

CAVWV Documents Exclusion of Lao, Hmong, Khmer and Vietnamese Allies from U.S. Veteran Recognition Programs

Allied communities who bled alongside U.S. forces in Laos, Cambodia & Vietnam are still waiting for the recognition their American counterparts were promised.

ST. PAUL, MN, UNITED STATES, May 19, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Lao, Hmong, Khmer, Vietnamese, Montagnard, and Nung allies who bled alongside U.S. forces in Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam are still waiting for the recognition their American counterparts were promised



CAVWV

When America finally begins to account for the [Forgotten Warriors](#) of the Secret Air War in Laos, it will confront a truth that federal and state recognition programs have systematically avoided

“

The men who flew over Laos served without names. The allies who fought on the ground beneath them served without recognition. Both are owed the same thing: an honest accounting.”

*Thomas Leo Briggs, President,
CAVWV*

for fifty years: the men who fought alongside American forces in that war were not only American airmen. They were Lao soldiers. Hmong fighters. Khmer irregulars. Vietnamese Kinh, Montagnard, and Nung irregulars who answered American intelligence officers' calls, went into denied territory, and in many cases died there, in a war that the United States officially denied was happening, in a country the United States officially denied it was operating in.

The [Coalition of Allied Afghan & Vietnam War Veterans](#) (CAVWV) has spent this Memorial Day week bringing forward the stories of American airmen who flew in that

war without names, without geography in their citations, without their country's public acknowledgment. Today, CAVWV adds the names that are most systematically absent from

American law and public memory: the allied communities whose sacrifice on behalf of American policy has never been fully acknowledged, and in many cases has been explicitly excluded from the federal and state veteran recognition programs that were designed, in principle, to include them.

The CIA's Special Guerrilla Units in Laos, comprising lowland Lao, Lao tribesmen of many tribes, and Hmong fighters, under commanders including General Vang Pao in Military Region 2 and General Soutchay Vongsavanh commanding SGU forces in the south, were organized, equipped, and directed by the United States government. They were not auxiliaries. They were the ground force in a war that the United States could not officially fight. When American Raven Forward Air Controllers flew unarmed over the most dangerous terrain in Southeast Asia to direct air strikes in support of those forces, they were flying in defense of troops the U.S. government had recruited, trained, and armed. When those Raven pilots were shot down and needed rescue, it was often Lao and Hmong fighters who held the perimeter that kept them alive until the helicopters arrived.

That interdependence is not reflected in American law.

Federal recognition programs ostensibly designed to cover Vietnam War U.S. Government allies have, in practice, excluded the majority of those allies. The Hmong Veterans' Naturalization Act of 2000 covered a narrow slice of the SGU community. VA burial benefit eligibility under 38 U.S.C. § 107 has been applied inconsistently and sometimes denied to allied veterans whose service was at least as direct as those the law was designed to cover. State programs, including Minnesota's HF3919, establishing SGU veteran eligibility under MN Statute 197.448, have moved



Minnesota Lao SGU Veterans



Thomas Leo Briggs, President, CAVWV - CIA
Paramilitary Case Officer, Pakse, Laos, 1970–1972

toward inclusion, but the companion legislation needed to close an equity gap affecting Lao veteran service members who served in the Minnesota National Guard has not yet been passed. Across eighteen years of Minnesota appropriations history documented by CAVWV, Vietnamese and Cambodian communities received zero direct appropriations. Lao communities received their first funding only in 2023.

This is the other side of the Secret War's recognition gap. The American airmen whose citations said "Southeast Asia" instead of Laos have been forgotten. The Lao soldiers who held the ground beneath those airstrikes, who guided the mirror flashes that brought Raven pilots to the target, who carried wounded Americans to landing zones, who died in numbers that dwarfed American casualties, they were not given sanitized citations. They were simply not given recognition at all.

CAVWV calls on Congress, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and state legislatures to complete the accounting that Memorial Day 2026 has begun, for the American airmen whose names were sealed away, and for the allied communities whose names were never written into American law in the first place.

"The men who flew over Laos served without names. The allies who fought on the ground beneath them served without recognition. Both were forgotten by a country that never knew them. Both are owed the same thing: an honest accounting." - Thomas Leo Briggs, CAVWV President, author of *Cash on Delivery: CIA Special Operations During the Secret War in Laos* (Rosebank Press, 2009), CIA paramilitary case officer, Pakse, Laos, 1970–1972

Full research documentation, unit histories, and allied community recognition analysis are available at www.cavvv.org/forgotten-warriors.html. CAVWV's eighteen-year Minnesota legislative appropriations analysis and SGU veteran equity documentation are available at www.cavvv.org.

About CAVWV

The Coalition of Allied Afghan & Vietnam War Veterans (CAVWV) is a veteran advocacy organization dedicated to recognition of the service and sacrifice of American veterans and the Southeast Asian allies who fought alongside them during the Vietnam War era, including the citizens of the Republic of Vietnam, the Kingdom of Laos, the Kingdom of Cambodia, and the Khmer Republic who served as surrogates for American policy. CAVWV advocates on behalf of the full range of allied communities — Vietnamese (Kinh), Montagnards, Lao Loum, Lao Theung, Lao Sung, Nung, Khmer, and others, whose contributions have been systematically overlooked in federal and state recognition programs. cavvv.org

Media Contact: Thomas Leo Briggs — cavvv.president@gmail.com

Thomas Leo Briggs

Coalition of Allied Afghan & Vietnam War Veterans (CAVWV)

cavvv.president@gmail.com

Visit us on social media:

[X](#)

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/913210043>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2026 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.