

A Senate resolution

recognizing Colonel Bounhom Phithaksounthon for his service in the Secret War in Laos during the Vietnam War, from 1961 through 1975.

**WHEREAS**, in 1961, President John F. Kennedy authorized the dispatch of 300 U.S. military advisors to Laos. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of the United States began recruiting and training the Lao and Hmong highlanders as the Special Guerrilla Unit (SGU) to support America during the Vietnam War; and

**WHEREAS**, in 1963, President Kennedy and King Savang Vatthana of Laos met at the White House, regarding the conflicts, to initiate discussions on strategies to contain the threats spreading throughout Southeast Asia; and

**WHEREAS**, led by the prominent Hmong Leader General Vang Pao of the Royal Lao Army, who was also appointed by King Savang Vatthana, the allied fighters and SGU became best known for their heroic valor in intercepting enemy supply lines and rescuing American pilots; and

**WHEREAS**, Hmong and Lao SGU were armed and fought valiantly in the Secret War, enduring over 35,000 killed or missing in action, with several thousand more veterans and their families perishing in Laos or fleeing across the Mekong River, to Thailand; and

**WHEREAS**, when America withdrew from Southeast Asia, the allied forces and their families were driven out by the new Communist regime and were dispersed to many different Western countries, creating a diaspora of Hmong and Lao people, with a current population of 80,000 in Minnesota; and

**WHEREAS**, today, we celebrate a momentous milestone with the unveiling of the Minnesota Memorial to Special Forces in Laos on the Minnesota Capitol Mall Monuments grounds, as a symbol of the journey the Hmong and Lao have made, as well as the service, sacrifice, and contributions leaders, such as Colonel Bounhom Phithaksounthon, have made to our community, state, and nation; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Senate of the State of Minnesota that Colonel Bounhom Phithaksounthon is recognized for his service and valor in the Secret War in Laos during the Vietnam War, on behalf of the United States of America.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Secretary of the Senate is directed to prepare an enrolled copy of this resolution, to be authenticated by the Secretary's signature and that of the Chair of the Senate Rules and Administration Committee, and transmit it to Colonel Bounhom Phithaksounthon.

JoAnne M. Zoff  
Secretary of the Senate

Thomas M. Bakk  
Chair, Senate Committee on  
Rules and Administration

Foung Hawj  
State Senator, District 67