Laos lacks such a technological base. The technological disparity prevents Lao authorities from independently handling complex telecom network fraud investigations, which usually involve complex digital networks and transnational communication channels. The dependence on China for digital surveillance instruments, intellectual property tracking, and forensic analysis has demonstrated efficacy in collaborative operations, although it has also underscored Laos' necessity for sustained investment in technology infrastructure. Training initiatives and technological transfers have mitigated this gap; however, additional development is essential for Lao authorities to conduct cybercrime investigations with increased autonomy.

### 4.3 Financial Regulation and Monitoring Barriers

Preventing telecom network fraud is much hampered by the differences in financial laws between China and Laos. Often using legal gaps in both countries' financial systems, criminals hide the results of fraud, move illegal money, and launder money. Lao banks are often less regulated than their Chinese counterparts, which makes it easier for criminals to pass money through the Lao financial system undetectable. Although combined financial intelligence units help to detect suspicious activity, further harmonizing of financial rules is required to stop fraudsters from using these weaknesses. A unified financial crime database available to both countries would help to enable real-time monitoring of cross-border transactions and the supply of law enforcement with the required instruments to quickly freeze assets before they are moved outside reach.

### 4.4 Geopolitical and Diplomatic Barriers

Geopolitical events and diplomatic ties greatly influence how well China-Lao cooperation addresses telecom

network fraud. Although the two countries maintain strong diplomatic ties, some aspects of the larger geopolitical background could affect the success of their joint projects.

#### 4.4.1 Diplomatic Relations and Collaboration

The enduring diplomatic connection between China and Laos is essential for enabling cross-border law enforcement operations. Bilateral treaties and agreements establish a foundation for collaboration, facilitating extradition, intelligence sharing, and joint operations. The efficacy of this collaboration may be influenced by alterations in political leadership or modifications in regional priorities. A shift in government policy or leadership in Laos could influence its readiness or capacity to collaborate comprehensively with Chinese authorities on law enforcement matters.

#### 4.4.2 The Impact of Regional Stability

Another element influencing the effectiveness of China-Lao cooperation is the stability of the area. Legal and law enforcement capability as well as political regimes define Southeast Asia in different degrees. The communications network could flee unrest in surrounding nations. Fraud syndicates complicate the containment efforts of China and Laos. If a neighboring country becomes a center for fraudsters, this may hamper bilateral initiatives, necessitating China and Laos to reallocate resources to confront the regional issue.

#### 4.4.3 External Political Pressures and Diplomacy

External political pressures—including regional alliances and international relations—can help or hinder law enforcement cooperation. For example, China's increased close ties to ASEAN nations might affect Laos's diplomatic posture on cross-border crime. Moreover, pressure from foreign human rights organizations or other nations could sometimes disturb the legal procedures linked with cross-border investigations, including the imprisonment of suspects and extradition. Furthermore, diplomatic tensions caused by unrelated geopolitical crises or trade exchanges may influence countries' willingness to cooperate peacefully. Although China and Laos currently have a stable relationship, any future political, economic, or geographical conflicts could jeopardize their law enforcement cooperation.

### 5. Proposed Solutions for Enhancing Cooperation

In order to effectively address the challenges of cross-border telecom network fraud between China and Laos, a series of strategic initiatives must be implemented. These proposals are intended to enhance collaboration by overcoming technological, legal, and diplomatic impediments. In order to guarantee feasibility, practical implementation steps are provided for each proposed solution, with a focus on potential obstacles and resistance from key stakeholders.

#### 5.1 Establishment of Joint Task Forces with Cross-Border Jurisdiction

It is imperative to establish specialized joint task forces that are composed of law enforcement officials from both China and Laos. The task forces should be granted the authority to investigate, detain, and prosecute individuals who engage in telecom network fraud. The operations of these task forces would be governed by a legally established framework, which would allow officers to fulfill their responsibilities within mutually designated zones without the necessity of extensive clearances or diplomatic approvals.

Implementation Details:

- **Bilateral Legal Agreement:** Both countries must establish and execute a bilateral treaty that confers limited cross-border jurisdiction to the task teams. This would include delineating the precise conditions under which police from one nation may operate within another (e.g., only for Telecom Network Fraud cases).
- **Operational Integration:** Joint task teams may be positioned at critical border checkpoints or within regional law enforcement centers, enabling swift deployment to regions where telecom network fraud networks are active.
- **Potential Resistance:** Some stakeholders could see allowing foreign law enforcement officials to operate inside their borders as compromising national sovereignty. These problems could be resolved with a clearly jurisdictional agreement carefully crafted. Moreover, local police departments can protest to claimed incursions of their territory; so, it is essential to make sure that new task teams improve rather than replace current law enforcement initiatives.

#### 5.2 Real-Time Digital Evidence Exchange Platform

Provide a safe, cloud-based system between Chinese and Lao authorities for real-time sharing of digital evidence including IP tracking logs, financial transaction data, and conversation histories. With this platform, law enforcement officials from both countries could swiftly obtain vital information free from the delays related with conventional diplomatic routes.

#### Implementation Details:

- Platform development involves the commissioning of an experienced cybersecurity company to construct a digital platform that is secure and equipped with end-to-end encryption, capable of managing sensitive data pertaining to law enforcement. This platform ought to be in accordance with the data protection laws of both China and Laos.
- Training and Accessibility: Guarantee that law enforcement personnel from both countries are adequately instructed in the utilization of the platform. In order to prevent adoption delays, the interface must be user-friendly.
- Potential Resistance: In Laos, where the infrastructure may be less resilient, resistance may arise from concerns regarding data security and sovereignty. Furthermore, the cost of the platform may present a challenge, particularly for Laos. In order to address these concerns, China could assume a leadership role in providing technical assistance and financing the platform's development, all while ensuring that sensitive data is safeguarded by a shared governance structure.

