

GENERAL VANG PAO: A Review of Reputable Sources
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In assessing the merits of the Madison School Board's decision to name a school General Vang Pao, there are four factors that might give one pause--allegations that Vang Pao ordered summary executions, press reports that his army conscripted boy soldiers as young as 10 years old for combat, reports that his army's command was involved in the Laos opium traffic, and press reports of financial fraud in Hmong-American welfare associations affiliated with him.

In aftermath of the Vietnam War, books by authors ranging from the staunchly pro-Vang Pao Jane Hamilton-Merritt to Christian missionary William Smalley and commercial author Christopher Robbins have been unanimous in reporting that Vang Pao ordered extra-judicial executions of enemy prisoners, his own Hmong soldiers, and Hmong political opponents. All base these allegations, which have been repeated in recent press reports, on interviews with eyewitnesses, which include CIA operatives, American pilots for the CIA-owned Air America, and Hmong whose communities supported the CIA's Secret Army.

In the latter stages of the Vietnam War, 1971-73, General Vang Pao's CIA army reportedly recruited children from ages 10 to 14 years-old to serve as boy soldiers in brutal combat with extraordinarily high casualties.

Moreover, there are several sources, citing first-hand accounts from former CIA officials, alleging that the Secret Army's command was involved in the Laos's opium traffic, particularly in the transport of opium out of Hmong villages on the CIA's airline Air America.

Finally, over the past 20 years General Vang Pao has been affiliated with several Hmong organizations reportedly involved in questionable fund raising for a variety of Hmong community causes—an anti-communist resistance group, the United Lao National Liberation Front, whose leader Kao Thao, General Vang Pao's son-in-law, was convicted of embezzlement in California in 1990; a welfare assistance group, the Lao Family Community; and a citizenship advocacy group, the Lao Veterans of America. Most recently, in October 2005 the Minnesota state attorney-general forced the "Vang Pao Foundation" to close its doors when an investigation found its chief officer Mr. Cha Vang, General Vang Pao's son, had conducted business improperly and could not account for \$500,000 in missing funds.

I. VANG PAO & EXTRA-JUDICIAL EXECUTIONS:

Over the past twenty-five years, four books, reflecting a wide range of political perspectives, have been published with statements that General Vang Pao, while an officer in the Royal Lao Army and head of the CIA's Secret Army from 1962-1975, was responsible for the extra-judicial execution of his own soldiers, enemy suspects, and political opponents within the Hmong community. Here are extracts from those sources:

1.) Christopher Robbins, **Air America** (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1979):

"A Meo [Hmong] soldier on the ridge watched the plane crawl slowly toward him and in a moment of boredom fired off a shot. The bullet went straight through the pilot's heart and killed him instantly while the plane crashed into the mountain and burned, killing everybody on board. The soldier was executed on the spot by Vang Pao." (page 122).

The book quotes Air America pilot Wayne Lennin saying about Vang Pao:

“VP was exceptional. He did a lot of things people didn’t like—he’d summarily execute somebody who didn’t do their job. But he kept the whole thing together, and if they hadn’t had him it would have fallen apart long before it ever did.” (page 139)

2.) Christopher Robbins, **The Ravens: The Men Who Flew in America’s Secret War in Laos** (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1987):

“In a later run-in with Long Tieng base chief Tom Clines, Vang Pao ruthlessly demonstrated who was in charge. Six prisoners had been brought in by the Meo [Hmong], and Clines demanded that his men interrogate them. Vang Pao nodded to an aide, who immediately had the men taken outside and shot. The CIA man took the point. “What I meant to say, general, is that I would *appreciate* it if you would *allow* us to interrogate prisoners, *please*.” (pg. 125).

3.) Jane Hamilton-Merritt, **Tragic Mountains: The Hmong, the Americans, and the Secret Wars for Laos, 1942-1992** (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993):

The book quotes Air America pilot Fred Walker’s eye-witness description of Vang Pao’s execution of a prisoner in January 1962:

“Colonel Vang Pao comes in and eats lunch. While he’s eating, one of his aides comes over and says something and points to the young guy squatting in the corner. Suddenly, Vang Pao spits out the sound ‘Ba!’ A couple of soldiers stood up and took the prisoner outside. Vang Pao continued eating. A few minutes later, I heard four shots.” (page 98)

4.) Tony Kennedy and Paul McEnroe, “The Covert Wars of Vang Pao,” **Star Tribune** (Minneapolis, MN), 2 July 2005.

