

November 22, 1978

Mr. Barry Lando
CBS News
37 Rue Marbeuf
Paris, France

Dear Barry,

Pursuant to our telephone conversations of today, I enclose (1) a copy of the Washington Post story of September 17, and (2) a copy of the original draft. I suggest you read carefully the Post story first for the general thrust. It also includes biographical data on me. Then read the original draft, because it has more detail. I rewrote it for the Post, and I believe the Post story is a tighter piece of work, but there are some additional angles in the draft which would be worth going into after you have read the final version. You will see the photo of Nhia Kao Yang and his family, which will give you some idea of how photogenic many of these refugees are.

The main angle of the story might be: What has happened to our former allies, the so-called CIA "secret army." When you have read the article, you will see that picture. Side angles could be: What is going on in Laos, i.e. something approaching genocide of the hill tribes at the hands of the Vietnamese army in Laos. Also, some human interest in the case of Tony Poe, a legendary US soldier of fortune (Iwo Jima marines, getting the Dalai Lama out of Tibet, long association with the Hmong (Meos) in Laos etc.) Poe is now married to a local girl and raises tapioca on a plantation miles into the bush country of Northeast Thailand. With luck, film could be shot of newly arrived refugees at the bank of the Mekong.

If you decide to do the story, I suggest that I go to Bangkok about a week ahead of you to line up contacts. At your end you will presumably have to get visas for your crew, at which time you would indicate your interest in doing a story on the refugee problem in Thailand. As you know, there are Vietnamese "boat people," Cambodians, and people from Laos among whom are the Meos. I would suggest you indicate only a general interest, with specific plans to be developed on arrival in Thailand. I would guess they will give you the names of Thai officials to contact in Bangkok etc. Once in Thailand, however, I would expect to have the track well broken so that while, perhaps, some team members are contacting the Thai bureaucracy, a cameraman and interviewer would in fact be brought into the camp very informally and without fanfare to do some key interviews which I could have already laid on.

Since I have done all this already in preparing my article, and particularly because I am personally on an inside track with key US officials in Bangkok and Udorn whom I used to know when I was with ARB in Southeast Asia, I am quite sure I could be of enormous help to your team. All I would want would be air fare out to Bangkok and return, plus whatever daily stipend you customarily pay consultants, so that I would not end up out of pocket.

After you have read both versions of the article, please let me have your reactions. The article was also run, in somewhat shorter version, in the Paris Herald Tribune of, I believe, Sept. 25.