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For downloadable images, visit www.pbs.org/pressroom

For more information about the program, visit the companion website: www.pbs.org/witnessestoasecretwar

THE HISTORY OF THE SECRET WAR IN LAOS IS REVEALED BY THE SURVIVORS IN WITNESSES TO A SECRET WAR

*Film to Premiere on Global Voices Series on PBS WORLD Channel
Sunday, May 17, at 10 PM*

(San Francisco, CA)—While America's most visible fight against communism in the late 1960s was in Vietnam, a secret war was being conducted in neighboring, neutral Laos. At the time, Washington feared that if Laos fell to the Communists, the rest of Southeast Asia would follow. So the CIA was dispatched to make a stand in Laos by recruiting a little-known group of Hmong tribesman to fight its proxy war.

WITNESSES TO A SECRET WAR is a firsthand account of the war by the Hmong soldiers who fought alongside the CIA and who were forced to flee their homeland with their families after the Communist takeover of Laos in 1975. Academy Award-nominated filmmaker Deborah Dickson sheds light on a piece of untold American history through personal stories of betrayal, loss, courage and survival.

The film will have its television premiere on the PBS WORLD series *Global Voices* on Sunday, May 17, 2009, at 10 PM (check local listings).

Artist Cy Thao and refugee advocate Ka Ying Yang were young children when they fled Laos with their families and came to the United States. Like exiles everywhere, they feel compelled to understand the past their parents never talked about.

Through disarmingly naïve paintings, Cy depicts the violence against the Hmong that followed the Communist takeover in order to tell the story hardly anyone knew. The paintings are bright and primitively executed, in the style of drawings he once saw that were done by refugees who had witnessed rape and murder and starvation and bloodshed.

Ka Ying has dedicated her life to helping refugees. While working as a cultural orientation teacher in the last remaining camp of Hmong refugees in Thailand, she helps Xue Xiong, his wife, Mae Yia Thao, and their seven sons prepare to immigrate to St. Paul, Minnesota. The Xiong family has lived in refugee camps in Thailand since fleeing Laos 30 years ago.

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WITNESSES TO A SECRET WAR follows the Xiong family as they embark on the journey to make a new life in America. At the same time, Ka Ying and Cy's search for history and identity leads the film back to the past they all share.

About the Filmmaker

Deborah Dickson, a three-time Academy Award nominee, is an independent filmmaker based in Brooklyn, N Her film **RUTHIE AND CONNIE: EVERY ROOM IN THE HOUSE** premiered at the Berlin Film Festival in 2001 and won more than 14 awards at festivals worldwide, including Best Documentary at the Seattle Film Festival and the Nashville Film Festival. It was short-listed for an Academy Award nomination, and it was broadcast on Cinemax in 2004. **FRANCES STELOFF: MEMOIRS OF A BOOKSELLER**, a film Dickson produced, directed and edited, premiered at both Sundance and Berlin and was nominated for an Academy Award. **SUZANNE FARRELL: ELUSIVE MUSE** premiered at the New York Film Festival and was nominated for an Academy Award in 1997. **LALEE'S KIN**, which premiered at Sundance in 2000, won a duPont Award 2004 and was nominated for a Spirit Award and an Academy Award. In addition to **WITNESSES TO A SECRET WAR**, Dickson has recently completed **ANOTHER DAY IN PARADISE**, a documentary film about love and war during a six-month deployment to the Persian Gulf. Dickson has a B.A. in English literature from Barnard College and an M.F.A. in film from New York University.

About *Global Voices*

Global Voices is produced by ITVS International to air on the PBS WORLD digital channel beginning Sunday, April 26, 2009, at 10 PM (check local listings). The 26-week series brings to a national audience internationally themed documentaries made by U.S.-based and international filmmakers. This season, the series will feature the U.S. premieres of seven documentaries funded by ITVS International as well as encore broadcasts of other acclaimed ITVS programs. For more information about *Global Voices*, visit www.pbs.org/globalvoices. Encore presentations include the highly acclaimed **THE NEW AMERICANS**; the 2005 Emmy Award nominee **AFGHANISTAN UNVEILED**; the 2007 duPont Award winner, **SEOUL TRAIN**; the winner of the 2002 Special Jury Award at the Sundance Film Festival, **SEÑORITA EXTRAVIADA**; and the award-winning **DEVIL'S MINER**.

About ITVS International

ITVS International is a division of Independent Television Service that promotes an international exchange of documentary films made by independent producers, bringing international voices to U.S. audiences and American stories to audiences abroad. Through a unique public-private partnership called the Global Perspectives Project, ITVS International administers the International Media Development Fund (IMDF) and *True Stories: Life in the USA*. The IMDF funds international producers and supports the American broadcast of their programs. *True Stories: Life in the USA* promotes a series of American independent films to audiences around the world. ITVS created the Global Perspectives Project in 2005 with support from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and the U.S. Department of State. More information about ITVS International is available online at itvs.org/international.

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About PBS WORLD

PBS WORLD features documentary, public affairs and news programming from a number of public television's award-winning signature series and acclaimed independent filmmakers. Produced and distributed by PBS, WGBH Boston and Thirteen/WNET New York, in association with American Public Television and the National Education Telecommunications Association, PBS WORLD launched on 55 stations across the country, representing 24 licensees and reaching more than 27 percent of U.S. households. In most markets, PBS WORLD programming is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Programming on PBS WORLD includes such popular and critically acclaimed series as *American Experience*, *Frontline*, *History Detectives*, *Nature*, *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*, *Nova*, *Scientific American Frontiers* and *The Tavis Smiley Show*.

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