This investigative report quotes CIA operative Bill Lair, who worked closely with General Vang Pao during the war in Laos:

“When I first got up there, when they captured prisoners--both sides did it--they automatically killed all the prisoners,” he said....

“I talked to him [Vang Pao] about. I said, ‘Look when you capture these guys, we ought not to shoot ‘em ‘cause they know a lot of stuff; we can get information out of ‘em which would be very useful to us,’” Lair said. “He wasn’t shooting them because he was a barbarian. He didn’t know what else to do with them.”

5.) William A. Smalley, Chia Khoua Vang, and Gnia Yee Yang, **Mother of Writing: The Origin and Development of a Hmong Messianic Script** (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

The book describes the murder of Shong Lue Yang, a messianic leader and inventor of a Hmong writing system as follows:

“It was mid-February 1971 that Shong Lue Yang, Mother of Writing, Savior of the People, was assassinated at the age of forty-one....About nine o’clock in the morning, two of the party of assassins came toward Shong Lue’s house, while the others stayed on guard....Then they went on and shot Shong Lue and Bau [his wife] inside their home. Shong Lue’s and Bau’s three-year-old son, Ba..., darted to the jungle. The assassins shot at him,

wounding him in the leg, but he managed to get away....All of the suspected assassins are known now, their identities learned in various ways. They were all soldiers in General Vang Pao's army..."

"After Shong Lue was assassinated, a student named Yong Lee Yang..., who had been one of the twelve clan representatives at Kiaw Bouia or Fi Ka, and so had been trained by Shong Lue as a leader, built a round house for worship and continued teaching the Pahawh Hmong [writing system] in his own village of Houi Kinin...in the Long Cheng area. Once more the Hmong people in the surrounding area gathered to study in increasing numbers, until there were five hundred of them....

"The process of spreading the Pahawh Hmong [writing] continued until November 1971, when Yong Lee Yang was also killed in his Houi Kinin home. The assassins were dressed in the uniforms of government soldiers. They came early in the morning, armed with bazookas of the type supplied by the American CIA, weapons powerful enough to piece tanks and blow up bunkers. With these weapons, they killed not only Yong Lee, but also five other people, wounding sixteen as well. Then the next evening, at 4 p.m., two T-28 bombers, also of the type provided to General Vang Pao's army by the CIA, flew twice over the village and destroyed the round worship house.

"That disaster ended the spread of the Pahwah Hmong until the Royal Lao Government collapsed and the Hmong people began to leave Laos, beginning May 14, 1975." (pages 37-39)

II. CONSCRIPTION OF CHILDREN BY VANG PAO'S CIA ARMY:

During the latter years of the US war in Laos, there were frequent press reports that General Vang Pao's army was conscripting children as young as ten years old for service in his CIA-funded army as "boy soldiers" because of extraordinarily high casualties.

1.) "**From Laos to America: Changing World, Changing Lives**" (D.C. Everest Area School District, Weston, WI; <http://www.everestinfo.org/laos2/index.php?page=Boy_Soldiers>) has a photo of these "boy soldiers" with the following caption:

"Late in the war, when manpower was depleted and recruitment was more difficult, younger and younger boys were enlisted. It was not uncommon for **boys just entering their teens** to be recruited or drafted. Some boys as young as ten years of age were given arms and uniforms. Some of these young soldiers were referred to as "carbine soldiers" because they were shorter than the rifles they carried."

2.) "Laotian General Said to Ask for Reinforcements," **The New York Times** (February 11, 1971), pg. 19:

"General Vang Pao's tribal units are weary from years of fighting, and casualties have been replaced with recruits that knowledgeable sources say are 13 to 15 years of age."

3.) Henry Kamm, "War in Laos Imperils the Survival of Meo Tribes," **The New York Times** (March 16, 1971), pg. 1:

"General Vang Pao's army, after a stepped up recruiting effort, numbers more than 10,000...The number of 12-year-old and 13 year-old fighting men in the general's forces

appear even higher than among regular Laotian units. Although there is no draft, youngsters are impressed under clan and family pressure.”