#### *5.3 Strengthened Financial Intelligence and Monitoring Cooperation*

Create a cooperative financial intelligence unit (FIU) specifically monitoring illegal financial flows connected to telecom network fraud. Access to a unified financial crime database would enable the FIU to freeze bogus accounts, monitor suspicious transactions in real time, retrieve illegal money before it is transferred abroad.

#### Implementation Details:

- Establishment of a Centralized Database: Create a unified financial crime database to document suspicious transactions, flagged accounts, and illicit funds associated with telecom network fraud. Chinese and Lao financial institutions must disclose high-risk activity to this unified system.
- Cooperation with Financial Institutions: The FIU would collaborate closely with banks and financial regulators in both countries to streamline the process of tracking suspicious transactions. In high-priority cases, the unit would have the authority to freeze assets immediately, pending further investigation.
- Potential Resistance: Financial institutions in Laos, which may have less stringent regulatory supervision, may resist increased scrutiny and reporting obligations. Providing clear guidelines on reporting requirements and offering training programs for local financial personnel can help facilitate the transition. Furthermore, compliance may be stimulated by incentives such as enhanced international reputation and diminished fraud exposure.

#### *5.4 Streamlined Extradition Procedures*

Simplify and speed up the extradition process between China and Laos for suspects of telecom network fraud to help to lower delays that impede prosecutions. Fast-track procedures could be created especially for cases of telecom network fraud, therefore avoiding some of the administrative obstacles in the usual extradition process.

#### Implementation Details:

- Fast-Track Extradition Treaty: A new or updated treaty emphasizing on telecom network fraud could include fast-track provisions for high-priority cases, so allowing both countries to avoid some bureaucratic processes, such as secondary reviews by lower courts, in favor of quick approval from central legal authorities.
- Digital Case Management System: Both countries could decide to employ a shared digital case management system tracking legal documents, case statuses, and extradition requests in real time, therefore reducing paperwork and delays.
- Judicial Cooperation: Frequent meetings between the courts of both countries could serve to assure improved coordination, therefore ensuring that legal processes are in line and delays are reduced.
- Potential Resistance: Fast-tracking may be opposed by bureaucratic and judicial authorities who may raise issues with national sovereignty and due process. Therefore, only cases of telecom network fraud should be eligible for fast-track extradition, and safeguards should be in place to ensure that the rights of suspects are protected.

#### *5.5 Expanding Capacity Building and Technological Support*

China might help Laos even more by keeping on offering modern technical tools and training courses for Lao law enforcement. This would increase Laos's capacity to manage complex telecom network fraud cases on her alone.

#### Implementation Details:

- Ongoing Training Programs: The training classes that China should continue to expand should encompass a variety of topics, including digital forensics, investigations of cybercrime, and analysis of cybercrime. For the

purpose of reaching a greater number of Lao authorities, it is possible to organize these courses both online and in person.

- **Technology Transfers:** Laos would be able to acquire the resources it requires to address complex fraud cases if it were provided with advanced forensic tools, software for IP tracking, and financial monitoring systems.
- **Managing Potential Problems:** The fact that Laos is dependent on China for its resources over the long run may result in problems for the country. Through the implementation of skill-building efforts, China needs to prioritize the development of Laos's own technical capability and the promotion of independence.

### 5.6 Addressing Political and Diplomatic Considerations

For the purpose of ensuring that political dynamics do not hamper law enforcement collaboration, China and Laos ought to improve diplomatic contact and regional cooperation. This involves the utilization of regional groups such as ASEAN in order to provide more comprehensive multilateral cooperation for the prevention of telecom network fraud.

Implementation Details:

- **Regular Diplomatic Meetings:** China and Laos should set up regular high-level meetings specially to handle cross-border crime, so ensuring that telecom network fraud stays a top concern. These conferences would give a platform for addressing any diplomatic or political problems developing.
- **ASEAN Cooperation:** Both countries ought to make a request for assistance from ASEAN and other regional organizations in order to address the issue of increasingly widespread fraud using cross-border telecom networks. In order to promote bilateral collaboration, multilateral agreements might be of assistance. These agreements would ensure more widespread regional support.
- **Potential Resistance:** Both the political events in either nation and the more general dynamics of the area might have an impact on the collaboration between the two countries. In order to prevent these issues from occurring in the first place, it is necessary to maintain a high level of diplomatic contact at both the local and central levels. In addition, ASEAN has made a regional commitment to maintain continuity even in the face of variations in political circumstances.

## 6. Conclusion

Due to the complexity of cross-border fraud networks, China and Laos are struggling. Despite advances made through collaborative operations and enhanced cooperation, jurisdictional constraints, technological deficiencies, and financial regulation inconsistencies continue to hinder effective collaboration. The recommended measures, including the formation of joint task teams with cross-border authority and the creation of a real-time digital evidence-sharing platform, provide a means for more effective and prompt law enforcement responses to these difficulties. Furthermore, enhancing financial intelligence collaboration and optimizing extradition processes can markedly accelerate and enhance the prosecution of telecom network fraud cases. It is crucial to recognize the possible opposition from many stakeholders, encompassing issues related to national sovereignty, data security, and resource distribution. Through meticulous planning, diplomatic engagement, and capacity-building activities, China and Laos may improve their capability to tackle telecom network fraud regionally. Ongoing governmental endorsement and enduring investment in technology and training will be essential for preserving this collaboration. Through the implementation of these initiatives, China and Laos may establish a more robust framework for cross-border crime prevention, therefore creating a significant precedent for regional security and law enforcement cooperation. Ultimately, these initiatives not only protect their residents but also enhance regional stability in the combat against transnational crime.

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