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**U.S. GOVERNMENT'S POST-WAR POW/MIA
EFFORTS**

HEARINGS
BEFORE THE
**SELECT COMMITTEE ON POW/MIA
AFFAIRS**

UNITED STATES SENATE
ONE HUNDRED SECOND CONGRESS
SECOND SESSION
ON
U.S. GOVERNMENT'S POST-WAR POW/MIA EFFORTS

AUGUST 11 AND 12, 1992



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HEARING ON U.S. GOVERNMENT'S POST-WAR POW/MIA EFFORTS

TUESDAY, AUGUST 11, 1992

U.S. SENATE,
SELECT COMMITTEE ON POW-MIA AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:32 a.m., in room SR-325, Russell Senate Office Building, Hon. John F. Kerry, Chairman of the committee, presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN F. KERRY, U.S. SENATOR FROM MASSACHUSETTS

The CHAIRMAN. The hearing will come to order. Mr. Perot, let me just inform you that the press will move momentarily, so, as I agreed with you, will not sit in here.

Let me, if I can, before I make an opening statement, if you would stand so I can swear you in, Mr. Perot.

If you'd raise your right hand?

Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Mr. PEROT. I do.

The CHAIRMAN. If I could ask if the members of the media would clear the well so that we could have an unobstructed view.

The Select Committee meets this morning to continue its effort to try to determine the truth about Americans still unaccounted for in the war in Southeast Asia.

Mr. Perot, as you know better than anybody, we are here more than 19 years after the fact, because the POW/MIA issue continues to confound us in this country. Some would say it even haunts our politics and our psyche.

It is that way because an awful lot of questions that should have been asked a long time ago were not asked and because answers and information that should have been forthcoming a long time ago was not made available; and because a swirl of controversy and suspicion has arisen in the country as a result, with people doubting the word of their own Government on this subject.

It is also true, and we are here in response to the fact, and a fact that you have witnessed in your own travels and efforts over these 20 years, that we all have a duty, a personal duty, to try and get to the truth and get the answers.

When our committee began its work last November, I think it is safe to say that most people in the country thought we were on a wild goose chase and that there were not any new facts to learn,

that what was known about this was on the table, and in fact, that the committee would probably come up empty.

Many people believed that all the possibilities had been exhausted. The passage of time obviously puts this committee at a disadvantage, in terms of the people who might be available to talk to, the memories, and the availability of documents.

I respectively assert that the idea of this committee has already been validated, because already we have uncovered information that for 2 decades was unknown or concealed. We have found new evidence that some Americans may indeed have been left behind after Operation Homecoming and we have found the clear, unrefutable evidence that a certain group of those people were at least unaccounted for, with the expectation that they should have returned.

We have examined carefully, and for the first time publicly, Government handling of live-sighting reports, and we have set in motion one of the largest efforts to declassify documents in the history of this Government.

The committee has also pursued our own Government and foreign Governments, including Vietnam and the former Soviet Union, to step up efforts to investigate live-sightings, to resolve long-standing questions about particular cases, to open archives and to review files.

And now we have an ongoing presence in Southeast Asia. We have access to long denied documents. We have unprecedented cooperation with Vietnam and Cambodia, and we have more U.S. personnel, ironically, working on this issue today than we ever have before.

Just this past week in the hearings that we had on live-sighting reports, when doubts arose about Vietnam's willingness to permit short notice inspections, we immediately questioned Vietnam and we have been assured that continued access will be allowed, and in fact, two investigations have taken place just in recent days.

So this morning, we meet to begin really a new phase, almost the last phase of this investigation. And that is the review of our own Government's response to available POW/MIA information from the time of the war until today. And particularly, the beliefs and the observations of people like yourself, Mr. Perot, and those who were in Government who made the decisions regarding this issue and who had reason to be able to have access to documents and information over the course of that time.

In many ways, Mr. Perot, you are really the ideal person to help us initiate this part of our investigation, to give us an overview. Because there is no private citizen, there is no person who is not a family member, who has had a longer or more intimate experience with the POW/MIA issue than you. Beginning with your widely praised efforts during the war to improve the treatment of POWs—and this committee congratulates you on the reality of the change in their treatment that you did achieve—and continuing through meetings with top American and Vietnamese officials in the late 1980's, Mr. Perot has had 20 years' of experience in dealing with this issue, firsthand and often at the highest level.

Our committee is interested in what you have done with respect to POW/MIA, in respect to what you have witnessed with respect

to this issue, and finally, in what you believe today with respect to this issue. With your help and the help of other witnesses, we hope to continue the process that we have begun of demystifying this issue, of moving aspects of it from the realms of rumor and allegation and conspiracy to try to find the truth.

This is not an easy process. It will require hard questioning, and as I have said to you, we will ask hard questions today. It will require a vigorous effort to try to reconcile conflicting views of what has happened.

In preparing for this hearing during interviews with witnesses, we have heard conflicting accounts. Today and tomorrow, we will review those accounts with you and your associates, with former State Department and Defense Department and Intelligence Agency personnel, and with former Presidential Chief of Staff, Howard Baker.

We will do our best, Mr. Perot, in a nonpartisan, dispassionate way, to try to resolve the conflicts and to make some judgements about where the truth most probably lies, and most important, to evaluate the overall significance of the information received as it relates to POW/MIA.

As I have said at earlier hearings, we have reached reality time on this issue. We have had 20 years of secrecy, rumor, theory, myth, and accusation; 20 years of pain and uncertainty, a roller coaster of emotions for the families, a huge uncertainty in the country and division and doubt and even politics in the use of this issue.

Our committee's one obligation to the public and to our colleagues is to the truth. As I have said previously, not a slant on the truth, not a particular piece of the truth, but the truth as well as we can put it together. And so the purpose of this hearing today and the purpose of our future hearings is to get at that in open public session.

I respect the reservations that you had, as we said earlier, about an appearance at the time that your candidacy was perhaps about to be announced. We are delighted that you are here now ready to share with us your experience on this issue and we look forward to a very fruitful dialog in the course of this morning.

Senator Smith.

STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT C. SMITH, U.S. SENATOR FROM
NEW HAMPSHIRE

Senator SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, Mr. Perot. We are honored and privileged to have you here this morning. You have steadfastly kept pace with the American prisoners of war and those unaccounted for from the Vietnam conflict for many years, for which we are grateful and I know the men are.

I look forward to hearing your testimony into this issue, as I did 6 years ago, as you recall, when you at least tried to testify before the Solarz Committee in the House of Representatives, of which I was a member, but there were many interruptions in that process and you were not allowed to complete your testimony unfortunately.

Five years ago, I remember reading a quote in The Washington Post from General Alexander Haig, the former Secretary of State, in which he said in reference to Mr. Perot, Perot's efforts during the war, quote, we knew he was passionate about what was happening to the boys. We knew he had something to offer, more than just money, unquote.

Former President Richard Nixon echoed these comments a few weeks ago, saying Ross Perot supported what we were trying to do in Vietnam, unlike many other people in the business community who took a walk. And I appreciate that. He did everything he could to help the POWs while many others were doing nothing at all. At a time when many people in the American establishment were not supporting the POWs, Ross Perot was doing so. Unquote, from Richard Nixon.

I note after reviewing the record that support and praise for Mr. Perot's efforts were not partisan in any way during the war. Indeed, Democrats in the Congress, such as former Congressman Zablocki of Wisconsin and former Speaker of the House John McCormick, praised his efforts. And I am sure Mr. Perot will call his appearance before Chairman Zablocki's committee in 1970, in which he asked the American people to pay more attention to the POW/MIA issue, may also recall that Congressmen Zablocki and McCormick were instrumental in getting a POW cage displayed here at the Capitol during the war which brought great attention to the plight of our POWs.

A year later, in 1971, Ross Perot told a reporter from The Chicago Tribune that the American people, the American people hold the key on this issue because the Communists have shown that they respond to world pressure, world opinion. I believe that those words spoken more than 20 years ago, should still be heeded today. The more the Communists in Southeast Asia know the American people want the truth, the more likely we are to get the truth.

Mr. Chairman, there should be no doubt that Ross Perot's efforts have been helpful to our POWs and MIAs. It is a matter of fact that his efforts to bring food, medicine and Christmas packages to POWs in 1969 and 1970, did in fact improve the North Vietnamese treatment of these men, as we later learned from the returnee debriefs.

My words of thanks for your efforts, Mr. Perot, frankly pale in comparison to the recognition that you have already received from former POWs themselves and their families and our Nation's veterans groups.

As many know, Mr. Perot has a painting which he proudly hangs in his office which is signed by all the POWs who came home in 1973, thanking him for drawing of public attention to their plight. I also note that the Department of Defense has awarded Mr. Perot its highest civilian honor for his efforts, the Defense Medal of Distinguished Public Service.

Now here we are 19 years later, after the end of the war, and we still do not have all the men accounted for. The intelligence reports, some of which we explored for the first time in public session last week, continue to raise legitimate questions on whether American POWs have survived long after the war.