III. INVOLVEMENT IN OPIUM TRAFFICKING BY SECRET ARMY:

There are several sources that allege that the Secret Army's command was involved in the Laos's opium traffic, particularly in the transport of opium out of Hmong villages on the CIA's airline Air America. In 1988, the award-winning PBS news program "Frontline" broadcast interviews with former CIA field operative Tony Poe, former Agency official Victor Marchetti, and chief counsel for The Select Committee on Narcotics, US House of Representatives charging that Vang Pao had been involved in the Laos heroin traffic.

1.) "Frontline," Program #613, "Guns Drugs and the CIA" (17 May 1988), **Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) Television.**

"NARRATOR

Until now, Tony Poe has never talked publicly about the Laos operation. He saw it from beginning to end. one of Vang Pao's early case officers, Poe claims he was transferred from Long Chien because unlike his successors, he refused to tolerate the Meo leader's corruption.

TONY POE, Former CIA Officer

You don't let him run loose without a chain on him. You gotta control him just like any kind of an animal or a baby. You have to control him. Hey! He's the only guy that had a pair of shoes when I first met him--what are you talking about, why does he need Mercedes Benz, apartments and hotels and homes where he never had them in his life before. Why are you going to give it to him?

Frontline:

Plus he was making money on the side with his business?

Tony Poe:

Oh, he was making millions, 'cos he had his own source of, uh, avenue for his own, uh, heroin.

Frontline:

What did he do with the money?

Tony Poe:

What do you mean? U.S. bank accounts, Switzerland, wherever.

Frontline:

Didn't they know, when Vang Pao said 'I want some aircraft', didn't they know what he wanted that for?

Tony Poe:

I'm sure we all knew it, but we tried to monitor it, because we controlled most of the pilots you see. We're giving him freedom of navigation into Thailand, into the bases, and we don't want him to get involved in moving, you know, this illicit traffic--O.K., silver bars and gold,

O.K., but not heroin. What they would do is, they weren't going into Thailand, they were flying it in a big wet wing airplane that could fly for thirteen hours, a DC-3, and all the wings were filled with gas. They fly down to Pakse, then they fly over to Da Nang, and then the number two guy to President Thieu would receive it....

NARRATOR

But in 1972, a U.S. intelligence agent in Southeast Asia sent a secret field report to customs. It suggested a serious conflict of interest: quote--"It was ironic that the CIA should be given the responsibility of narcotics intelligence, particularly since they were supporting the prime movers. Even though the CIA was, in fact, facilitating the movement of opiates to the U.S., they steadfastly hid behind the shield of secrecy and said that all was done in the interest of national security." End quote.

VICTOR MARCHETTI [former CIA official]

I doubt that they had any strong deep understanding of what they were allowing to happen by turning their head the other way and letting Vang Pao ship his dope out which was made into heroin which was going to our troops, which was corrupting people throughout Southeast Asia and back here, the effect it had on crime, I doubt that any one of them really thought in those terms at the time....

NARRATOR

As a former chief counsel for the House Select Committee on Narcotics, Joe Nellis did indeed have access to the records.

Joe Nellis:

Vang Pao had a heavy hand in the production of heroin in that area.

Frontline:

How much of the money that was going to pay these thousands and thousands of tribesmen to fight for us, for the CIA. Where was that money coming from?

Joe Nellis:

From the trade.

Frontline:

From the opium trade?

Joe Nellis:

Yes surely.

Frontline:

How would that work?

Joe Nellis:

Well, money would be paid for the transportation, and the safe arrival of the merchandise to its proper destination, and that money would be paid to the carrier, the person transporting the merchandise and that money would be used to pay off the farmers. But as I told you, they got so little of it that there was an enormous amount left over, and it was that money was

used to feed to the peasants in order to get them to continue not only fighting for us but also continuing to give us very important intelligence about the movement of the North Vietnamese...

Joe Nellis:

I have never revealed any classified information that I obtained when I was with the committee and I'm not going to start now, but I do know that that was verified.

Frontline:

That it was known here?

Joe Nellis:

Yes.

Frontline:

Well, without getting into classified information, was that at a high level or a low level?

Joe Nellis:

Well, I can't discuss the level. Let's put it this way; you're familiar with the Iran-Contra business.

Frontline:

Yes.

Joe Nellis:

That was known at a very high level, it was known at all sorts of levels really--it's amazing that they could keep it secret as long as they did, and I guess that was the situation with Air America. People in CIA certainly knew it, and at that time Dick Helms I think was the head of the office, and I'm sure he must have reported it to Nixon."

