

THE  
CENTER  
FOR  
SECURITY  
POLICYPRESS RELEASE  
For Immediate ReleaseNo. 94-P 72  
13 July 1994AT LAST, A SMOKING GUN ON THE  
VIETNAM-ERA P.O.W.- M.I.A. COVERUP

At 11:00 a.m., Thursday, July 14, the Sheraton Hotel in Crystal City, Virginia, will be the site of an extraordinary press conference. On this occasion, the National Alliance of POW-MIA Families will be revealing to the press around 2,000 photographs taken by the North Vietnamese army and news agency. These photos are of American prisoners of war, aircraft crash-sites and pilot identification cards.

Some of the subjects are among those prisoners who returned at the end of the war. But many others are servicemen — photographed alive or dead — who are still officially considered "unaccounted for." Incredibly, these materials were secretly withheld from the public -- *including family members of some of those servicemen appearing in these photographs* who claim that they had not been previously informed about the existence of these photos by the American government, even though the Defense Department now acknowledges having them for more than two years. The explanation may lie in the fact that these photos represent damning new evidence of the extent to which the American and Vietnamese governments have covered up critical information on missing U.S. servicemen.

The National Alliance obtained these "TOP SECRET" photos from a former agent of the Defense Intelligence Agency. They testify, among other things, to the great pains North Vietnam took to document its inventory of captured or dead American prisoners and their equipment -- to the point of labeling and warehousing prisoners' uniforms, flight helmets and aircraft identification numbers. In addition, hundreds of pilot identification cards (including those of men still listed as missing) are shown in pristine condition. There are also photos depicting Vietnamese searching through crash-sites together with Soviet bloc advisors, indicating that there is much more information in Hanoi and Moscow that can *and must* be made public

Importantly, these photos also appear to put to rest several, long-disputed issues:

- o American servicemen officially listed as missing in the Vietnam conflict were captured alive.
- o American servicemen listed as missing or deceased "with body unrecoverable," were at one point in the hands of Vietnamese and Soviet bloc officials.

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- o Vietnamese excavation teams examined downed aircraft even in *extremely remote areas*. This proves that most crash sites now being excavated by joint American and Vietnamese military teams at great cost to U.S. taxpayers were scoured and live prisoners, or their bodies, were removed decades ago.

The Center for Security Policy believes that members of Congress, journalists and the public at large who wish to know the truth about the hundreds of American servicemen still unaccounted for from the Vietnam War should see this exhibit. At a minimum, the troubling questions raised by these photographs demand a new *and independent* evaluation of all available information related to the missing Americans.

Answering these questions should be the sole focus of the upcoming meeting between Secretary of State Warren Christopher and his Vietnamese counterpart in Bangkok on 22 July. Clearly, unless and until Hanoi and Washington are fully forthcoming on this score, there must be no further progress toward normalization of political or economic relations with communist Vietnam.