Reports are now surfacing in the press that the Reagan administration may have received an offer from the Vietnamese in January 1981 to exchange an unspecified number of POWs for reconstruction aid promised by President Nixon at the Paris Peace Accords. Already, our committee is aware of three separate U.S. Government officials who are stating that such an offer was indeed made and we are continuing to investigate that. Our investigation will not stop until we know the truth.

Mr. Perot has consistently offered his time and energy to help the Congress and the executive branch to learn the truth. In fact, I recall in 1986 being one of 275 Members of Congress who were trying to form a presidential commission at that time, which Ross Perot would have headed to look into this issue. This came following a 1986 internal review at the Pentagon, in which former DIA Director Gene Tighe concluded that there was a strong probability American POWs were still held against their will.

Later, at the request of the White House, Mr. Perot began to review Government intelligence files on possible surviving POWs and evaluate current policy in order to report his recommendations to the President. This followed 3 years of service by Mr. Perot in President Reagan's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board.

We know that he spent hours and hours at the Pentagon reviewing live-sighting reports and other intelligence on possible POWs still in captivity. We know he was doing everything he could to help the President resolve this issue. In fact, I hope that today we can explore some of his recommendations to President Reagan in April 1987. The solution to these outstanding questions on the issue may in fact lie in his recommendations. If they do, we will want to measure the extent to which these recommendations made by Mr. Perot have been implemented in the past 5 years.

Mr. Chairman, while I vaguely recall Mr. Perot's efforts during the war concerning POWs, his later involvement in the mid-1980's POW/MIA Task Force, I had started to become involved with this issue in trying to learn the facts.

I recall in October 1986, when Mr. Perot last testified before Congress, I and several of my colleagues made a request for reports written by General Tighe, Colonel Gaines, and Admiral Thomas Brooks. Our requests were never acted on. And 4 years later I was told two of the reports did not even exist in writing. Now 6 years after my original request, these reports have finally seen the light of day. We are making progress.

When President George Bush stated 2 months ago that Ross Perot was trying to help our efforts on POWs in 1986 and 1987, he was absolutely right. Mr. Perot's cooperation with this committee has been steadfast. He met on at least four different occasions with either the chairman or the vice-chairman of this committee, a couple of times separately and jointly, to give us his insight on the issue.

He met twice with our investigative staff, once in Dallas and once in Washington, and he had several conversations with both myself and the chairman on this issue. Mr. Perot also gave generously of his time with a formal, lengthy formal deposition for the record. Press reports to the contrary, Mr. Perot has cooperated

fully with this committee and with the efforts and objectives of this committee which are to find the truth. Senator Kerry also pointed out some difficulty we had because of the candidacy, but that was just more minor, very minor procedural matters.

Like Mr. Perot, I too was disheartened to read certain press articles after he announced his interest in the Presidency this past spring, articles that maligned his efforts, beliefs and his patriotism, articles that questioned his commitment to the men who never came home, articles that in his words tried to rewrite history.

I was especially outraged when certain staff members associated with this committee, which seems to be replete with leaks, maliciously leaked committee confidential information regarding the committee's private meetings with Ross Perot. They were leaked to Sidney Blumenthal at The New Republic and Michael Binstein and Jack Anderson's column. It was a feeble attempt to discredit our witness before those hearings even began.

For that, Mr. Perot, you deserve an apology and I so apologize. During these hearings, I suspect people may try again to rewrite history concerning Ross Perot's involvement. Already the committee has heard sworn testimony from a Government employee who claims to have never met Ross Perot in Laos during the war, although four other witnesses, including another Government employee, claimed the individual briefed Mr. Perot on the presence of American POWs in Laos.

Already, we have heard statements from the individuals who claim Mr. Perot's activities quote, unquote blunted U.S. efforts on POWs and MIAs during the 1986-87 time period. As I stated earlier, Mr. Chairman, I remember this period very well and I know that this was not the case. The President had not yet even appointed General Vessey at the time to be his special emissary to Hanoi on this issue. And everyone was looking for a way to jump start this process, including then Vice President George Bush who asked Mr. Perot for his assistance.

This point was made very clear at the time by then Vice Presidential spokesman Marlin Fitzwater, who stated quote, Government agencies are doing an outstanding job, but sometimes private channels can be more effective, unquote.

While some former Government officials claim to have negotiated written agreements with the Vietnamese to resolve this issue before General Vessey's appointment, the facts clearly show that this was not the case. There were no written agreements to resolve this issue and there was no real progress being made at the time.

And when these same former officials now anonymously accuse Mr. Perot of talking about paying money in exchange for POWs and MIAs in 1986, the record will show that 1 year earlier, in February 1985, these same officials were considering the same options. The record will also clearly show that President Reagan and some 275 members in Congress, including my former colleague Jerry Solomon, then chairman of the House POW Task Force, supported and welcomed Mr. Perot's involvement.

So, I believe, in conclusion, Mr. Chairman, that the real question for these hearings today and tomorrow is not what Mr. Perot has done. The real question is, what has our Government done or per-

haps not done since 1973 to locate American POWs who might still be alive.

Mr. Perot, I believe the vantage point from which you have observed and tried to help Government efforts will help us to learn the truth. History will judge you kindly for your commitment. You are a patriot who has given unselfishly of your time and your personal resources. And this Senator appreciates all that you have done for the committee, for the issue, and for me, in my involvement in trying to get the answers. And I look forward to your testimony.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Reid?

STATEMENT OF HON. HARRY REID, U.S. SENATOR FROM NEVADA

Senator REID. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. I think it is instructive for the four panels that will appear before us today and those that are in the audience to recognize that we have 12 Senators sitting on this panel, 6 Democrats, 6 Republicans. And as both the chairman and the vice-chairman have mentioned today, this is not a bipartisan committee, it is a nonpartisan committee.

This is also the first investigation into missing servicemen that has had subpoena power and the ability to put witnesses under oath and the determination—and in fact we have used both.

History is interesting, if you look at what took place before. There have been at least 11 separate executive and congressional investigations since 1973. Prior to the establishment of this committee, four congressional, six executive branch investigations.

And, in fact, learning the fate of the missing MIA and POWs has been called our highest national priority for almost a decade, but in fact during that decade not a great deal was done. But in less than a year, this committee has found, as Chairman Kerry announced, many unexplored avenues, from the admission by high-level executives of the possibility that some Americans may have been left behind after Homecoming in 1973 to the issuance of a presidential Executive order to declassify basically all MIA/POW material, something that the families of our missing servicemen have been asking for for almost 20 years.

The efforts of both the chairman and vice chairman, Bob Smith, I think are exemplary. I think also that the panels should recognize that we have had over 20 full-time committee staff investigators who have put in literally thousands of hours to this point, trying to arrive at a basic set of facts.

Crucial witnesses who have never been questioned before, such as participants in the Paris peace talks, ambassadors, CIA desk officers, Soviet veterans of the Vietnam War, KGB agents who have worked in Hanoi or Moscow during the Vietnam conflict, and many others.

There have been, with this committee alone, four sets of hearings that have gone into weeks of hearings. As of yesterday, we have had 83 depositions, some of them lasting days. It is expected before this is over there will be 100 depositions or more taken this year.

A group of Senators from this committee traveled to Southeast Asia last April, gaining access to a prison and several military

bases, I think setting a precedent that U.S. teams must follow in the future.

This committee sunsets the end of this Congress. We have lots of work to do. The work today begins with these four panels. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Reid. Senator McCain.

STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN McCAIN, U.S. SENATOR FROM ARIZONA

Senator McCAIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Perot, I want to welcome you here today and make note of the fact that there is no person who is involved or committed to the return of the American POWs that does not hold for you everlasting gratitude and appreciation for your efforts during those years.

You are a leader and a person who in some ways to whom can be attributed the return of some of the American POWs in far better condition, and maybe even alive, because of your efforts to bring the attention of the world and the American people to the plight of the POWs. And I am very grateful that you are here today and taking time from your very busy schedule.

Having said that, I would like to tell you that for those who have followed these hearings, it is well known that I have asked tough questions. Because tough questions have to be asked if we are going to get the answers to this very perplexing and disappointing issue that has plagued America for over 20 years. So I intend to do that today, since I believe that you have information that is very important for the committee to know, otherwise you would not be here.

I would like to make one additional fact known about the work that has gone on in the last year, and that is an issue that I know you are also concerned about and that is the hoaxers; the ones who have perpetrated fraudulent photos, sent out fundraising letters, and really done the most despicable things to raise the hopes and reignite the emotions of so many friends and family members of those who are listed as missing in action.

If I have one regret about the work of this committee, it is that we have not done the work that we should have in that side of this issue, and I deeply disappointed that we have barely even appointed investigators, much less given this issue the attention that it deserves.

So, Mr. Perot, I again welcome you and express our deep appreciation for all you have done. And I apologize that I may have to leave because there is a hearing on the Senate Armed Services Committee with some military witnesses as to whether we should get involved in another Vietnam, this one called the Balkans. And I do not want to have to ask you some years from now to be involved in another POW effort, because we have got people in prison in Bosnia.

So I hope you will forgive my absence for a few minutes, and I will back. And, again, thank you for being here today.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Senator McCain. Let me just say for the record that while the fraud aspect of the investigation is tiered at the end of our investigation, I think both the chair and vice chair feel confident that that will be fully aired in the

course of the next 4 months. And hearings are planned in November on the fraud aspect. So I think that before the committee's work is fully done, there will be a full airing of that issue.