2.) Jonathan Mirsky, "Heroin, Laos, & The CIA," **The New York Review of Books** (16 August 1990).

"From his conversation with me, at his request, in Washington in 1981, [ex CIA Director] Colby knows that one of his ex-agents told me at length about the heroin trade in Laos. The agent, who had lived with Vang Pao for several years, told me that "the general" stored a great quantity of opium under his house, as "insurance" in case the CIA abandoned him, and that he, the ex-agent, had seen opium put on Air America planes. Within a few days, however, and at Colby's insistence, he added that the pilots did not know what they were carrying. Colby spoke highly of this ex-agent, and did not dispute what he had told me. He simply underlined that none of these activities were CIA policy. I accepted that there was probably no document likely to be seen by a Senate oversight committee which would stipulate CIA cooperation in the drug traffic."

3.) Keith Quincy, **Harvesting Pa Chay's Wheat: The Hmong & America's Secret War in Laos** (Spokane: Eastern Washington University Press, 2000) [extract available at <http://members.aol.com/hmongstudies/HSJv3_Quincy.html>; last accessed, 4 May 2007]

[113] Vang Pao's airline, Xieng Khouang Air Transport, delivered hundreds of tons of merchandise to villages throughout the region every month. Vang Pao was a major retailer of these goods, employing a staff of Hmong salesmen to peddle items door-to-door in the larger villages. {58} He was also into banking, handling deposits and money exchanges at the Long Cheng Bank, the only Hmong-owned financial institution in Laos.

[114] And then there were narcotics. Vang Pao had mixed feelings about opium. He preached against the evils of addiction, but was pragmatic with addicts; occasionally he airdropped opium to troops in the field so addicted soldiers involved in a prolonged campaign would not suffer withdrawal and impede the effectiveness of their unit. Nor did he have any reservations about trafficking in the drug if it advanced his ends.

[115] Vang Pao first became involved in the opium trade in 1963. Desperate for more soldiers but strapped for the cash to add them to his pay roster, he used military helicopters to collect opium from mountain villages and delivered the narcotics to merchants in central Vietnam where opium fetched top dollar. Most of the money from the sales went for soldiers' salaries, though Tony Poe later claimed Vang Pao grew rich from narcotics trafficking.

[116] Vang Pao greatly expanded his involvement in narcotics once the war heated up after 1965. The intense fighting kept opium merchants out of the highlands. In village after village, opium harvests moldered in sheds instead of reaching the market. Rather than let the fruit of their labor rot in burlap sacks, Hmong farmers in communist-held territory north of the Plain of Jars began selling their harvest to the Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese. Profits from these deals purchased weapons to kill Hmong soldiers. To deny the opium to the communists and to reap the profits for himself, Vang Pao arranged for the CIA to begin transporting opium from the highlands to Vientiane, Saigon, and Bangkok.

[117] To undermine Vang Pao's narcotics operation, Moscow sent Hanoi fifteen tons of silver, plus 3.5 million feet of black, green, and red cloth much prized by the Hmong, to trade for Hmong opium before Vang Pao could get his hands on it. The plan might have worked had the North Vietnamese not botched the operation. To be negotiable the silver had to be recast into ingots the size of candy bars used by the Hmong in business transactions. The task seemed beyond Hanoi's ability and very little of the silver entered the Hmong highlands.

[118] With no serious economic competition from the communists, Vang Pao was able to expand his opium collection network to accommodate nearly all of the Hmong opium grown in Laos, much of it transported by his own private airline, Xieng Khouang Air Transport, launched in 1967 and subsidized with CIA funds. Thousands of Hmong villages in opium growing areas became dependent on him for their cash income, an economic fact of life that made them reluctant to deny his requests for military volunteers to flesh out his growing army.

[119] The money from narcotics, skimmed soldiers' pay, and various business enterprises went mostly to subsidize the political patronage that guaranteed the fidelity of clan leaders. To purchase the loyalty of ordinary Hmong, Vang Pao used refugee relief. At its height, refugee aid funded by the U.S. created jobs, provided services, and distributed food and clothing to more than half of the Hmong in Laos. The principal force behind refugee aid was USAID. With CIA funds the organization established schools, delivered food, clothing, medicine, and created agricultural projects for Hmong displaced by the war.

