

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today. My name is Ya Lee. I was one of the 37 Hmong pilots trained by the United States Air Force with the full support of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency during the Secret War in Laos. We flew the T-28D Trojan, a World War II-era fighter planes, conducting numerous bombing missions as part of the Hmong Special Guerrilla Units to combat the Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese forces.

Unfortunately, many of my fellow pilots are no longer with us. Most were shot down during the war, while others now struggle with serious health issues, Today, only ten of us remain.

I stand before you today, wearing my 1972 flying suit which I brought with me from Laos. On my right you can see the emblem of "Det One, 56th Special Operation wing, an American unite stationed in Udorn, Thailand. I also brought photograph of my American instructor Pilot and me, my U.S. Air Force flying certificate which signed by a U.S. Air Force LT. Colonel John Alderson, and a certificate of recognition personally signed and presented to me by U.S. Air Force Chief of Staff General Norton Schwartz from Pentagon, Washington D.C., and Hmong pilots also have history in The National Museum of the U.S. Air Force, at Dayton, Ohio.

I am here to testify in strong support of Senate file # 568, a bill that seek to formally recognize the services and sacrifices of Hmong veterans who fought as proxy soldiers for the United States during the Secret war in Laos.

The Hmong people paid a heavy price for our role in supporting U.S. military operations in Southeast Asia. Thousand s of Hmong men and boys took up arms alongside American forces. Over 30,000 Hmong soldiers perished during the war, and another 50,000 lost their lives in the aftermath.

Despite our vital contributions, WE, Hmong veterans have never been granted the full recognition we deserve.

When the U.S. withdrew from Southeast Asia, the communist forces hunted us down because of our loyalty to America.

We carried the scars of battle and the burden of being forgotten.

Today, you have the opportunity to change that. Passing this bill is not just symbolic act; it is a profound acknowledgement of our place in U.S. history. It sends a clear message that those who fight for this nation will never be overlooked. Recognizing Hmong veterans is a crucial step toward justice and meaningful way to educate future generations about the sacrifices made to secure our nation's freedom.

I urge you to support this measure and stand with us in honoring the Hmong SGU veterans who gave so much for this country

Please STAND by us who are your friends.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Lt. Ya Lee