Senator Grassley.

STATEMENT OF HON. CHARLES E. GRASSLEY, U.S. SENATOR FROM IOWA

Senator GRASSLEY. First of all, let me say to Mr. Perot, before I give my opening statement, that I appreciate very much his cooperation with this committee. More importantly, even before this committee met, he has met with many Members of Congress, including this Member of the Senate, to discuss this issue years before this committee was ever set up. And I appreciate your going out of your way to meet with us to discuss your point of view on these issues.

It occurs to me that there is probably not anyone in America who has been more closely involved with the POW/MIA issue for as long as Ross Perot. At least no one has been such a diligent student of the problems as well as so active in attempts to seek resolution. Much of his labors have been as a private citizen, although he has served at the request of the President as well. And he has devoted countless hours of his valuable time, as well as personal treasure, to attend to the needs of the captives, to solve mysteries, and to bring our men home.

For his devotion to this cause, I hope all Americans are very grateful. I am sure that contentious issues of fact and opinion will surface at our hearings today and tomorrow. That seems to be the nature of this issue. It is also a reflection of the fact that we will be discussing events that happened nearly a quarter of a century ago, when Ross Perot first became involved. This is a long time to remember facts with great precision.

So it is my hope that our efforts will focus on what Mr. Perot has learned about POWs and MIAs over the 23 years, and what prescription he can recommend to us. I look upon Ross Perot as an expert witness, one whose intimate involvement with policy, intelligence, and operations we should exploit to the fullest, and I look forward eagerly to his testimony.

So, Mr. Perot, I am extremely pleased to welcome you here today and I wish you—I wish to express to you my personal gratitude to you for the years of devotion that you have given to this most tragic issue. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Senator Grassley. Senator Kohl.

STATEMENT OF HON. HERB KOHL, U.S. SENATOR FROM WISCONSIN

Senator KOHL. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Perot, I was involved in business before I got into public life. And, Mr. Perot, you were wise enough to return to the business world after the considering the possibility of seeking public office. I may not agree with the decision you reached, but in truth I sometimes envy it.

Even as a businessman, however, Mr. Perot, you have always been engaged in public issues. And this hearing is an attempt to explore what you found out in the process with respect to our POW/MIAs in Southeast Asia. We are all pleased to have you with us today, and we very much look forward to your testimony and we welcome you here.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Kohl.
Senator Brown.

STATEMENT OF HON. HANK BROWN, U.S. SENATOR FROM COLORADO

Senator BROWN. Mr. Perot, I join the others in welcoming you here. Vietnam is a conflict where some of our leaders in this Nation broke faith with the men and women who serve this country in the field. You have a reputation, though, of just the opposite. You have a reputation, well deserved I believe, of keeping faith with those who work for you and those who served this Nation in combat. For that we all salute you and welcome you here and look forward to your testimony.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Daschle.

STATEMENT OF HON. THOMAS A. DASCHLE, U.S. SENATOR FROM SOUTH DAKOTA

Senator DASCHLE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I too would like to welcome Mr. Perot. I would remind him and our committee about how quickly our time is running out, how little we have left to accomplish all that this committee is charged to do.

I have had two frustrations over the course of the last year. The first is what I consider to be a dismaying lack of ability on the part of Government to do this, up until the time this committee was formed. That is to collect the data, to come to some conclusion about what has to be done and what information has to be released. And second the conflicting information that continues to undermine our ability to establish fact.

We have two real responsibilities. The first, to determine fact as we best can establish it. And second, to release to the maximum degree possible all information pertaining to POWs and our policy over the last 20 years. My hope is that you, Mr. Perot, with all of the effort that you have demonstrated for the last 20 years to establish those facts, to ascertain the best information, your attitude of assistance toward your Government can be demonstrated yet once more as we establish that fact, as we release that information, as we finally come to grips with the problems that face us in this committee.

Again, let me welcome you for all of us who have admired your work and we look forward to listening to you soon.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Robb.

STATEMENT OF HON. CHARLES S. ROBB, U.S. SENATOR FROM VIRGINIA

Senator ROBB. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am delighted to welcome Mr. Perot and the other panelists today. I think they have probably heard as much as they need to hear from us, and we

would like to hear from them at this point. Many of us will have to come and go a number of times during the day because of other conflicting appointments. I hope you will not find that that, for any reason, takes away from our interest in your testimony.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Robb. Senator Kassebaum.

STATEMENT OF HON. NANCY LANDON KASSEBAUM, U.S. SENATOR FROM KANSAS

Senator KASSEBAUM. Mr. Perot, I too join my colleagues in commending your early efforts to raise the profile of the prisoner of war issue during the Vietnam conflict. I think there is no doubt that that really improved the condition of the prisoners of war.

I think, for me, one of the key issues, and I will be interested in hearing why and for how long you have thought there were live prisoners of war in Southeast Asia. And I look forward to hearing your testimony, and thank you for coming today.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Senator Kassebaum.

Let me just say for the record that Senator Kerrey, Bob Kerrey, is presiding over the Senate, which is why he is not here to also welcome you now, but he will be shortly. And Senator Helms is ill and not present at this moment.

So, Mr. Perot, you are well welcomed in the best traditions of the Senate this morning, and appropriately so and now we look forward to your testimony and opening statement, and then we will have some 10 minute rounds of questions, at least for a first round, and then see where we are in terms of maybe a larger amount of time for follow-up questions after that.

The floor is yours.

TESTIMONY OF H. ROSS PEROT; ACCOMPANIED BY DAVID BRYANT, ATTORNEY

Mr. PEROT. In keeping with Senator McCain's remarks on the committee hearing he has to go to, there is one basic lesson that should be carved across every citizen's forehead in this country from Vietnam.

The CHAIRMAN. Could I ask you a little favor. If you could pull the mike just a little up and toward you.

Mr. PEROT. There is one basic question that should be carved right across each citizen's forehead in this country from Vietnam, and that is you don't send people out to fight and die unless the American people go with them in spirit. We committed our troops in Vietnam, we never committed the Nation, and the rest is history. And that's the reason we're having this meeting today.

The second thing, to put it all in perspective. I got started on this process because Murphy Martin, who will testify this afternoon, brought in a young lady and a little 3-year-old boy: Bonnie Singleton and her little boy. The little boy had never seen his father; he didn't know if he had a father. His father had been shot down flying into Laos with no U.S. markings on the airplane, with tapes over his insignia. The same old ground rules: CIA ran the war, but watch my lips, uniformed military personnel were fighting and flying it.

Now the New York Times has an excellent reputation and is one of our most professional newspapers. I'm sure most of you read the story this morning.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Perot, could you just bring the mike down a little bit.

Mr. PEROT. OK, very sensitive mike here.

The CHAIRMAN. There you go, yes.

Mr. PEROT. "Because the United States did not send ground troops into Laos," that's how covered up the whole thing has been all these years. And all I can say is read about Operation White Star. Read about Colonel Bull Simons. Read about the special forces people that lived up there. They were uniformed military personnel.

Two or 3 years ago I spoke to a group of retired senior military officers and their families. And I mentioned that if there was one thing I hoped would never happen again, and that is we'd fight a war using military troops with the CIA running it. And if I had a videotape of those admirals and generals faces as I said those words, you would understand the complete confirmation that this is something you must never do.

As I speak today, look at that map. Just look at that map. Those are live-sighting reports. Discount 98 percent of them, discount 99 percent of them, discount 99.9 percent of them, and can we agree that if there is one living American held against his will in Vietnam, Laos, or Cambodia or in the Golden Triangle in Burma, that the principle is the same, that we have an absolute obligation to bring that person home?

And you may say, as one person told me years ago, don't you realize that they're old, don't you realize their wives have remarried, don't you realize that their children have grown, don't you realize how angry they would be? I don't care if the guy fights with you on the airplane all the way home and dies a minute after he lands here, we owe it to him to bring him home.

We pledged to those people we would not leave them behind when we sent them into combat. And when you go into combat, particularly as a single-seater fighter pilot and you're hundreds of miles out there by yourself, you got to believe two things. No. 1, that nobody can shoot you down. And No. 2, if they do we'll come get you. We left them.

And to put it in perspective, as I walked in here today—and this was not rehearsed—a young lady came up to me with a baby and said I hope we'll get his grandfather home. This lady has grown up without her father. I have five grandsons that I enjoy every day; I'm sure some of you do too. This little grandchild has never seen his grandfather, if he's still alive. His daughter has never known—imagine what it's like to grow up and not know.

I share your concern about the hoaxers. My own experience, since I've had very little contact with them except they call me over the phone, is that most of them are well-intentioned. I put them as bush league, minor league, non league, compared to Federal employees who have covered up, dissembled, and finessed this issue for 20 some odd years.

We're paying those folks. It is their job. I find it interesting how we coddle some of these Federal employees who you want to come

in to testify, and yet there is a whole different set of ground rules just for an everyday citizen like myself.

Now I'm happy to be here. I don't care about my image; I care about the facts, I care about the issues. And there is no question in my mind that we left people behind and we left people in Laos, and I think I can prove it to any rational person.

