



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

JAN 23 2006

Dear Mr. Sabo:

Thank you for your December 16, 2005 regarding the exhumation and disinterment of a number of Hmong graves from a temple in Thailand.

As you noted in your letter, the graves being moved were not located on an approved cemetery site, and local Hmong leaders were given between four and five months notice of the need to relocate the graves. We also understand, as you do, that the move is required because the burial site may be contaminating the local water supply, and the local temple wishes to develop the land.

Regarding the method of exhumation and reinterment, our understanding is that these have been conducted in accordance with local Thai customs. Temple authorities at Wat Tham Krabok indicated to U.S. Embassy officials that the family members were given the opportunity to make alternative arrangements to move the graves of their loved ones, if they desired.

We understand the sensitivities of this particular issue. We have discussed this matter with Thai authorities, who are aware of the situation and of the concerns of the Hmong. Our Embassy in Bangkok will contact additional Thai officials to ensure they also understand the Hmong concerns about appropriate funeral rites and rituals. We will continue to monitor the situation.

We hope this information has been useful. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeffrey T. Bergner". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Jeffrey T. Bergner
Assistant Secretary
Legislative Affairs

The Honorable
Martin Olav Sabo,
House of Representatives.