

Minnesota Veterans of the Special Guerrilla Units and Irregular Forces in Laos Advisory Task Force
Meeting 7 Summary – December 19, 2025

Date: December 19, 2025

Time: 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

Location: Hybrid Meeting (Microsoft Teams and In-Person)

1. Call to Order

Chair Susan Pha called the meeting to order at 10:06 a.m. Audio connectivity for virtual participants was confirmed.

2. Roll Call and Quorum

Vice Chair Ben Johnson conducted roll call. A quorum was confirmed.

3. Opening Remarks

Chair Pha stated that the purpose of the meeting was to continue section-by-section review of the Eligibility Protocol draft dated November 7, 2025. The Chair emphasized that while unanimous agreement may not be possible, the goal was to surface concerns, seek majority consensus, and complete substantive edits during this meeting so that MDVA staff could prepare a revised draft for subsequent review.

4. Discussion: Eligibility Protocol Review

4.1 Recap of Prior Edits

MDVA staff summarized changes made since the previous meeting, including removal of the requirement to submit a copy of a U.S. Certificate of Naturalization showing an A-number, and technical edits previously agreed upon by the Task Force.

4.2 Section 2 – Affidavits and Chain of Command Verification

The Task Force discussed revised language clarifying that affidavits may be submitted by a commissioned officer, noncommissioned officer, or other member of the applicant's chain of command with direct knowledge of the applicant's service.

- Mr. Rouleau raised the possibility of using immigration "A-files" generated at the time of naturalization as a potential source of corroborating information, noting uncertainty as to whether service-related distinctions were documented.

- Mr. Walker expressed concern about relying on immigration or VA determinations as conclusive proof of SGU service, emphasizing the need for positive identification rather than reliance on a single document.
- Vice Chair Johnson and Chair Pha noted that affidavits are sworn, legally binding statements and that the Task Force must rely on available mechanisms given the passage of time and loss of records.
- Members acknowledged the practical limitations created by the deaths of many superior officers and the classified nature of SGU service.

Consensus was reached to retain the revised affidavit language.

4.3 Section 3 – Prior Federal or State Determinations

Members indicated continued consensus on Section 3 as previously drafted. No additional edits were proposed.

4.4 Section 4 – Additional Supporting Documentation

MDVA staff presented a revised Section 4 incorporating a non-exhaustive list of additional documentation, informed by submissions from community organizations and prior Task Force discussions. The list was framed as “including but not limited to,” to preserve flexibility.

Discussion highlights included:

- Support for allowing applicants’ statements of service, unit information, and narrative descriptions to aid historical plausibility and corroboration.
- Emphasis on evaluating multiple pieces of evidence collectively, rather than elevating any single document as determinative.
- Recognition that applicants may face language barriers and may interpret requirements literally, underscoring the importance of clear guidance and outreach.
- Clarification that affidavits from CIA case officers or individuals in comparable advisory roles could be considered where available.
- Discussion of family affidavits; MDVA leadership stated they did not recommend including spouse or family affidavits due to corroboration limitations.

Community Letters Entered into the Record:

- A letter from the Hmong Committee of 100 emphasized maintaining a state-level process, concerns regarding the feasibility of superior-officer affidavits, and suggested additional forms of proof.
- A letter from Colonel (Ret.) Yee C. Hang recommended a flexible, historically informed evidentiary framework acknowledging the covert and classified nature of SGU service.

Members generally agreed that the revised Section 4 appropriately balanced flexibility with integrity and did not create an unduly burdensome process.

Motion:

Mr. Strusinski moved to adopt the revised Section 4 as presented. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Johnson. The motion passed by voice vote with no objections.

5. Processing Timeframes, Appeals, and Application Window

5.1 Application Processing and Applicant Scope

The Task Force agreed that a 90-day timeframe for MDVA review of a complete application was reasonable. The Task Force discussed that the eligibility protocol is structured around applications submitted by living veterans and does not address eligibility determinations for individuals who are deceased.

5.2 Appeals

Members discussed the proposed appeal window. Concerns were raised regarding translation needs and mail delays.

Consensus was reached to extend the appeal filing period from 30 days to 60 days.

Members also noted that denial would not preclude reapplication if additional supporting information became available.

5.3 Application Deadline

The Task Force discussed establishing a clear end date for applications to balance access with administrative capacity.

Consensus was reached to set a firm deadline of December 31, 2030.

6. MDVA Statement Read into the Record

Vice Chair Johnson read into the record a written legal opinion from the MDVA General Counsel's Office addressing legal assertions raised in the CAVWV report. The opinion clarified:

- Minn. Stat. § 197.448 already recognizes individuals naturalized under Public Law 106-207 as Veterans of the Secret War in Laos, and the Task Force does not have authority to revisit or reassess that statutory determination.
- The Task Force's role is limited to developing criteria under § 197.448, subdivision 1(2) for individuals not already covered by subdivision 1(1), consistent with its charge under 2025 Session Law Chapter 30.
- Any process or recommendation that would disqualify individuals deemed eligible by statute, or that would replace authority delegated by the Legislature to the Commissioner of MDVA, would exceed the Task Force's authority and raise legal concerns.

Members acknowledged the clarification and thanked MDVA legal counsel for the guidance.

7. Adoption of Eligibility Protocol Draft

Motion:

Mr. Strusinski moved to adopt the Eligibility Protocol draft, as amended during the meeting, for the purpose of preparing a revised draft for further review. The motion was seconded by Mr. Rouleau.

Roll Call Vote:

Member	Vote
Trent Dilks	Yes
Bill Strusinski	Yes
Tou T. Yang	Yes
Gia T. Lee	Yes
Scott Walker	No
William F. Rouleau	Yes
Rep. Ethan Cha	Yes
Rep. Bidal Duran	Yes
Susan Pha (Chair)	Yes
Ben Johnson (Vice Chair)	Yes
Sen. Jeff Howe	No

Vote Tally: 9 Yes, 2 No, 2 Absent

The motion passed.

8. Public Comment

Mr. Briggs commented that no single document constitutes indisputable proof of service and emphasized the importance of corroboration. MDVA leadership reiterated that the protocol relies on evaluation of multiple forms of evidence.

9. Adjournment

Chair Pha adjourned the meeting at 12:04 p.m.

Next Steps:

- MDVA staff will prepare a revised Eligibility Protocol draft incorporating the adopted changes.
- The Task Force will review the revised draft at a subsequent meeting for potential final adoption and inclusion in the legislative report.