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By: Sia Lo, Lo & Associates Law Offices

Grave Desecration Update

On July 12, 2008 the National Hmong Grave Desecration Committee sent a third delegation to Thailand to meet with the Thai government to bring closure to the Hmong grave desecration issue. The delegation includes nine members of the Committee to Thailand. They are the Committee's Chairman Ser Lee of Minnesota; Vice Co-chairmen Vang Xiong of Washington; Treasurer Xai Khue Khang of North Carolina; Political Officer Michael Yang; Legal Adviser Sia Lo; Thai expert Souwan Thao; cultural experts Neng Txoua Xiong of Wisconsin and Nao Lue Moua of South Carolina; and Lt. Fong Lo, Chairman of the Hmong-American Veterans.

From 1961 to 1975, the Hmong gave their lives to stop Communist expansion into Thailand and the rest of Southeast Asia. During this war period the Hmong took the highest of casualties defending freedom and democracy in Laos. More than 35,000 lives were lost, which accounted to almost a third of the Hmong men's population.

After the war in Laos ended in 1975 the Hmong resettled temporarily at Wat Tham Krabok, seeking political asylum. Since then, Thailand has been the safe haven for more than 100,000 Hmong, from where many have immigrated into other countries.

The United States helped to resettle approximately 15,000 Hmong from Wat Tham Krabok in June 2004. Later that year the digging of approximately 900 Hmong graves began. This violated the cultural and religious practices of the Hmong people.

Since 2005 the Committee has been working with the parties involved for a peaceful resolution. The Committee has chapters throughout the United States that are represented by Hmong cultural experts, leaders and professionals.

In 2007, the Committee sent a delegation to investigate the depth of the issue. They found that the revered abbot of the wat, Luang Poh Charoen Parnchand, had commissioned the Phothi Phaowana Songkhroa Foundation and the Buddha Dhamma 31 Nakhon Ratchasima Foundation to exhume these graves. Parnchand passed away early this year. The Committee was able to recover 211 remaining bodies and 480 bodies which were cremated.

After the second delegation to Thailand in late 2007, and with continuous effort to work with the Thai Government, all involved parties have opened the opportunity for the Committee to send a third delegation to pay condolences to the late abbot as well as meet with government authorities to best resolve this issue and bring back the remaining bodies to the wat. The Committee is also expected to be introduced to the new abbot of the wat, Phra Ajahn Boonsong Tanajaro.

The Committee is working with full compliance from the State Department, with the US Embassy of Thailand and with Sen. Norm Coleman's office. The Committee has every reason to believe the Thai government will continue cooperate with bringing closure to the family members who are still spiritually bothered and ill from this desecration.

For more information about this issue, visit www.hmongjustice.350.com or email hmongjustice@gmail.com.