

Brig. Gen. Torrence Saxe

Commissioner & Adjutant General

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**Department of Military
and Veterans Affairs**

Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska

STATE OF ALASKA

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State Office of Veterans Affairs

Alaska provides Veteran Recognition to Hmong and Lao Veterans

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — The State of Alaska’s Department of Motor Vehicles now reflects veterans status on Hmong and Lao Veteran Alaska state ID’s and driver’s licenses for those who served between February 28, 1961 and May 15, 1975. This new status option began May 15.

Those members who served with special guerrilla units or irregular forces, operating from bases in Laos, in support of the U. S. Military and CIA operations need to contact the Office of Veterans Affairs in order to receive the evidence needed to gain this honor on their Alaskan documents.

During the war, Hmong constituted the primary forces that interdicted North Vietnamese supplies on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The enemy resupply route ran through the jungle so heavy that air attacks could not cut through to stop the deadly traffic. Hmong and irregular warriors destroyed thousands of guns and tons of ammunition – guns that could no longer be used to kill American soldiers.

The Hmong and irregular forces rescued downed U.S. Airmen in places deemed too dangerous to send American forces. Hmong radio navigation aid stations were vital to successful air efforts against North Vietnam. Whatever the task, brave Hmong warriors and their families stepped up against the frightening resistance and into extreme danger.

Before the war, there were 300- to 400-thousand Hmong people living in the Laotian Highlands. Approximately 40,000 were recruited by the CIA and the U.S. Forces. The Hmong fighter casualty rate was five times higher than that suffered by U. S. troops, and tens of thousands of Hmong civilians perished during the war as well.

“There is no doubt in my mind the efforts of Hmong warriors helped many return home. On a very deep personal level, I will always be grateful to the Hmong community for what they accomplished on behalf of our nation,” said Verdie Bowen, Director of the State Office of Veterans Affairs. “I welcome and support continuing efforts to secure formal recognition for the important contributions of Hmong Alaskans,” he said.

Those seeking additional help may contact the State office of Veterans Affairs at 907-334-0874, toll free at 888-248-3682, or alaska.veterans@alaska.gov.

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Director Bowen, Lt. Pasert Lee and his wife, Mia pose for a photo as Lee was the first Hmong to have an Alaska veterans driver's license issued. (Courtesy, Alaska State Office of Veterans Affairs)



Hmong Veterans wait in line at a local Alaska Department of Motor Vehicles to receive Alaska Veterans License. (Courtesy, Alaska State Office of Veterans Affairs)