Very quickly, in 1969 I was speaking with John Warner who was then Secretary of the Navy. A close friend of mine, Colonel Bill Leftwich who was a highly decorated Marine, finished one tour in Vietnam, killed on his second tour, and I were visiting. We were talking about the POWs.

I indicated a willingness to do what I could, and at that point it was all covered up, the families were told not to speak out. Sybil Stockdale, Jim Stockdale's wife, was taking a tremendous beating here in Washington because she and wives felt that the men were being forgotten.

Secretary of Defense Laird felt they should speak out. Colonel Chappy James, later General James, felt they should speak out. Dick Capon in the Department of Defense—I went from John Warner to Dick Capon to Chappy James, and then some time later this led to a meeting with Dr. Kissinger, who asked me to get involved, who introduced me to Colonel Alexander Haig, who was to be my day-to-day contact.

In December of 19—and we started a series of processes to arouse the American people. In December of 1969 I met with President Nixon. We had a long discussion; we had a discussion. Throughout these discussions there was a constant theme with Dr. Kissinger, Secretary Warner, and others. They felt it would take 3 years to Vietnamize the war. They felt that many of the men would die of brutality and neglect.

They asked me to bring out a private effort; that I would have to fund it completely privately because it would lose all of its credibility if it was ever leaked. And my experience over 20 years, one constant is everything will leak 100 percent—not 90, 100 percent, including my efforts to help this committee, leak and get distorted, I might add, something I suggest you work on.

So I funded it out of my pocket. We made the Christmas trip to Laos. Now history has been rewritten on the early phase ever since the petition-signing process, and this shows you the sickness of our Government. What does this have to do with whether or not the American people want to put me on the ballot? Nothing. But you have to redefine this character, so you go out and blatantly lie and you use the resources of the Federal Government to do it. And everybody plays games with the lives of those people right there and it's sick and I'm ashamed of it.

The Christmas trip was planned to go to Laos; that's as close as we could get to Vietnam. We took medical supplies and other items needed by the prisoners. We were very precise about what we would take, and we got that information from returned POWs Fishman and Bergdahl.

We got to Laos. The Laotians would not let us deliver the supplies—excuse me, the Vietnamese Embassy would not let us go on into Hanoi. But they said if we would take them to Moscow by December 31, they would be delivered.

I then went to see the Russian Ambassador, who greeted me warmly as a humanitarian. I then explained to him why I had come to see him. He couldn't believe his friends down the street had done this to him, as far as telling me I could go to Moscow. He asked me to wait on the ground. I told him I didn't have time to wait on the ground and get there by December 31, and that every time I landed we would check in with the Russians and make sure it was OK to land in Russia.

Well we got all the way—we flew over the North Pole, got all the way to Copenhagen, and sat there on the morning of December 31. We went in to see the Russian Ambassador in Copenhagen and he said did you really think we would ever let you take these supplies to Moscow? I said, well, I took you at your word. The Vietnamese Ambassador to Laos said I could. Your Russian Ambassador thought it was a warm, great humanitarian thing to do and said he thought he could get it cleared. He said, well you can't.

Well unfortunately the medical supplies never got to the men. The good news is there was no competing news on that trip and by the time we got home the whole world was aroused about the plight of our POWs.

While I was in Laos, the Vietnamese Ambassador criticized me saying that if I were a true humanitarian I would show the same interest about the prisoners being held in the South, the North Vietnamese prisoners being held in the South, that I had shown for our people. So I went back on a second trip.

Now again this history has been rewritten. I'm supposed to be doing this on my own out of control, not with the clearance of the Federal Government, right? Don't you find it interesting that I was allowed to go into every prisoner of war camp in the South and take film and get mail. Don't you find it interesting that I was warmly greeted by the U.S. Ambassador and given every courtesy and consideration? Don't you find it interesting that our Government had arranged for me to meet with President Thieu?

Well we took all that. We got the mail, we got the pictures.

Senator REID. What is the date of the second trip?

Mr. PEROT. Spring of 1970, sir. We took all that information, took it to the ambassador, the Vietnamese Ambassador to Laos, as close as you can get to Hanoi, and he refused to accept it.

In the meantime, back at Christmas 1969 we sent a planeload of wives to Paris, and children. And they spent Christmas in Paris. These same people that still don't know if their husbands are dead or alive spent their Christmas in Paris in 1969. That had an enormous impact on the world.

So having failed to be able to deliver all this information that they wanted to, we wanted assure them that the Geneva Accords were being observed in the South. I personally went through the prisoner of war camps. They were in good condition, the prisoners were being well cared for, they were being properly fed. We took endless tape to show that this was true, and we brought mail from the prisoners back to their families, all of which they refused to accept. Then we took that to Paris. They refused to accept it there.

We were then asked to speak to various committees of Congress and we set up a number of activities in this country to again arouse the American people, and that was done. The most signifi-

cant thing that happened in this country is that across the country State delegations, on their own, organized massive mail ins and took huge amounts of mail to Paris.

The treatment of the prisoners changed dramatically. It correlated directly with the events. At the end of the war in 1973 when the prisoners came home from Vietnam, when the first plane landed in the Philippines, I got a call from one of the senior officers thanking me for our efforts. And I told him I was amazed that he knew. He laughed. He said, Ross, from 1969 on everybody flying North was briefed on what you were doing so that we could tell the other guys in the camps if we got shot down that they were not forgotten by the people at home.

Again, the only reason I bring that to your attention is history has been rewritten in the last 2 or 3 months. I find it odd that the Government was briefing pilots going on missions then and now denies any direct involvement with me.

After they came home, we had two major events for the prisoners. One, a San Francisco weekend where the prisoners came together for the first time to honor the men who went to Son Tay to try to rescue them.

If you recall the Son Tay raid, 20 miles outside Hanoi, the most heavily defended city in the history of warfare, a handful of special forces people went 300 miles behind enemy lines, successfully got into the prison camp. The prisoners had been transferred from the camp. Colonel Simons led the raid.

All of his men returned safely. The only casualty was a broken ankle when a fire extinguisher came off a helicopter in a hard landing. The sad part is the raid was delayed. If it had been done at an earlier point in time, we would have gotten the people from Son Tay.

The prisoners wanted to come together and thank the men who went to Son Tay for trying to save their lives because, believe me, nobody thanked them back here. And if you go back and look at that, it's a sad episode in our country's history where the senior parts of this country, including the House and Senate, ridiculed the effort. They did the right thing, and the POWs appreciated it and the POWs were home.

This is important for your present efforts. As the men were being led to the planes at Ton Son Nhut Airport outside Saigon—Hanoi, excuse me, excuse me—I'm wrong on the airport. Being led to the airport outside Hanoi, the senior prison officials told them you know the most serious mistake we made during the war was the brutal treatment of the prisoners in the early years; it's the only thing that united the American people against us.

There's a message here. The American people are not focused on who might be left up on that map there. The Vietnamese are very very sensitive about what we are interested in. Your committee has done brilliant work, in my judgment, in getting this back to the surface.

I'm a person who has been very fortunate, but my most treasured tangible possession is the picture that you referred to earlier signed by all the POWs. If I could keep one thing, I'd just keep that. I have scrapbooks of letters that the men wrote me when they came home that rank right with it. I have many many many pic-

tures that people—the prisoners sent me that I keep and treasure, and my most treasured picture is little Billy Singleton pointing at his father the night he saw him for the first time.

Let's go back to that little baby. Let's go back to his mother. Can you imagine what it would mean to her to point at her father and see him after all these years? Now there's only one reason that we haven't done it, and that is we've never faced the issue.

We left men in Laos. There's no question we left men in Laos. If you—let me just go through the litany. On our Christmas trip—excuse me, on the spring trip in Laos I visited with Soth Petras, who was a senior Pathet Lao official in Laos. He boasted about holding prisoners. He boasted about holding large numbers of prisoners. I asked him if he would give me a list of the prisoners, and interestingly enough he said—because it would mean so much to the families, to know if the men were alive.

And interestingly enough, he said I see no reason why not, come back tomorrow. I came back the next day, he said I've checked with my superiors and the answer is no. And I just draw one line in the sand right there. He said he had them. He boasted about having them.

Now prior to that I was briefed—now isn't this interesting. Here's this—you know, this history is rewritten. Here's this odd duck wandering around the world on his own suddenly being briefed in the embassy by the CIA station chief about where the prisoners are being held and how they know it.

Now I'm not allowed to give his name today, which I find interesting. We've got to coddle him, right? Can you imagine the exposure my family has had over the years. The Vietnamese sent people to Canada in 1970 with instructions to kill me and my family, and for 4 years my children lived with that.

But no, see, it's a Government employee so we've got to—we've got to hide him, pamper him, and so on and so forth. Now he claims that meeting didn't take place, but three of my associates—excuse me, two of my associates were in the room when it took place. It's my understanding that the man who set up the meeting remembers that it took place.

But I'll just tell you right here—I'm under oath and it took place. So I got it from the CIA station chief, I got it from Soth Petras, in spring of 1970.

The CHAIRMAN. Excuse me for interrupting you, Mr. Perot. Let me just tell you that I do not think he is going to be coddled. We are meeting with him this afternoon.

