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Mayor Coleman Announces Grave Desecration Reconciliation Working Group

(Saint Paul) - Saint Paul Mayor Chris Coleman today announced the creation of the Grave Desecration Reconciliation Working Group. The charge of the Reconciliation Working Group is to work with the Hmong community and recommend an appropriate action plan regarding the remaining 211 bodies exhumed from Wat Tham Krabok, Saraburi, Thailand.

"Grave desecration in Thailand has caused great pain and suffering for hundreds of Saint Paul families. I welcome the opportunity Ambassador Ralph L. Boyce has extended to my office to work cooperatively to resolve this issue. We will take advantage of this opportunity to look for a solution that will bring peace and reconciliation to those who have been deeply affected," said Mayor Coleman.

In October of 2005, more than 900 Hmong graves were dug up, the corpses dismembered and taken from Wat Tham Krabok after most of the Hmong refugees there had been relocated to the United States. The U.S. Ambassador to Thailand, Ralph L. Boyce, has communicated to Mayor Coleman several possible solutions to recovering the 211 bodies. Though Ambassador Boyce has indicated that there are significant challenges to bringing the bodies to the United States, the Reconciliation Working Group will look at all options to determine the most appropriate and feasible solution.

Of the 900 bodies exhumed, 211 have been located and remain in local Thai custody. The Grave Desecration Reconciliation Working Group will also work collaboratively with members of the Minnesota Congressional Delegation and the State Department to expedite the recommended action plan.

Members of Mayor Coleman's Grave Desecration Reconciliation Group:

The Hmong Grave Desecration Committee
Barbara Frey, Human Rights Program, U of MN
Bill Means, International Indian Treaty Council
State Senator Mee Moua
State Representative Cy Thao
La Thao, affected family member
Va-Megn Thoj, Office of Mayor Chris Coleman