



## McGregor W. Scott

United States Attorney  
Eastern District of California

*Sacramento*  
501 I. Street, Ste 10-100  
Sacramento CA 95814  
Tel (916) 554-2700  
TTY (916) 554-2855

## NEWS RELEASE

*Fresno*  
2500 Tulare St., Suite 4401  
Fresno, CA 93721  
Tel (559) 497-4000  
TTY (559) 497-4500

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**June 14, 2007**

Contact: Rosemary Shaul

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### **INDICTMENT HANDED DOWN IN PLOT TO OVERTHROW THE GOVERNMENT OF LAOS**

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**Hmong insurgency planned to use AK-47 and M16 automatic rifles, Stinger missiles, Claymore mines, anti-tank rockets, C-4 explosives, and other arms and munitions to topple Lao government and reduce government buildings in Vientiane to rubble.**

SACRAMENTO -- United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott, Special Agent in Charge of the San Francisco Field Division of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives Stephen K. Martin, and FBI Special Agent in Charge Drew Parenti announced today that a federal grand jury in Sacramento today issued a five-count indictment against 11 individuals stemming from a thwarted plot to overthrow the government of Laos.

This case was the result of an extensive investigation by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives ("ATF") and the Federal Bureau of Investigation ("FBI"), including the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force.

Indicted today were: Harrison JACK, 60, of Woodland; VANG Pao, 77, of Westminster; Lo Cha THAO, 34, of Clovis; Lo THAO, 53, of Sacramento; Youa True VANG, 60, of Sanger; Hue VANG, 39, Fresno; Chong Vang THAO, 53, of Fresno; Seng VUE, 68, of Fresno; Chue LO, 59, of Stockton; Nhia Kao VANG, 48, of Rancho Cordova; and Dang VANG, 48, of Fresno; all in California. VANG Pao, a general in the Royal Lao Army in the 1960s and 1970s, emigrated to

the United States in 1975. Harrison JACK is a 1968 graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point, and a retired officer.

With the exception of Seng VUE, who has been hospitalized for illness since his arrest on June 4, 2007, all defendants are in the custody of the Sacramento County jail. They will be arraigned on the indictment on Monday, June 18, 2007 at 2:00 p.m. before United States Magistrate Judge Kimberly Mueller at the Robert T. Matsui United States Courthouse in Sacramento.

The charges are a culmination of a six-month undercover investigation, dubbed "Operation Tarnished Eagle," of suspected violations of the Neutrality Act and other federal laws, the object of which was to engage in the violent overthrow of the sovereign government of the nation of Laos. On June 4, 2007, over 200 federal agents and local law enforcement officers executed pre-dawn search and arrest warrants throughout the Central Valley and in Southern California, taking the defendants, other than Dang VANG, into custody without incident.

Dang VANG was arrested earlier today in Fresno, California and will make an initial appearance at 2:00 p.m. before the Honorable Kimberly J. Mueller. VANG's identity was revealed as a result of the execution of the June 4 searches. During the search of a seized computer, an operation plan for the overthrow of Laos was recovered. The document identified "David Vang," Dang VANG's alias, as the author.

"Federal law is without equivocation: you cannot conspire to overthrow a foreign government with whom our nation is at peace. Many means may be used to effectuate change; committing serious crime, however, is not one," stated United States Attorney Scott.

According to Assistant United States Attorneys Robert M. Twiss and Ellen V. Endrizzi, who are prosecuting the case, the indictment alleges that the defendants conspired to acquire

hundreds of AK-47 automatic rifles, Stinger missiles, AT-4 anti-tank missiles, LAW rockets, Claymore mines, C-4 explosives, rocket-propelled grenades, and smoke grenades that they intended to use to engage in the violent overthrow of the government of Laos. The indictment outlines a series of meetings with an undercover ATF agent and conversations among the alleged co-conspirators during which they outlined plans to ship arms to Laos and make current and future payments for the weapons.

All defendants are charged with:

- conspiring to violate the Neutrality Act, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Sections 371 and 960;
- conspiring to kill, kidnap, maim and injure persons in a foreign country, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 956(a);
- conspiring to receive and possess firearms and destructive devices, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Sections 371 and 922(o) and Title 26, United States Code, Section 5861; and
- conspiring to export listed defense items without a license from the U.S. Department of State, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 371 and Title 22, United States Code, Section 2778.

Additionally, defendants Harrison JACK, VANG Pao, Lo Cha THAO, Lo THAO, Hue VANG, Chong Yang THAO, Youa True VANG, Nhia Kao VANG, and Dang VANG also are charged with conspiring to receive and possess missile systems designed to destroy aircraft (Stinger missiles), in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 2332g.

The maximum sentence that every defendant faces is imprisonment for life plus 38 years. The nine defendants who are charged with conspiring to receive and possess the Stinger missiles also face an additional term of imprisonment for life, for a total of imprisonment for two life terms plus 38 years. There is a mandatory minimum sentence of imprisonment for 25 years to life on the Stinger count. However, the actual sentence will be dictated by the Federal

Sentencing Guidelines, which take into account a number of factors, and will be imposed at the discretion of the court.

The charges are only allegations and the defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

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