Mr. PEROT. Yes, in closed testimony.

The CHAIRMAN. Initially he will give closed testimony, but if needs be it will be made public.

Mr. PEROT. All right, sir. Whatever you say. Now let's go on.

The CHAIRMAN. Well that is the same thing we did with you, Mr. Perot. You initially gave closed testimony.

Mr. PEROT. Let's go on. Now we're in Laos, and I'm going to focus you on Laos because nobody came out of Laos. The only people that came out of Laos were people who were captured by Vietnamese troops on the border of Laos; nine people came out.

Was there ever anyone in Laos? General Vernon Walters, in testimony before Congress in 1976, page 3, says except for permanent

installations in the vicinity of Hanoi and Sam Neua, parenthesis, the Pathet Lao capital, the enemy forces did not maintain prison of war camps in the popular sense. Well all the briefings centered about Sam Neua with the embassy officials.

Then let's go back to the information that—and, again, I commend you on the information that you've had declassified after all these years. There's no reason it should have been classified.

Here is a letter from Mr. Eagleburger, acting Assistant Secretary of State, Assistant Secretary of Defense, I guess—yes, internal security affairs, to the Secretary of Defense. He talks about: The Pathet Lao may hold a number of unidentified U.S. POWs, although we cannot accurately judge how many. The American Embassy in Vientiane agrees with this judgment. It says: Defense Intelligence lists approximately 350 U.S. military and civilians as missing or captured in Laos.

Now the war is over, the prisoners have come out of Hanoi, and this is what's being written at the highest levels of the Defense Department: "There has been no accounting of U.S. personnel in Laos other than the one February list of 10 who were probably all captured in Laos by the North Vietnamese rather than Pathet Lao. We still have the Laos MIA question remaining unresolved. There appears to be a need for a well-orchestrated plan for solving the problem of our Laos POWs and MIAs." This is March, 1973. The same need exists today.

Here's the letter from Secretary Richardson to the head of the National Security Council: I am concerned over the situation in Laos regarding our men who are still being held prisoner or missing. To date there's been no accounting of U.S. personnel missing in Laos, other than the one February 1973 list of 10 men who were probably all captured by the North Vietnamese rather than Pathet Lao.

The CHAIRMAN. Could I just again interrupt you quickly to ask a question. The committee is well aware of these documents because they have only just recently surfaced.

Mr. PEROT. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. When is the first time that you became aware of these documents?

Mr. PEROT. When I read about them in the newspaper.

The CHAIRMAN. Just recently.

Mr. PEROT. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. OK.

Mr. PEROT. Yes. But, again, there's nothing secret about this. This is just kind of correspondence back and forth.

Now let's go back to the—now we have the CIA station chief. We've got Soth Petras talking about these people. Right here we've got the Secretary of Defense and the Assistant Secretary of Defense talking about these people.

And now we're at the Paris Peace Conference and we just go to the newspapers, which have never been classified, and the people at—our people at the Paris Peace Conference were asked what about the people in Laos. And our people replied, oh, we'll get them back through Hanoi. Very quickly the Pathet Lao said oh, no, you will have to deal directly with us. It's all in the newspapers, so we can't hide behind classifications here.

Then the question was do you hold prisoners? And the direct quote was we hold tens of ten. For years I thought that way a Pathet Lao was of saying large numbers, and then I happened to meet a person who was in the Royal Lao Intelligence and ask him what tens of ten meant, and he said they held the prisoners in groups of ten and it did mean large numbers but it meant tens of ten groups of ten in a group.

This man has testified before your committee, and I believe has made it clear that at the end of the war there were a substantial number of prisoners there. So the Pathet Lao boasted about this and said that we would not get these prisoners—this is important. We would not get these prisoners until we paid the Nixon reparations money and they got their piece of it. As you know, when the prisoners came home Congress decided not to pay the Nixon reparations money.

Let me just say something as clearly as I can here, and please give me your attention. I realize you've got aides giving you three by five cards and all that stuff, but just for 1 minute listen to me. We ransomed the people out of Hanoi. We ransomed our prisoners out of Hanoi. Senator McCain is able to sit right here today because we ransomed him out of Hanoi, but we never wrote the check. And that's what caused the people to be left in Laos.

If you go read the fine print, you'll see there are all kinds of interesting little stories at this point in time, people fluttering around on this issue. And then, if you want to know why this thing died at the point, keep in mind these letters were written in late March. And there is not a hint in these letters that anything has happened to the 350 prisoners that are there.

Two weeks later the Defense Department declared them all dead, and the rest is history. Here we have the Secretary of Defense saying to the head of the National Security Council—I didn't read this part of it. He says we maybe need to go in and have some more air strikes to shake these guys up. And 2 weeks later we declared them all dead.

Dr. Roger Shields did it. He told me directly over the phone years later when I was doing my study that he did it under orders. You have his testimony; I don't know what his testimony is now.

Why was that done? Watergate. The Government was in crisis. The war was over. Prisoners were home, quote. There was not a war in Laos. Keep in mind, there was not a war in Laos, folks. We never admitted it, and yet we had all of these people in uniform—who were uniformed military personnel flying missions and fighting on the ground in Laos. Who trained Vang Pao's troops? It wasn't the Girl Guides, I'll tell you that. We had a war in Laos but we never admitted it so we just shut it down, and the rest is history.

OK, now moving ahead quickly—in case you're interested and since history has been rewritten, in 1976 there was a series of interesting interviews with people in terms of their perspective about my involvement at that time. And they're on audiotape, because these were oral interviews taken directly with the people.

I'll just give you a couple of sound bites to put it in perspective, since history is being rewritten. From George Bush: Dedicated and principled were the two words I'd use in describing Ross Perot,

whose unselfish dedication to country—I kept feeling a sense of respect for his dedication, what he was trying to do. He was asked—he said what are Perot's weaknesses? He said: I think he's so openly honest and openly uncomplicated in terms of patriotism, that he might get rendered less effective for that reason, but to me it's an asset and not a liability.

I don't want to bore you with this, and the only reason I even bring it up.

Senator REID. When was that said?

Mr. PEROT. 1976. This is 3 years after the war. Chappy James, first black four-star general: All the warriors love Perot. To them he was a daring guy. He understood us. He is articulate, tough, and direct. Through all this, this stable guy who was always there and tried to calm them down and also understood where we were coming from and never lost faith in us and what we were trying to do was Ross Perot. He was the steady, stable factor right in there, and I could draw more strength from Ross than from anyone else.

Senator REID. Again, what was the date on that?

Mr. PEROT. Same time, 1976. All these interviews took place at the same time. Mr. Martin, who's here today, did the interviews.

Roger Shields, who was ordered to declare the men dead: Ross was smart enough to know what was going on. He was smart enough to know the pitfalls. And I think because he was smart enough to check and say now look, if this is wrong, if it does not fit in, if it is off the mark, counterproductive, let me know. That's the role I've always played. Change of treatment. I think he had a big part in it. That's Roger Shields.

Now, very quickly, we'll go to just one other and we'll go on to General Scowcroft, whose been around this issue forever and who, in my judgment, is one of the finest people in our Government. Now here's my kind of guy. It's 1975, Saigon is falling, can you imagine what his life must have been like that day? He was head of the National Security Council.

Former POWs were so concerned about a man named Nguyen Van Dat, who had lived with them in the prison camps, who was a South Vietnamese fighter pilot who had been brutally treated because he would slip them medicine and food when they were dying. We had identified him publicly. He had come to this country. We had honored him with a cross-country tour which he richly deserved.

And now he was in Saigon with his family and it was falling and former POWs who had been through hell were as close as Bangkok, going in to get him back. And wouldn't it be nice if everybody in this country had that kind of courage. They were going in to get him back.

I talked to them on the phone. I finally got them on the phone in Bangkok. I said, guys, do not cross the border, let me try. I called Brent Scowcroft and he laughed. He said, Ross, it's a busy day. And I say I understand. He says well I understand why we need to get him. One hour later special forces land and a van showed up. They put Nguyen Van Dat in the trunk of a special forces officer's car. They put 19 of his family members in the van, took him to Tan Son Nhut Airport, he's back in this country, he's a U.S. citizen.

Now we should have looked about Nguyen Van Dat. And Brent Scowcroft got my undying respect that day, because, you know, he proved that nothing is more important than one person that has stood by people and served them.

So very quickly from Brent here: He has dedicated the effort, the time, the money, from an altruistic motive to help this country, to help his fellow man, to help his fellow servicemen. It's the finest example of American patriotism. It's too seldom seen today. His behavior is in the finest American tradition, and is an inspiration to us all.

Now I don't say any of this for self-serving. I say this because I'm sick of having it rewritten. I never said a word about it at the end of the war. These things have never been printed or published. Well I could go on. We've got State Department officials saying the same thing. They'll be up here tomorrow, and if they rewrite history I'll come back, if you'll let me, and we'll clean that up. But I won't bore you with it right now.

Now then, after the war we had a whole series of events where I was asked to help the Government, where the Government pledged that my name would never surface, and it always did and put my family at further risk. I supplied all the on-the-ground intelligence from November through the end of the year when the 52 hostages were taken in Tehran. And when you think how much you spend every year on the CIA you'd think they could have gotten somebody on the ground, right?

