

March 14, 2023
Testimony for House Bills 5728 and 5467
Submitted By: Tia N. Kha

Honorable Chairman and Members of the Veterans Affairs Committee,

Today, we the Lao Hmong Special Guerrilla Unit (S.G.U.) veterans are here to ask for your consideration in supporting veteran's benefits for the Lao Hmong S.G.U. who had served in the United States' CIA paramilitary operations in Laos during the Vietnam War. The War has been over for 48 years now, but we have not received any benefits from the United States Government for our service, despite making equal sacrifices to those of the U.S. service men and women in the defense of freedom.

- We, The Lao Hmong S.G.U. were not American paramilitary allies. We were a military force recruited, trained, paid, equipped, and directed by the United States government under the auspices of the U.S. State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) during the War in Vietnam.
- We received orders from and operated under the auspices of the United States Ambassador to Laos, William Sullivan, and Brigadier General Harry C. Aderholt who was the Commanding General of operations in Laos during the Vietnam War from 1960 to 1975.
- Colonel James (Bill) Lair was the CIA case officer during this conflict. He recruited General Vang Pao and his Hmong tribesmen to arm and carry-out the CIA's mission to fight against the North Vietnamese troops in Laos by blocking the main supply route (Ho Chi Minh Trail) to South Vietnam, an act which saved many American servicemen's' lives by significantly reducing the flow of weapons and supplies into the South.

Like many veterans of war, we made personal sacrifices that have left us with lasting physical and mental health effects. We lost friends and family members during the war. We also had to abandon our homeland and take refuge in the United States when it withdrew its armed forces from Southeast Asia. Now, as citizens of this great country, we respectfully request our service to the United States be recognized by allowing us to receive the benefits entitled to members of the armed forces under the United States' VA programs.

We, the Lao/Hmong SGU are seeking:

1. Formal documentation of military service (DD-214 or similar ID);
2. Eligibility for State Veterans Driver License.
3. Eligibility for VA health benefits equally to other veterans in this great country;
and
4. Being recognized by the Federal and State governments as being eligible for internment in Federal and State cemeteries.

Your Honor, I ask for your support in the passage of House Bills 5467 and 5728 which will help bring us some recognition of our sacrifices in service to this great country. We are old and few now and many suffer the same health effects as those suffered by the service men and women who served in the US Armed Forces in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War.

Thank You for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Tia neng kha'

Tia N. Kha
Liaison of Lao/Hmong SGU-RI
