United States Secret War in Laos with the Hmong tribe (Vietnam era) – the agreement

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United States Secret War in Laos with the Hmong tribe (Vietnam era) – the agreement

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Introduction

Purpose: The purpose of the project was to learn and understand the agreement between the Hmong tribe of Northern Laos and the United States when the U.S. government recruited the Hmong people to fight the communists in Laos.

Questions:
1. What did the United States promise the Hmong people for their involvement in the Vietnam war?
2. Did the United States promise the Hmong people their own land or country?
3. How did the Hmong interpret the outcome of the agreement with the United States government?
4. Are there any discrepancies from former research sources about the agreement between the Hmong and the United States government?

Procedure:
1. Research was conducted in Minneapolis, Minnesota (high concentration of Hmong immigrants)
2. Interviews:
   - President and Secretary of the Hmong Special Guerilla Units veteran's organization
   - Several Hmong professors from local Minnesota universities
   - Jane Hamilton (Interviewed from Hmong American Youth Organization)
3. Primary and secondary documents found at the Hmong Archives

Background

The War:
An agreement was made between the U.S. government (through the Central Intelligence Agency) and the Hmong tribe. Recruitment began with several hundred and by the end of the war there were over 30,000 Hmong soldiers.

Results from Interviews and Archival research

Question: Why did the United States turn to the Hmong to fight in Laos during the Vietnam War?

Interviewees:
- Pao Pang, former soldier and President of the Special Guerilla Units Veterans Organization
- "The needs of the Americans were to protect the Ho Chi Minh Trail, route 2. "We窗帘ilitate pass through the Ho Chi Minh Trail from North Vietnam to the south."
- Dr. Vang, former cabinet member of the Provisional Government of Laos and professor at the Uo. of Minnesota
- "It was a secret war, congress did not know, it was only the CIA that knew."
- Xang Vang, former soldier and Secretary of Special Guerilla Unit Veterans Office
- "Communism [was] spreading throughout Southeast Asia and it came to North Vietnam. It came to Laos, it came to Cambodia."

Question: What did the United States promise if the Hmong fought for them?

Scholars:
- Dr. Vang, "They [(America)] promised guns and money."
- "They [America] didn't promise "if you fight for me and we win you will have your own country, or if you lose the war we will bring you to America."

Military:
- "It was a secret war, congress did not know, it was only the CIA that knew."

Interviewees (Hmong and U.S. military and political officials) and other primary sources:
- "The [U.S.] just left. They didn't care who couldn't leave or stay. If they could leave then good but if they stayed they were dead."
- "If they [Hmong] couldn't stay but make it to Thailand then they [could] no longer stay in Laos. If they stay they will be dead."
- "They [[(Hmong)] to the united states, they [[(Hmong)] [could] no longer stay in Laos. If they stay they will be dead."
- "They [America] left. They didn't care. They came and then left. It made us lose hope."

Question: Did you feel the United States kept its promises?

Interviewees:
- "They [(United States)] left. We feel we have nothing to rest the war people. America wanted to defend and wash their hands and [go] back home. So we have no brother, no pride."
- "They [(Hmong)] leave [the] United States, they [(Hmong)] leave [the] United States."
- "They [(America)] broke their promise in that they left soldiers and the Hmong in the jungles and mountains to die but afterwards when the United States went to Thailand the Americans helped."

Conclusion

1. From the interviews and primary and secondary sources found at the Hmong Archives, it can be concluded that there is an obvious discrepancy between the scholars and general Hmong population and the U.S. and Hmong military and government officials. From past scholarship, the general Hmong population said that America promised them land. However, according to interviews conducted with Hmong military and political leaders and U.S. officials, the claim was invalid.
2. The U.S. did promise: food, military supplies and money.
3. Despite the discrepancies, many of the interviewees and scholars felt America had a moral obligation to help the Hmong.
4. America became the Hmong's broker. After the U.S. left Southeast Asia, the Hmong's only support and protection was gone. They were left to fight the communist Pathet Lao and Vietnamese troops alone.
5. As a result, the Hmong have been in a state Diaspora. Thousands live in Australia, France, America and Thailand. Now many of the Hmong in Thailand have been deported back to Laos, a government that once was their enemy.