When General Dozier was captured I worked very closely with the senior levels of the Government in an effort for his recovery. On the hostages in Beirut, on several occasions I was asked to help there, and I did. Again, all with the pledge that none of this would ever surface, and of course, right on cue it surfaced.

In 1986 I was asked to serve on the Tighe Commission. I was busy at the time and told them I couldn't. General Risner served on my behalf.

Early in 1986, I got a call from the Vice President. There was a man in Singapore in jail who had a tape of prisoners of war being used as slaves in the Golden Triangle. Vice President Bush asked me if I would buy the tape from him. The man wanted \$4.2 million, the Vice President said that I would be reimbursed by the Federal Government if the tape were authentic. Then he said a General Lenny Peroots would call me from Defense Intelligence and brief me on the details.

General Peroots called me. To make a long story short, the man was in jail in Singapore. We could get him out on bail for \$100,000 but he couldn't leave Singapore and the tape was in Bangkok. So we had to find an Indian businessman that he had ripped off for \$45,000, pay the Indian businessman \$45,000, and the fellow got out of jail, went to Bangkok, and right there a man I had never heard of from the White House staff, the Vice President's staff, named Don Gregg called and said we have decided not to reimburse you. Well, this was like an old movie in my life in dealing with the Federal Government. I said OK.

Then General Peroots called and apologized profusely. And I said, I'll go ahead, fellows, but I want to know one thing. Who made the policy decision? Well, they all froze on that, because

these are Federal employees so you've got to coddle them, right? And I said, well, surely the fellow's mother thought enough of him to give a name when he was born, so just tell me his name. And they froze on that.

I said, well, let me speak to the Vice President. Well, he was out of the country. He came back in the country. I said ask him to call me when he comes back. I didn't hear from him. I called him, and he said he did not know anything about it, and I said well, call General Peroots and call Don Gregg because they are the people who have been telling me about it, and then all I want to know is who made the policy decision? Well, I never got a call back.

Meantime, the guy's out of jail. I called the Vice President's office. I says he's out of jail. We'll never see him again. And lo and behold, he did go to Bangkok, he did call me from Bangkok and said he had the tape, was ready to come to the United States. Keep in mind, a Special Forces officer, a former POW named Mark Smith, had seen this tape. And the thing that captured my attention, Mark Smith said when he saw it, he cried, because these were POWs being used as slaves in the Golden Triangle. Well, Special Forces guys don't cry very easily, so that caught my attention.

Well, to make a long story short, this man was coming to the United States. He has several names—O'Bassey, Gregson—maybe somebody somewhere knows his real name. He wanted me to buy him a plane ticket. I said no, for \$4.2 million you buy your own plane ticket. He laughed. He said I thought I'd try. I keep the Vice President's office informed. He comes to Washington. He calls me. He says I am in Washington, I'm on my way to Texas. I said fine. He says no, your people tried to arrest me. And this fellow was really mad at me because he thought I had set him up. And I convinced him I didn't know anything about it, the deal was still good. They missed him at the airport. They tried.

So then I started calling Washington saying who is trying to arrest this guy? We want the tape. Well, I never got an answer to that. To make a long story short, he fled the country and the last time I heard from him he was in Beirut getting knee surgery. So that is just one more misfire.

That was in early—say that ran through the spring and early summer of 1986. The Tighe Commission report was released—was finished. They asked me to come in. The Vice President asked me to come in and do a followup study. And I said there is no need to. We know we left men in Laos. And I don't think the Government will do anything about it anyhow. He assured me they would, and I said I want the President to assure me personally that he will. The President assured me personally that he would do something about it. And so I commenced my study.

In the middle of this study, out of the blue, the Vietnamese invited me to visit—now, this was publicly known that I was doing a study—they invited me to come to Hanoi. Well, this was kind of a shock to me because all they had ever done to me before was try to kill me. And they actually got to my house one time—their representatives did—and fortunately, didn't make it to the house, but they got to the front yard.

Now, keep in mind—see, my timing is bad for some reason. We now have Iran-contra. At the end of the war we had Watergate.

Now, we have another White House crisis—Iran-contra. So we've got turmoil in the National Security Council, everybody is on the defensive, everybody is trying to protect his position, and I am finishing my study and the Vietnamese ask me to visit.

I go to see the Chief of Staff Don Regan because I was having trouble getting answers anywhere else, and asked him if they wanted me to go see the Vietnamese. And I told him that I had sent word back to the Vietnamese I would not go until I had sent an advance team in, I wanted to make sure that they were willing to talk about POWs, and I would not go unless my Government cleared it. And I would not go unless they sent me a written invitation.

I explained to Don Regan why I had come to him. I explained to him that I could not go through the National Security Council because it was suddenly in an adversarial mode and I felt it would leak it to the press. I visited with Don Regan in the middle of the day and it ran on the 5:00 news. The next morning he apologized to me saying he felt he had to tell the National Security Council. Sam Donaldson got the story. He got it from people who will be testifying before you in the next few days. It shows you where their priorities are. Turf is more important than that. Power and control is more important than one man left alive held against his will. And until we get that straightened out up here, we won't have much of a Government.

Finally, I couldn't get an answer from anybody because everybody was in a defensive mode around Iran-contra. It was Wednesday before the Sunday I was supposed to go, the advance team had gone in, I had received a written invitation, I had kept the White House fully posted. I called up and said do you want me to go or not? Senator Howard Baker, who was then the new Chief of Staff, called back and said we want you to go. We want you to go as a private citizen, not as a Government emissary, and very candidly the reason he said they didn't want me to go as a Government emissary is with all the headaches they had they didn't need one more headache like Ross Perot, Government emissary, held in Hanoi. And we want you to try to talk to them about having General Vessey as the President's negotiator, which I was in favor of and which was a good idea. And I said fine.

Well, I left on Sunday as a private citizen, went to Hanoi, visited with the Vietnamese, did everything they asked me to do, came back, briefed Senator Baker, asked to meet privately with President Reagan to give him a letter summarizing the findings of my experience and the study and the trip. I asked to meet just with Senator Baker and President Reagan. I was assured that I could. The meeting was set on May 6. When I got there we had two members from the National Security Council, Mr. Carlucci and General Powell. Mr. Baker pulled me aside and apologized and said that they insisted on being there and there was nothing he could do about it.

We visited with the President, I gave him the letter, went over the letter with him, and I will be glad to go through the letter with you because I think it covers the core of what I think we need to do still. And that was the end of the study, when I gave the President the letter.

Mr. McKillop, who accompanied me to Hanoi on the meeting and who made the advance trip to Hanoi, was invited by the Vietnamese several times after this to go back to Hanoi. He visited with them. There were no significant results. Mr. Thach, the Foreign Minister, came to New York, the UN, in 1988, wanted to visit with me. I visited with him and briefed the National Security Council about that visit.

From that point on, all my Government activities—well, you know—1989, when we had Panama, I was called immediately for emergency funds for the people of Panama, assisted the families and the wounded from Panama. 1990 and 1991, I was called again to assist the families and wounded in Desert Storm. In 1991—this is a small world and its history is being rewritten—now, just think about it. This is after your committee started, suddenly I get a call from the CIA asking me to supply money to the Defense Department that they didn't have so they could get work done for you. And I said fine, just have Brent Scowcroft call me and OK it.

Now, if you look at how we operate, anytime I get a call like this there's a pattern. I'll say have the head of the National Security Council give me a green light and I'll do it. I never heard back. It didn't surprise me. I think this was—this was a senior guy in the CIA. But I'd say it was not politically correct to do it at that point in time, so I never heard back. I hope they got the money and I hope they are doing the work. A Mr. Ford from the Defense Department was supposed to be the man that needed the money, and I waited to hear, never heard, and let that one pass.

That brings us pretty much up to sum of my activities, and I think probably the highest and best use of your time now would be for me to answer your questions, and I hope I haven't taken too long. But let's close on this thought—let's close on just this thought: You know how much your children mean to you. You know how much your parents mean to you. You know how much anybody you love means to you. Just think how much those people up there on the map mean to their families, and think what it would be like if you had lived in hell, just lived in hell for 20-some-odd years, think what it would be like to spend a few years back here before you died. Think what it would be like.

Now, we haven't mentioned Russia. We haven't mentioned Korea. Hell, the record in Korea is worse than it is here, in terms of numbers. And if you question that, read General Mark Clark's testimony. Russia? They took people at the end of World War II, they took people from Korea, and they took people from Vietnam. And all you've got to do is go dig through the SIGINT, particularly around Vietnam, and you'll find it.

We have an enormous capability to gather this information. Thank God you have had the guts to force it out in the open. There is no reason for that SIGINT to be secret now. The wall has come tumbling down. The world has changed. The technology we used to break the codes and the technology back in Laos during the war is so primitive it would be like the wedge and the hammer. You're not giving up any secrets. Let's stop covering it up. Let's expose it. Korea, Russia, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Golden Triangle, those jump at you. Maybe I've missed some that you think of.

But how would you like to be a person just like you sitting over there rotting in Russia since World War II, Korea, or Vietnam?

Thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Perot. [Applause.]

The CHAIRMAN. There will be no demonstrations. Let me give a warning now, if I may, that there will be no demonstrations on either side of any questions that are asked or answers given, and if anybody sees fit to try to demonstrate, this warning will serve as notice to the Sergeant at Arms that we will politely ask people to be removed. The committee wants to do its work.

Now, Mr. Perot, I appreciate your testimony. You have touched on a great many areas. There are a lot of questions for us to ask, questions of large scope and questions of detail. There is a lot of emotion, obviously, in what you have talked about. If you come before the committee and you talk about a person with a child that greets you coming in here and this is a child that has never known a grandfather, we understand that. There is not a Member of this committee who has not likewise been confronted or written to, and we know the emotion that is driving this issue.

The effort today, without being perceived as insensitive, because I do not think there is a Member of this committee who does not feel this emotion every day, particularly those who served in Vietnam, but without succumbing to that emotion, lifting ourselves to a level where we are really looking in hard-nosed terms at fact, at reality, trying to dig into this, I would like to get at some larger reality.

Now first, for the record, I would like to establish whether or not at some point in time you became privy to a conversation that Dr. Roger Shields of the Defense Department had with Mr. Bill Clements, who at that time was in the Defense Department with the responsibilities for POWs. Did you become aware of a conversation he had?

Mr. PEROT. When I was doing the POW study in 1986 for the Vice President I heard this story, I called Dr. Shields. I said, Roger, I'm surprised.

The CHAIRMAN. You knew him?

Mr. PEROT. Yes. Oh, sure. I said Roger, I'm surprised that you declared all the men dead in April 1973. He said, I was ordered to do it. And he said he was ordered to do it by the Deputy Secretary of Defense, William Clements. Then he said words to the effect that he protested, because just 2 weeks earlier these memos were going around.

The CHAIRMAN. The memos that you referenced earlier?

Mr. PEROT. From Eagleburger and Richardson in the Defense Department.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me come back for a moment, when you say he protested—

Mr. PEROT. Basically, he didn't think they were dead. He knew that we hadn't gotten anyone out of Laos. Then he was told words to the effect, you didn't understand, they are all dead. Then Dr. Shields said Ross, everything you need to know from me you can get in a memo I wrote to the Secretary of Defense. And if they won't give it to you, I have a copy. But I would rather you get it from them.

Now, I was supposed to have access to anything. And a part of my education was learning how big the labyrinth can be. When I asked for that document there was a lengthy delay and then I was told we can't find it. Now, this is an interesting term, and I heard this term on a number of occasions—we can't find it. That doesn't mean it didn't exist. That didn't mean they didn't all know about it. That just meant they couldn't find it.

How many years did it take them to find the Gaines report, the Brookes report, you know, so on and so forth? There is a pattern here.

The CHAIRMAN. Now, let me try to establish, I want to be very clear, that in 1976 Dr. Shields confirmed to you—

Mr. PEROT. 1986.

The CHAIRMAN. 1986—that he had gone in in 1973 to Bill Clements.

Mr. PEROT. He didn't say what time exactly he did it. But—excuse me, that would have to be 1973, yes. Because it happened April 14, 1973.

The CHAIRMAN. And at that time something was said to the effect that he argued with Bill Clements, said he could not say they were all dead, and Bill Clements said you did not hear me, they are all dead.

Mr. PEROT. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. Is that accurate?

Mr. PEROT. Yes. Then, he told me to try to get it. I couldn't get it, so he said he had a copy. I went back to him and said I can't get it, can I have your copy? And he seemed very nervous about my getting his copy, said that it was in storage, it would be difficult to find. I said Roger, I'll pay the cost, I'll send people up, whatever you want me to do. And then finally, in a very oblique way he indicated someone had talked to him and he shouldn't give it to me. So I never saw the memo. I hope you all have the memo. I don't know what the memo says.

The CHAIRMAN. Now, turning to a larger picture for a moment, you have pointed to this map over here and you point to the live-sighting reports and you talk about the need to get one American back, if there is one American back, two. Whatever persons might be there, we need to get them back. Now, repeatedly in your deposition to the committee you talk about the importance of negotiations. Again and again you say—let me read. In answer to one question you said if we just go straight to Laos and Vietnam and Cambodia and negotiate hard and stay on it, we will get it done, correct? And it has been your consistent belief which you expressed to the White House in the eighties that we should be negotiating for their return, is that accurate?

Mr. PEROT. Yes, sir, and if I may elaborate, let's assume you have something I want. My only way to get it is to negotiate with you. That's on a person-to-person basis. On a national basis we have a war we did not win. We had no leverage at the end of the war. They kept those prisoners as leverage to get the Nixon reparations money. In my letters to the President, which maybe we ought to go through in more detail—

The CHAIRMAN. We will.

Mr. PEROT[continuing].—We covered this in great detail. If I have to negotiate with you and I have no leverage, I really need to understand you, I need to understand your feelings, I need to understand your sensitivities, I need to build some kind of a relationship with you so that we can overcome the distrust which exists between the two nations.

They are worried to death. If I may finish this, excuse me, sir—I walked in the room in Hanoi, and their first question was why are you here? This was after the advance meetings, the letter of invitation, and so on and so forth. And my response was because you asked me. And they sat there for a minute. And they said we hold no POWs. And I responded don't embarrass yourselves. I know too much. And then they broke out laughing and said we had heard you were direct. We are direct, too, we will get along fine.

And then they said, your own Government declared these men dead in 1973. Why should we think your Government wants them back? Pretty good logic, right? Why should we think your Government—and then I explained it to them. I said our goal is to rebuild a relationship with your government. And since this is our goal, why wouldn't it be counterproductive to finally admit after all these years that we have these men and to give them back?

Senator KERREY. Excuse me. Mr. Perot, are you talking about the April 1987 trip to Hanoi.

The CHAIRMAN. Now, let me follow that up. That is the logic I want to try to discuss openly here. And I do, incidentally—I want to go through your letter to the President and I would like to go through it almost step by step. But before I get to it I want to pursue this.

So they say to you why does your Government now expect—how does it expect us to get people back, you declared them dead?

Mr. PEROT. No, sir. They said why should we think your Government wants them back.

The CHAIRMAN. And you made it clear to them why we want them back, as have other people, is that not true?

Mr. PEROT. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. Now, I take it you have great respect for General John Vessey, correct?

Mr. PEROT. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. And General Vessey is a person who you would believe his word. If he says if I tried to do this and you tried to do that, would you take him at face value?

Mr. PEROT. Absolutely, yes sir. I have no reason not to.

The CHAIRMAN. Now, you continue to believe, even to this moment, that a live-sighting report follow up is not an efficient way to resolve this problem, do you not?

Mr. PEROT. Absolutely.

The CHAIRMAN. Because they might move somebody, you would not really find out anything, correct?

Mr. PEROT. Let's go to Washington, DC., and let's go to a row of townhouses somewhere near the Capitol. You put one person in there, give me absolute freedom to go to any townhouse within a 1-square-mile radius, but I have to give you an hour's notice, I'll never find him.

The CHAIRMAN. So the only effective way, this is what I am getting at because this is our current policy, but the only effective way in your mind is to negotiate, correct?

Mr. PEROT. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. And you have suggested again and again through your deposition that we should negotiate because they are in Laos or they could release them through Laos, is that correct?

Mr. PEROT. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. Now, General Vessey, I might say, had a similar experience to the one I did with Foreign Minister Thach, in that—and we asked him the other day, he was under oath—I asked him the question, I said, did you have responsibilities within the military service for this issue?

He said, no.

So you come to it as somebody who has assumed responsibility with one goal, and that is to get the truth and get an accounting? Is that accurate?

He said, yes.

In the course of the last 5 years, you have had occasion to travel to Vietnam how many times?

Five times, he said.

And you have had successive days of meetings with the Vietnamese, correct?

He said, correct.

I said, have you ever had occasion privately to take former Foreign Minister Thach aside and say to him, hey, look, why don't you come clean on this? Why don't you, if you need money, if you need something for it, just give us the guys who are alive? Did that ever happen?

He said, I have raised that issue at every meeting.

Have you ever had any nibble or any indication whatsoever that there was a deal to be made if the right terms were struck?

None, was his answer.

Has anyone ever offered you, at any level of the Government or civilian cadre, entre to live Americans by virtue of your position?

No, sir.

Do you have any evidence today whatsoever from those five trips and from your journeys around Vietnam that someone is alive today in Vietnam?

None of the new information we have gathered leads one to believe or adds to any of the information we had before that led one to believe their might be live Americans.

Now, I, likewise, took Prime Minister Thach and a couple of other people aside in private conversation and said, look, this is the moment. It is 20 years. You could do it through Laos. You could do it this way. Not a nibble.

The answer is, Senator, we would love to do it. We do not have anybody to trade for. There is no deal to be struck. So what do you negotiate for today, Mr. Perot? What is it that you believe is missing in this equation, which, incidentally, I take it, in your trips, likewise, never produced this fruitful deal that you are talking about?

Mr. PEROT. First, General Vessey, who I feel—who is an outstanding man, was given a very narrow mission, was not given the

freedom, the flexibility. If you go into my letter to the President, I wanted him to have a much broader mission. I wanted him to be able to show some goodwill on our part.

