

**ABSTRACT OF DR. YANG DAO'S SPEECH
HOW DID THE HMONG GET INVOLVED
IN THE SECRET WAR OF LAOS (1961-1975)?**

After the Geneva Conference in 1954, Laos became an independent country from French Indochina. However, in 1959-1960, a Lao civil war, between royalists, neutralists and communists, started with interference from great powers such as China, the Soviet Union and the United States of America.

In August 1960, Captain Kong Le, a military officer of the Royal Lao Army, staged a coup d'Etat in Vientiane, the capital of Laos, and proclaimed his political neutrality. This situation led to the attack of General Phoumi Nosavanh's troops, which forced Captain Kong Le's neutralist army to retreat toward the northwestern part of Laos. On December 31, 1960, reinforced with communist support, the neutralist troops forced the Royal Lao Army, under the command of Colonel Kham Hou and Lt. Colonel Vang Pao, to evacuate the Plain of Jars in Xieng Khouang Province. On January 6, 1961, responding to a desperate call for help from Lt. Colonel Vang Pao, General Phoumi Nosavanh sent Colonel Bill Lair, a C.I.A. officer, to meet with the Hmong military leader in Thathom-Thavieng, who promised to be loyal to the Royal Lao Government. In February 1961, General Adaholt, who was an officer of the U.S. Air Force, representatives of the C.I.A., and the Royal Lao Army held a historic meeting with Lt. Colonel Vang Pao in Padong, south of the Plain of Jars. They came out with a military strategic plan to fight against the communist expansion in Lao territory. Thus the Secret War of Laos began. It would end in May 1975 as a consequence of the disaster of the Vietnam War. This presentation explains how the Hmong became involved in the Secret War in Laos, including rectifying some of the mistaken understandings related to this period.