IV. FUND-RAISING & CORRUPTION BY LEADERS ASSOCIATED WITH VANG PAO:

Since the late 1980s, there have been reports in the national and regional press that organizations associated with General Vang Pao have engaged in fund-raising activities, some questionable, among Hmong refugees in the United States.

1.) Ruth E. Hammond, “The Great Refugee Shakedown: The Hmong Are Paying to Free Laos—But What’s Happening to the Money?” **The Washington Post** (April 16, 1989), page B-1.

“Since 1981, when the United Lao National Liberation Front, or *Neo Hom*, was founded in the United States by exiled Laotian military leaders, a substantial number of Hmong families here say they have paid \$100 down plus \$10 a month into that organization’s coffers. The funds, they’ve been told, sustain resistance against the communist Lao People’s Democratic Republic. The president of the Neo Hom in the United States, Hmong Maj. Gen. Vang Pao, travels periodically to Hmong resettlement communities here and abroad to promise imminent victory and to appeal for funds....

“A member of one of the smaller Hmong clans, who requested anonymity, said that in the mid-1980s, 20 families of his clan in Minnesota donated \$20,000 in cash to support the Hmong resistance. He says that in 1986, his brother, who had personally donated nearly \$10,000, accepted Vang Pao’s offer of a resistance job in Thailand. He found no evidence that the promised supplies had been purchased, and Neo Hom leaders told him that ‘almost none’ of the money collected in the United States had ever reached the resistance.”

2.) Seth Mydans, “California Says Laos Refugee Group Has Been Extorted by Its Leadership,” **The New York Times** (November 2, 1990).

“For years, some members of the most primitive refugee group in America, the Hmong, have complained, mostly in whispers, that the anti-Communist leader who fled here with them from the remote mountains of Laos has been extorting money from them.

“Now the California Department of Social Services has given substance to those grievances, charging that Gen. Vang Pao’s resistance organization has demanded contributions from Hmong refugees in return for welfare assistance through a state-financed social service group he controls.

“The department, completing an 18-month investigation, recommended last month that country welfare offices cancel their contracts with the social services organization, the Lao Family Community.

“Kao Thao, a leader of the resistance group, the United Lao National Liberation Front, has been arrested and has pleaded guilty to two counts of embezzlement and misappropriation of funds....

“‘It’s sad to see Hmong ripping off Hmong,’ said one refugee who spoke on the condition that his name not be used. ‘I’m concerned about corruption with the Lao Family Community. It’s not run by the people who are appointed to run it. It’s run by corrupt political officers.’”

3.) Sean Madigan, Tom Hamburger, and Rob Hotakainen, “Deal on Hmong vets bill reached,” **Star Tribune** (Minneapolis, MN: May 19, 2000), page A-1.

“Washington, DC—Congress moved closer Thursday to approving a bill that would make it easier for Hmong veterans to become citizens after negotiations dropped a controversial veterans organization from the legislation.

“The change was made at the request of Sen. Rod Grams, R-Minn., who said it would have set a bad precedent to name an advocacy group such as the Lao Veterans of America in the legislation.

“That change was welcomed by many academicians and former military leaders. They worried that the Lao Veterans, based in Fresno, Calif., was an inappropriate group to be named in a citizenship bill.

“‘I can’t believe that anyone would have let them slide [that] in this bill,’ said retired Air Force Brig. Gen. Harry Aderholt, who directed U.S. forces in the Secret War.

“In an interview, Aderholt said the Lao Veterans represented just one faction of the deeply split U.S. Hmong population and warned that it would be a mistake to give them a role in deciding who gets citizenship benefits....

“‘The Lao Veterans of America are quite prejudiced,’ Aderholt said of the group’s attitude toward other Hmong veterans who aren’t affiliated with the organization.

“In addition, Aderholt and others expressed concern that the Lao Veterans’ strong association with Hmong Gen. Vang Pao would be a detriment. Vang Pao is honorary co-chairman of the group and is widely recognized in the Hmong community as the organization’s unofficial leader....”

“The change came after Hmong scholar Yang Dao a former instructor at the University of Minnesota, wrote to members of the Judiciary Committee on Wednesday, urging the Senate not to name any one group.

“The letter warned that ‘allowing only a single group of Laotian veterans to certify the citizenship status would jeopardize the process of naturalization by promoting corruption, fraud, distortion, and injustice.’ It did not mention the Lao Veterans by name....”

