

## TEACHING AMERICA'S SECRET WAR IN THE CLASSROOM



In the shadows of the Vietnam War, the CIA conducted a secret war in Laos that relied on Hmong soldiers to prevent the threat of communism from spreading deeper into Southeast Asia. A brand new **collection of resources** based on the **Twin Cities PBS** documentary *America's Secret War* empowers educators to bring this story into their classrooms in fresh and engaging ways.

First-person storytelling, interactive maps, and accessible guides make themes like service, sacrifice, justice, and freedom relevant for all of us. Activities also embrace concepts of the **Humanities Center's** approach to engagement through **absent narratives**- those voices often left out or marginalized- with the goal of helping students engage others with **respect and empathy**.

### **MNVietnam.org/Educator-Resources**



#### **TOOLKIT HIGHLIGHTS:**

- Interactive Story Wall of personal stories
- Collection of short videos
- Activity guides for multiple subjects & levels
- Viewing Guide for full documentary
- Additional Multimedia Resources list

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To access this guide and additional resources to support teaching about America's Secret War, visit [mnvietnam.org/resources/](https://mnvietnam.org/resources/)

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## ABOUT AMERICA'S SECRET WAR



While the United States was publicly engaged in the Vietnam War, a secret conflict was raging just next door in the country of Laos. Under the command of the CIA, a full-blown military operation engulfed Laos, with a select few of the U.S. Armed Forces participating. At Long Tieng, a secret airbase in the heart of Laos, the CIA trained an army of allied guerilla fighters including a large number of the Hmong people (an ethnic group from the mountainous regions of southern China, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand), to assist in destroying enemy supply lines.

The hour-long documentary **AMERICA'S SECRET WAR** uncovers the history of this covert war through the stories of Hmong elders and a rich collection of never-been-seen archival images, maps, and documents, including recently declassified CIA intelligence.

Highly **personal testimonials** from world-renowned diplomat Dr. Yang Dao; Hmong scholars Lee Pao Xiong and Dr. Mai Na M Lee; Special Guerilla Unit soldiers; nurses; and second generation family members paint a vivid portrait of life in Laos during the war.

Their stories also detail the harrowing run for their lives after the fall of Saigon and Cambodia, as members of the enemy organization Pathet Lao hunted them down. Many narrowly escaped to Thai refugee camps by hiding in the jungles, sometimes for months, without food, and crossing the two-mile wide Mekong River in the dead of night on anything that would float. Their journey continued in and out of multiple refugee camps and then to the United States, where a new and unfamiliar life was waiting for them in places like St. Paul, Minnesota and Fresno, California.

The film underscores that the Secret War — unacknowledged by the CIA until 1994 — was and is an integral part of the Vietnam War's history, a history that is still only partly (and only very recently) recognized. Although they are now U.S. citizens, Hmong veterans of the Secret War do not qualify for veterans' medical benefits.

Like a brilliantly colored Hmong Paj Ntaub story cloth tapestry, this documentary illustrates the journey to a new life. It's an invitation to walk in another man's shoes and to **remember**, **honor** and **understand** the Hmong experience.



A Twin Cities PBS Original  
[MNVietnam.org/americas-secret-war](http://MNVietnam.org/americas-secret-war)