

CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY ANALYSIS

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Indigenous Peoples Preservation Project *"Human Rights For ALL Peoples"*

June 22, 1994

The Honorable Ben Gilman, Vice Chairman
Foreign Affairs Committee
U.S. Congress
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Gilman:

Recently, I received a copy of the draft document allegedly written by Mr. Frank Proschan that is being circulated to key Members of Congress about Dr. Jane Hamilton-Merritt in an apparent attempt to discredit her and her book Tragic Mountains.

The draft document—aside from oozing academic arrogance in quite a number of places—leaves out major pieces of information including the endorsement of her book by former CIA director Bill Colby and its widespread endorsement by combat veterans in the Hmong, Air America and Ravens community.

Sadly, the real victim of this apparent character attack by Mr. Proschan will probably be the Hmong refugees at Ban Napho camp and Wat Tham Krabok in Thailand. As you may know, despite your important efforts at the April 26th hearing of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Asia, regarding Indochinese refugees, the U.S. Department of State and the Royal Thai government have not agreed to allow any of the thousands of legal Hmong refugees in Ban Napho camp—including the Vue clan—to leave the camp for resettlement in third countries. They will, therefore, it seems, be all sent back to Laos even though many were closely associated with the CIA secret war in Laos and the current Hmong resistance.

Like Rwanda and its tribal/ethnic divisions, the current implementation of the Luang Prabang Tripartite policy may be a recipe for disaster and genocide.

Dr. Jane Hamilton-Merritt and some of her book may be "politically incorrect" to some in the mainstream Indochina policy establishment entrenched in academe, the State Department and the NGO community. Attacks against her character and her work detract from the real issue at hand—the lives and long term security of the Hmong refugees in Ban Napho camp and at Wat Tham Krabok as well as the policy implementation failure of the Luang Prabang Tripartite Agreement. Time is running out for these Hmong refugees—and the assurances that proper monitoring has been done by the authorities in Laos does not seem to be completely true.

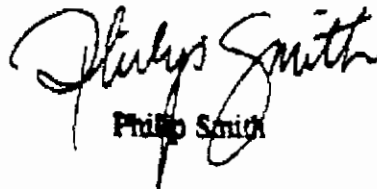
Elements of the Thai military recently forcibly repatriated 25,000 Cambodian refugees. By the looks of the current Hmong refugee crisis, a similar situation may face the Hmong at Wat Tham Krabok—who some say are closely associated with the Hmong resistance (and, therefore, it would seem, at greater risk of retribution if they are returned to Laos).

At a recent NGO conference I attended on Southeast Asia, Mr. Prochan seemed to be on extremely close terms with high ranking Pathet Lao officials in attendance as well as other individuals intimately associated—or economically associated—with the present Lao regime. Perhaps this is why the document attributed to him that you recently received refers (on page #3) to Hmong veterans and resistance fighters—like the ones you met during the Vietnam war—as "Lao resistance terrorists."

Your continued efforts—and those of Dr. Jane Hamilton-Merritt's—are crucial in order to save the lives of these "Lao resistance terrorists" and their families that sacrificed so much for the United States during the Vietnam war and its aftermath.

Thank you for your efforts—and the crucial efforts of your exceptional staffer Paul Berkowitz—on behalf of the Hmong people at Ban Napho and Wat Tham Krabok.

Sincerely,


Philip Smith

cc: Members of Congress