Lao-American Socioeconomic Profile

By Mark E. Pfifer, PhD

The U.S. Census Bureau released national Lao-American data from the 2005 American Community Survey on September 14, 2006. It must be noted that the 2005 ACS data contains a Limit set of variables, but the data set includes estimates based on sample data and is prone to sampling errors. The USDA report used a subset of the Lao-American population and is thus prone to similar sampling errors.

The 2005 American Community Survey profile for Lao-Americans região that includes 205,777 people in the U.S. who reported that they were Lao or a combination of Laos and other ethnic groups (this figure is up from the 183,642 Lao Americans reported in the 2000 U.S. Census). The 2005 ACS estimated that the U.S. Lao population was 90,000, or 40.6% female. The estimated Medium Age of the Lao-American population was 32.3 years in the United States in the 2005 ACS data was 28.3 years, which is 1.7 years younger compared to the 2000 U.S. Census data of 30.0 years for the United States. The 2005 ACS data showed that 70.8% of Lao Americans aged 15 and over had completed high school or received a degree from an American institution. Students in Laos who attend a degree completed at 12.7% of the 2000 Census data. This means that the 12.7% of Laos and in the U.S. had earned a graduate or professional degree in contrast to about 10% of all Americans. The 2005 ACS survey estimates that 12.5% of Lao-Americans had a disability compared to 14.9% of all Americans aged 5 and over. However, according to the 2005 ACS estimates, 15.1% of Lao Americans over 50 had a disability compared to 90.6% of all Americans.

In terms of entry into the U.S., the 2005 ACS estimates that 58% of Lao-Americans entered before 1990, 11.6% between 1990 and 1999, 13.3% in the 2000 to 2005, and 10.1% in the 2005 to 2010. According to the 2005 ACS data, 69% of all Lao-Americans reported speaking English to a “fair” or “very good” level.

In terms of occupational distribution, a large amount of the adult population employed Lao over 16 worked in a non-family business, while 10.8% of all employed Americans, the largest portion of the Lao working in Retail Trade, 13.0% compared to 11.6% of all Americans and 10.7% in Education, 5.7% in Transportation, 5.0% in Recreation, and Accommodation and Food Services, 3.1% compared to 205,777.

2005 Summary for Lao Americans (Lao or in any combination)

- Percent Male: 50.2
- Percent Female: 49.8
- Median Age (in years): 29.1 (compared to 15.9% for all Americans over 15)
- Years Median Age: 31.9 (compared to 16.4 of all Americans)
- Adults 25 years and older with a Bachelor's Degree: 9.2% (compared to 17.2% of Americans or in any combination)
- Employed in Manufacturing: 30.4% (compared to 11.9% of all Employed Americans over 16)
- Median Family Income: $52,249 (US$ average is $55,852)
- Poverty Rate: 13.9% (29.62% among all U.S. Families)
- Homeownership Rate: 51.3% (67.0% of U.S. households)

Thailand halts Hmong deportations

NEW YORK (January 30, 2007) - The United Nations refugee agency today expressed relief that Thai authorities have delayed the deportations of some 1,000 Hmong refugees to the Lao People's Democratic Republic after a group barged themselves into the center where they were being detained, and warned that any similar deportations would be a "tragic breach of international law." "We are relieved the deportation is on hold after some extremely worrying moments today," said the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Oxfam-based Asia bureau director. "However, Lao authorities should not be allowed to return to Laos and we will continue to work with third countries on our behalf," he added.

If this deportation had gone ahead, it would have been the second in four months that Thailand would have deported so-called "unregistered" refugees individually recognized under UNHCR’s mandate and a large group of international and intergovernmental organisations.

Authorities at north-east Thailand’s Nong Khai detention centre had earlier on Saturday attempted to move 152 refugees, including a number of baby, onto trains in preparation for deportation. Many of them were refugees who had fled when Lao authorities arrested and deported late 2006 via a network of camps but were recognised as refugees by the UNHCR. Among those recognised as refugees included around 22,000 Hmong and other ethnic minorities. The Thai government initially planned to deport them to their home country in Laos, but after the UNHCR intervened, the deportations were put on hold.

The agency has made repeated offers to the Thai Government to help find alternative solutions for the Lao Hmong group in detention and has been working closely with third countries to find resettlement opportunities.

Today’s attempted deportation comes just a few days after Thailand indicated it would deport 1,000 Lao Hmong to the Lao People’s Democratic Republic without screening them to see if they needed international protection, a move which sparked concern at UNHCR.

“Thailand has a special responsibility for the security and safety of those being deported to Laos,” said spokesperson Daphne Habila. “It’s not acceptable to forcibly return refugees to Laos under any circumstances and we will continue to work with third countries on our behalf,” she added.

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Filipino Veterans Equity Bill is filed

WASHINGTON, D.C. (February 1, 2007) — A bipartisan group of U.S. Senators led by Senators Ben Nighthorse Campbell (D-CO) and Richard Shelby (R-AL) has submitted a bill, Rep. Bob Filner (D-CA), as an original measure. The U.S. House Veterans Committee has also announced that it will hold hearings on this measure on February 15, to mark the 65th Anniversary of the Japanese Occupation.

The bill equitably seeks to amend the Residency Act and restore to Filipino Veterans and U.S. Veterans their rightful status and benefits as American citizens.

Last month, Sen. Daniel Inouye filed a similar bill in the Senate. S. 574 would amend title 38 of the United States Code to provide an expansion of the benefits resources available to the Filipino Veterans of the Philippines and the Philippines and their Filipino descendants for purposes of benefits under programs administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

Both Senators and Congress have championed the cause of Filipino veterans over the years. It is now the responsibility and duty of the Filipino American community to rally its representatives and senators, said Sen. “We have the same excellent group of young men, this year, for the House of representatives and we seek approval. Let 1 encourage as many in our community to come to Washington on Feb. 15 and fill up the hearing room.”

For the past 60 years, the national Filipino-American groups formed a national coalition to work for the passage of the bill. The National Network for Veteran Equity (NEVE), American Coalition for Filipino Veterans, the Veterans Federation of the Philippines, the Veterans Affairs Office of the Philippine Embassy, the Filipino Veterans Center of San Francisco, the National Federation for Filipino Americans, the Filipino Veterans of World War II Veterans, the Filipino Veterans of Los Angeles. www.alfa.org

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