

March 7, 1995

To: Mark Smith

From: Ted Sampley

Mark,

I am perplexed by your widely circulated criticism of Billy Hendon's POW/MIA effort in Southeast Asia.

You question why Hendon is asking for an "official visa" to enter Vietnam, why he waited to apply in Bangkok and why he did not go to the Vietnamese Interest Section at the UN in New York and apply for a "tourist visa."

You categorized the Hendon effort as "silly, exploitive, self serving baloney" and from the content of your letters, you appear to be defending the communist Vietnamese position that their refusal to issue Hendon a visa is because he "overstayed his visa" on a previous trip to Vietnam.

Mark, in December, the Vietnamese in New York mission denied a November 20, request I made for a "tourist visa" to go visit JTF-FA in Hanoi for the purpose of making inquiries about my father-in-law, SFC Robert D. Owen, missing in action since 1968.

Mr. Vu Khac Thu, First Secretary to the Mission, wrote that the mission could not issue the visa because "according to our regulations, tourist visas are being granted only to those who go to visit Vietnam as tourists."

He further stated that because I wanted to go visit JTF-FA in Hanoi for the purpose of making inquiries about the POW/MIA issue, I would have to get special permission from both the U.S. government and the government of Vietnam.

The Vietnamese refusal to issue visas to Hendon is an absolute contradiction of a previous public promise made by officials of both the U.S. and Vietnam governments. The promise is that in exchange for the U.S. government lifting the U.S. imposed trade embargo and moving forward towards normalized relations with Vietnam, the government of Vietnam "pledged to welcome Americans" making POW/MIA inquiries including the "skeptical" to see for themselves."

The Vietnamese, by not living up to their promise of cooperation on the MIA issue are making liars out of U.S. government officials, including Gen. Wold, who are on the record bragging about Vietnam's "unprecedented cooperation."

