



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Tom Libous

Col. Khamnoon Viengkham

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Award: Honoring Our Veterans

Year: 2013

During the Vietnam War, US Army Special Forces recruited, trained and funded Special Guerilla Units (SGUs) composed of soldiers from The Kingdom of Laos.

The SGUs' primary missions were to rescue US military pilots shot down over Vietnamese and Laotian airspace, to defend US Air Force radar installations and to interdict incursions by North Vietnamese Army units along the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

Col. Viengkham's military expertise, language skills and organizational abilities led him to play a key role in training US military personnel about jungle survival skills and to handle many other medical, intelligence and communications duties.

Thomas D. Poole, former Case Manager in Laos for the US Army's Special Forces, describes Col. Viengkham as his "deputy and advisor" during his tenure in Laos.

With the abandonment of the War, he was forced to change his identity and those of his wife and three toddler sons then clandestinely flee one night to safety across the Mekong River while under fire from hostile forces.

Col. Viengkham and his family eventually settled in Broome County and became proud American citizens. His son Ototo served in the US Navy as a Corpsman and is now a Surgical Technician at Lourdes Hospital, his son Akoko is a Police Officer in the Village of Johnson City, and his son Onino serves his community in the Broome County Public Defender's Office.

Today Col. Viengkham continues his lifetime of service and leadership as the President of the Lao SGU Veterans Chapter in New York State.