

SGU Veteran Benefits

Between 1961 and 1973, the CIA covertly directed a Hmong paramilitary force in Laos, engaging approximately 70,000 North Vietnamese soldiers who might otherwise have fought American and South Vietnamese forces. Despite this critical service, the Hmong fighters do not meet the VA's definition of "veteran," and are denied benefits. Congress should officially recognize SGU fighters as Veterans of the United States, and the Department of Defense should recognize service in support of the U.S. Military under the direction of the CIA as qualifying "active service."



*Hmong SGU
Fighters in the
Vietnam Conflict*



FEBRUARY 21-24

Tulare County has submitted these policy changes to the National Association of Counties for consideration and adoption into their national legislative platform.

Request

- Recognize those naturalized under Section 2(1)(B) of the Hmong Veterans Naturalization Act of 2000 as Veterans of the United States of America.
- Allow CIA contracted groups to **apply** for eligibility for consideration under P.L. 95-202 and 32 C.F.R. for a determination of Active-Duty service.





PROPOSED RESOLUTION

Expanding Veteran Benefit Eligibility

1 **Issue:** Naturalized citizens who fought in foreign wars under the direction of the CIA
2 do not qualify for Veteran's benefits despite their service, and subsequent allegiance, to
3 the United States of America.

4 **Proposed Policy:** NACo urges the current Congress to recognize those
5 naturalized under Section 2 (1)(B) of the Hmong Veterans' Naturalization Act of 2000
6 who served under the direction of the CIA in a documented special guerrilla unit, as
7 Veteran's of the United States of America, granting them full access to Veterans
8 benefits and acknowledging their service and sacrifice for the Nation.

9 NACo similarly urges the current Administration to allow CIA contracted groups to apply
10 for eligibility for consideration under P.L. 95-202 and 32 C.F.R. for a determination of
11 Active-Duty service. 32 C.F.R. § 47.4(b) should be amended to read:

12 "A determination of [active duty] service that is considered to be equivalent to active
13 military service is made on the extent to which the group was under the control of the
14 U.S. Armed Forces and/or the Central Intelligence Agency in a military operation or
15 mission during an armed conflict."

16 Upon implementation of these changes, if the CMSRB issues a favorable decision and the
17 Secretary of the Air Force authorizes it, the VA will have the authority to amend 38 C.F.R
18 § 3.7(x) to include the approved group(s).

19 **Background:** Between 1961 and 1973, the CIA covertly directed a Hmong
20 paramilitary force in Laos, which served in place of U.S. troops, containing
21 communist forces and engaging approximately 70,000 North Vietnamese soldiers
22 who might otherwise have fought American and South Vietnamese forces. Despite
23 this critical service, the Hmong fighters do not meet the VA's current definition of
24 "veteran," as they were under CIA rather than U.S. Armed Forces command, and
25 thus have been denied access to VA benefits. To rectify this longstanding oversight,
26 Congress should officially recognize SGU fighters as Veterans of the United States, and
27 the Department of Defense should amend its criteria to recognize service in support of the
28 United States Military under the direction of the CIA as qualifying "active service."

29 **Fiscal/Urban/Rural Impact:** Expanding veteran benefits to SGU fighters would
30 strengthen county-level health and social systems by connecting more veterans to high
31 quality VA care, mental health services, and housing supports that promote long-term
32 stability. These benefits complement local efforts by providing specialized services and
33 coordinated care that enhance, rather than replace, county programs. VA's Whole Health
34 model and wrap-around supports—such as VASH housing, employment services, and
35 behavioral health treatment—address key social determinants of health that counties
36 strive to improve. Expanding eligibility ultimately helps counties better support those
37 who served by strengthening the safety net for veterans and their families.

38 **Sponsor:** County of Tulare