4.) Tony Kennedy and Paul McEnroe, “Reality gets in the way of loyalty to general,” **Star Tribune** (Minneapolis, MN), 3 July 2005.

This investigative report describes allegations of financial fraud by General Vang Pao’s Hmong welfare organization called *Neo Hom*:

“To help Hmong refugees navigate America’s social service agencies, Vang Pao founded Lao Family and Community, Inc., a California nonprofit. It eventually branched out to Minnesota, Wisconsin, and elsewhere...

“In 1990, the California authorities began investigation charges that refugees were shaken down for contributions to Neo Hom as a condition of receiving social services. Kao Thao--Vang Pao’s son-in-law and then-executive director of the California Lao Family--was charged with misappropriating public monies, embezzlement and grand theft.

“Kao Thao eventually pleaded guilty to embezzling more than \$70,000 from the agency.”

5.) Joshua Kurlantzick, “Hmong Friends: The warlord of St. Paul, Minnesota,” **The New Republic** (Washington, DC), 5 February 2007, pg. 14.

“Going house to house in Hmong neighborhoods Vang Pao’s men would ask for small contributions, always in cash. ‘We’d even get money, five bucks, ten bucks, from the

poorest old women on welfare,' says Tou Long Lo, Vang Pao's former son-in-law. 'We'd threaten them...People knew that, in Laos, Vang Pao had killed, so threats worked.' In exchange for the money, donors would receive certificates promising them positions in a future Lao government....

"Along with anger at Vang Pao's détente, leading members of the community...began openly questioning his fund-raising operation. Vang Pao's son, Cha Vang, had been pushing out the general's old advisers while apparently taking funds for himself. (In 2005, the Minnesota attorney general sued a nonprofit run by Cha Vang for breaking operating laws, and taking donations for what may have been personal use. Cha Vang settled, but not before it emerged that he had spent some of the money at a massive jewelry store in Bangkok.)

"Several groups split from Vang Pao. These enemies remained in the shadows, but Hmong experts point to followers of another Hmong resistance leader named Pa Kao Her, who was mysteriously assassinated in Thailand in 2002. (His killer was never caught.) After Pa Kao Her's death, some of his followers claimed Vang Pao had abandoned their cause, and they lashed out at him....

"The next year, this stew of ancient animosity and modern grievances exploded. At a rally in early April 2004, in front of the St. Paul office of U.S. Representative Betty McCollum, pro- and anti-Vang Pao factions attacked one another. One woman was beaten to the ground with the sign she was holding."

6.) Sao Sue Jurewitsch, "Vang Pao Foundation Agrees To Close In Court Settlement: Cha Vang and Lia Vang Admit To Violations But Have No Answers On Missing Money," **Hmong Times** (St. Paul, MN, 16 October 2005) [available on line at <http://www.hmongtimes.com/main.asp?Search=1&ArticleID=259&SectionID=31&SubSectionID=190&S=1>; last accessed, 4 May 2007]

"In a settlement to a civil suit brought by Minnesota Attorney General Mike Hatch against the Vang Pao Foundation, a purported charity run by Cha Vang and Lia Vang, an agreement was made to cease operations and close the doors within ninety days. In the agreement, Cha Vang and Lia Vang, the foundation's only officers, admitted to violating Minnesota laws governing charities by not having a valid board of directors; not keeping adequate records and books; not filing with the Attorney General's office as a charity; and not having a valid address for the foundation's headquarters.

The settlement also bans both Cha Vang and Lia Vang for life from being involved in any kind of charitable organization or handling donations of any kind in the State of Minnesota. Cha Vang also agreed to pay \$32,375.00 in restitution to a couple that had donated the money for a low-income housing project that never materialized.

The settlements brings to an end the law suit filed by the Attorney General's Office on April 19th, 2005 to force the foundation to hand over its books and account for over \$500,000 in donations it received. This does not necessarily mean that Cha and Lia Vang's legal troubles are over. Leslie Sandberg from the Attorney General's Office told the **HMONG TIMES** that the case files were forwarded to both Ramsey County and Federal prosecutors, who could still file criminal charges against the defendants....

Cha Vang, who was the only signatory on the foundation's bank accounts could not account for the more than \$500,000 in donations the foundation collected since its founding in 2000, but the preliminary investigation by the Attorney General's office showed that he spent large amounts of foundation money on travel, hotel bills, and jewelry."