

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 16, 2005

The Honorable Condoleezza Rice  
Secretary of State  
2201 C Street N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Rice:

We write to inquire about reports of Hmong grave desecration near the Wat Tham Krabok in Thailand. Many of our Hmong constituents have come to us with their concerns about the disrespectful exhumation of their relatives' graves.

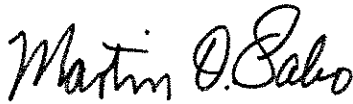
It is our understanding that the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok has met with Thai government officials, who said that Hmong leaders at the Wat refugee camp were given notice that the graves would be moved because the land was needed for development and health concerns arising from water contamination. Unfortunately, many Hmong residents of our states were not aware of plans to move the graves of their deceased relatives.

We do not dispute the authority of the Thai local or national governments to make land use decisions. However, we are deeply troubled by a disturbing video showing the appalling treatment of exhumed bodies, which is purported to have taken place at the Wat Tham Krabok gravesite. The images belie reports by the Thai government that the dead are being treated with respect. This footage has been circulated within our Hmong communities and we have enclosed the video for your review.

Furthermore, it is our understanding that some bodies will be cremated before being interred in a nearby cemetery. Because cremation is not practiced in the Hmong culture, our constituents oppose this plan.

We urge you to examine this material and continue to press Thai officials to take immediate action to ensure that the graves are being handled with proper respect for Hmong funeral rites and rituals.

Sincerely,



Martin Olav Sabo  
Member of Congress



Herb Kohl  
U.S. Senate



Betty McCollum  
Member of Congress



Russ Feingold  
U.S. Senate

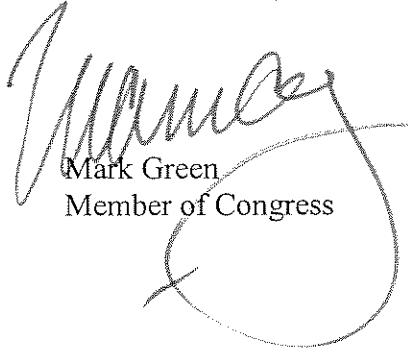
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Ron Kind  
Member of Congress



Mark Dayton  
U.S. Senate



Mark Green  
Member of Congress



Norm Coleman  
U.S. Senate