

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

Prepared by Ann M. Griffiths, Executive Director

May 5, 1993

The following resolutions passed by an overwhelming margin (1 nay vote on #1 and #2) at the meeting of League's Northeast Regions, held May 1, 1993 in Newport, RI.

- 1) WHEREAS, the League believes that the special POW/MIA envoy approach has outlived its usefulness at this critical juncture; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the League urges the Clinton Administration to send to Hanoi a high level interagency policy delegation, to include League representation, to negotiate in a serious manner an agreement binding to both sides that would encompass rapid resolution of all last known alive (LKA) discrepancy cases and prompt repatriation of remains recovered and readily available; and be it further

RESOLVED, that in this context, based upon concrete results only, the League would support reciprocal moves of interest to Vietnam.

- 2) WHEREAS, the League has lost confidence in certain aspects of JTF-FA's operations to include, but not limited to the emphasis on confirming death; the removal of experienced POW/MIA specialists and linguists from the mainstream of operations in-country; premature recommendations to close cases or declare them inactive with little compelling justification; JTF-FA's consistent courting of media coverage and portrayal of activities, rather than results in terms of accounting, as significant progress; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the League urges action be taken by the US Government to fully utilize the skills and unique expertise of available experienced specialists and to ensure that the Washington-based policy community reviews JTF-FA case recommendations in the context of all US intelligence and other information, including Vietnamese knowledgeability; and be it finally

RESOLVED, that the League urges the US Government to take immediate steps to ensure that JTF-FA operations, public statements and recommendations be brought into compliance with the commitments and policy stated by the President.

- 3) WHEREAS, the POW/MIA IAG has functioned in the best interests of the issue and the families during four administrations over a period of 14 years; and

WHEREAS, the current lack of coordinated, effective policy guidance on an interagency basis has resulted in multiple and conflicting messages from the US Government to the families, the American people and the Vietnamese; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the League urges the Clinton Administration to formalize interagency coordination through an IAG, or its equivalent, with representation as constituted for the last 14 years.

- 4) WHEREAS, the League has noted with great support the President's public commitments to obtaining answers about our missing relatives, as a first priority in our relationship with Vietnam; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the League commends the President for his principled commitment and requests that appropriate steps be taken immediately by the Administration to ensure conscientious implementation by all relevant departments and agencies.

Acting DASD/POW-MIA Ed Ross was the senior USG representative. He and League Executive Director Ann Mills Griffiths briefed the attendees for 1/2 hour each, followed by a Q & A session, for a total two and one-half hour session.

Ross focused on the most recent events, i.e. the Russian/Vietnamese document, the Vessey mission of mid-April 1993, current operations of the JTF-FA and, very briefly, the White House decision to delay consideration of "the Vietnam situation" by the IFI's until "June 15th." Ross' briefing was relatively straight-forward, with some admission to "growing pain" operational mistakes, such as JTF-FA's recommendations on cases as "inactive" and "case closed". (The CINC's decision to now term such cases "pending" is welcome; however, it does nothing to alter JTF-FA's Desert Storm approach of "rolling through" Vietnam, visiting last known locations and seeking to "confirm death" rather than objectively obtain answers to achieve accountability.)

Griffiths briefed on the overall policy situation, commended the President's public statements of policy to date and the NSC's active role, offered criticisms concerning the lack of informed coordination and discussed some of the problems in operational aspects. The questions were well-informed and polite, focused to a large extent on the Russian/Vietnamese document. There was evident impatience with Ross's description of activities in view of minimal results in terms of accountability.

The reaction to Griffiths' presentation was interesting. All were reassured that despite the lack of Defense and State policy-level support, direct contact with the Clinton Administration had been made. The families and concerned citizens present were well aware of and reassured by the President's commitment placing priority on POW/MIA in the context of bilateral US/Vietnam relations. In view of Griffiths' criticism of JTF-FA's current operational approach, some perceived a return to "the old Ann," i.e. publicly critical of USG efforts until 1982, then internally through the IAG until 1993. (All informed family members are familiar with the lack of priority on the issue between 1976-1981; they also watch closely matters affecting US/Vietnam relations.) Griffiths' response was to point out that the need for criticism was not a welcome development; when public criticism is necessary, the issue is not being handled as responsibly as it could to achieve objectives in the shortest possible time.

An additional briefing by the Army (COL Mike Spinello) on Central Identification Laboratory and application of DNA technology to remains identifications was well received, and there were numerous questions. There was also a briefing on family-member access to the so-called "Family Library" at OSD/POW-MIA by the senior USAF Casualty Officer, Mr. George Atkinson, a presentation which did not command attention to the extent those in the USG would expect.

Notes:

Resolution #1 was a polite means of expressing the collective intent to "get rid of Vessey."

Resolution #2 was substituted for a collective decision that the USG should "fire Needham." This was due to intense and growing dissatisfaction with JTF-FA's focus on "rolling through" Vietnam, an apparent penchant for logistics and meeting the established quota for field activities.

Resolution #3 was to reaffirm support for League participation in the USG's IAG (IWG).

Resolution #4 was not only to commend the President (and the NSC), but to urge institutionalization (now sadly lacking) of the President's stated commitment and policy.