There are all sorts of little insignificant things, like they would go on—see, they feel they won the war. They feel that we treat them like they lost the war. They are very, very sensitive about our relationship. They have figured out that if—I told them one time, I said, if you had let us win, we would have rebuilt your country and you'd be an economic superpower now, like Japan and Germany. [Laughter.]

Mr. PEROT. But, the point is, when we lose, we don't know how to handle it. See, we've got this giant ego problem back here, is that we want to thumb our nose at them, put our finger in their eye, and stiff arm them. And that's basically what we've done most of the time.

When I was visiting—and this is all in this letter—things like they had a very accomplished piano player. They said, you let the Russian piano player come to your country. You won't let ours come to play. Russia has Chernobyl and you turn out en masse to help the Russian people. The Russian people—the Russians funded the war in Vietnam.

This is the Vietnamese speaking. They said, we couldn't have fought you if it hadn't been for the Russians. You pander to the Russians. You treat us badly.

We had a typhoon. You didn't come. You didn't help us. You helped at Chernobyl. You see, they said, then General Giap, one of General Giap's dreams before he died was to see the United States. Now, that's a little—I suggested we let him speak at the War College. I thought it would be very interesting to our military people to hear his view of the war, which he would have been delighted to do.

Little, insignificant—you build a relationship. If you and I don't like one another, and we have to negotiate, and you have what I want, I've got to overcome all that scar tissue, all that hurt, all that bad will. General Vessey needed a broad mission, not just a little narrow mission. Five times in 5 years won't do it.

General Vessey has to come to Washington, get the clearance, get the money, get the budget, get the mission. All these fellows with their turf, their control, their power. You see what I mean? You know how the system works. That's why it didn't work. It's not because he's not a great man.

Is General Vessey a good negotiator?

I don't know. I've never worked with him in that area.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Perot, my time is up. I just want to tie that up with one other question, but we want to try to stay on the times here. I have a lot more to explore here, and I think it is very important to thoroughly explore this, because it leads to a number of questions of earlier time. But, answer for us this, if you would, please, because it puzzles a lot of people.

With the Vietnamese as entrenched as they have been, and as many public denials as they have made, with as many people rebuffed as they have been over the years, with no POW ever having come out in this period of time, with all that they have on the line in terms of their public pronouncements, and the pride and so

forth, how could they afford to have somebody come back today as the result of a negotiation, to run loose around this country saying, here is how they mistreated me for 20 years, and moreover, they kept me a prisoner, we should never give them anything or deal with them?

Mr. PEROT. Well, why don't we just take the things we have here. This is the \$4 billion offer from the Vietnamese. It's in the papers now, thanks to your committee. You've got former senior officials saying it happened, then saying it didn't happen. You've got a Secret Service official who apparently overheard the meeting, who the White House doesn't want to come forward. Now, think about it.

It's your son over there. And they're playing games with your son's life. I don't care about the protocol about a Secret Service guy. If this guy has something to say that will bring a man home, you should have access to him today, right away.

Now, let's assume that when you finally get him he doesn't have anything. Well, that's one more misfire. But there's every reason—this is an old story, gentlemen. I've known this story for years. The thing I didn't have was the wheels and engine that you now have. You've got Allen's sworn testimony, which he apparently has pulled back on, based on what you read here. You've got these other people who were around it and in the room. Bring them in here. Put them under oath. Ask them.

See, this is something you're doing nobody has ever done. You put people under oath and ask the direct question.

Why would you go to Canada if you were Vietnam in 1981 and make a \$4 billion offer to return POWs if you didn't have anybody? Now, you're in the Soth Petrasay trap. Now, you're in the Pathet Lao trap. Now, you've got them both. There's your ace, right there.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me say to you very politely and nicely, but firmly, that does not answer the question that I asked about how you deal with the issue of somebody coming out today, be it Laos, as you have suggested as an out.

Mr. PEROT. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. Now, somebody comes out of Laos and they still have their tongue in their mouth.

Mr. PEROT. Sure.

The CHAIRMAN. They are capable of saying, I was in Vietnam for 15 years. This is ridiculous. I didn't spend my life in Laos. And they beat me, and they made me be slave labor. And don't you dare engage in a relationship with them.

Now, the Vietnamese are not stupid. They sit there and say, what assurances do we have, if they even could return somebody. Now, how do you cope with that reality?

Mr. PEROT. You take the President and the leaders of Congress and sit down with them.

The CHAIRMAN. That is it?

Mr. PEROT. Sit down with them, and say, look, War is a dirty, ugly thing. We have a relationship with Russia, and every reason to believe they still hold our people. We've got a new ambassador to Laos. Now, only in America would you give them full status when they boasted that they held your men and never sent anyone home.

See, we've always stayed close to Laos. We've always had State Department people over there, so on and so forth, since the end of the war. And we had to do that because we didn't have a war in Laos. Right? Didn't have a war in Laos.

So, I would just say that we haven't discussed this yet, Senator. And before you and I leave, this is so important to me, I pray that we'll drop conspiracy theories. I pray that we will not have a special prosecutor. I pray that we will not look for scapegoats in this country. Because if we do, we will never get our men back.

I pray that we charge it all off to honest mistakes. And that we all come together in this country and say, there is just one issue. One person. Two people. Three hundred people. Who's ever there. Who's ever there we must bring home. Who's ever in Russia we must bring home.

And we will not go back and scapegoat. Because if we start the scapegoat process, I take you to Iran-contra. Iran-contra started in 1986, right? It is now 1992, 6 years later, and it's still going.

See. These men are getting old. They're grandfathers. These men need to be brought out now.

So, I'd say if the President and the leaders of Congress sat down and said, you have our assurance—now, people like—I can go out and build a consensus with the American people that we will accept all of the unpleasantness and all of the ugliness that will occur when they come home. And I will spend whatever time I need to spend, and I'm sure all of you would too, with the men who have suffered so terribly, explaining to them, it's the price we paid to get you out. It's the only leverage we have.

See. We could not leave you behind to rot longer. It's the price we paid to get you out. Then they're going to say, well, why didn't you pay it earlier? And we say, no excuse.

And then they're going to look at us and say, well, we hate you. And I say, well, I understand.

But all I can say is we finally got our heads cleared and we did it. And we will have to have a tremendous amount of support for these people when they come home.

Let me complicate it for you. Some are going to come home with Laotian wives and children. They had to do that to survive. You've been deep enough into the data to know that. That does not mean they're turncoats.

Let's assume you did 10 years in a cage in a village back in a triple-canopy jungle, and the war was over, and you knew this country had left you. And one way to have some semblance of a life was to blend into that little community. We'd probably do it 100 percent.

So, it'll be complicated. But let's sweep over that. Let's not get lost in the trivia. Let's get focused on how you get them back. Negotiate. We'll build a consensus among the American people. I would work night and day with you to do that. That won't be hard to do if it was the right thing to do. We'll get it over to the people when they come home, and to their families, it was the right thing to do.

Their must be families here today. I would say, we can't ask them to vote, but if we said, how many of you are willing to pay the price of admitting we were dead wrong, clearing the record, lis-

tening to tales of horror and abuse when the people come home, but getting them home. I am certain we'd get 100 percent consensus from the families. Better to do that, than leave them there to rot.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me say that I do have more questions, but we will do it on another round.

Senator Smith.

Senator SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let me just say I certainly concur with your remarks, Mr. Perot, that retaliation would be counterproductive or even the threat of retaliation would be counterproductive. A lot of mistakes have been made, policy mistakes for sure. And to get the men home now should be paramount. And I agree with you, and that is speaking for myself.

I do have one general question that I would like to ask you, but before that, I just want to go back on a couple of points that you brought up regarding Dr. Shields' testimony. Dr. Shields has confirmed to this committee what you have indicated to the committee today, what Clements told him, he has confirmed that under deposition. He also wrote a memo for the record on May 24, 1973, saying he did not feel comfortable with what he said when he said it. And he said that of course in public testimony. He also said it in his deposition to the committee.

I guess, as I search through, there is kind of two prongs to the fork. One is Vietnam and the other is Laos, as you have already indicated. We really have not, and I think where the committee thus far is struggling, is we have not been able to pin anybody down on that window of time between late March 1973 and mid-April of 1973, when that statement did occur that they were all dead.

We have seen those, and I have read all of those. The committee has read those memorandums that you referred to, the Eagleburger one specifically, in which we have a pattern here of intelligence being fed to the highest levels of Government, decisions being made based on that intelligence. The Eagleburger memorandum was exactly as you stated it, which basically said, hey, wait a minute, we do not know what has happened to these guys over in Laos. Maybe we ought to start the war again. That is a correct characterization of that memorandum.

However, the statement was still made in mid-April that they were all dead. And we still have not gotten that explanation regarding Vietnam, nor Laos, as to why it was made. As hard as we have pushed, as hard as we have pursued, as deeply as we have dug into this, we still, in my estimation, have not satisfactorily gotten those answers.

And I hope that we understand that what Mr. Perot has said here today to the committee is his own involvement. He is not a Government official. He has given us a great deal of information, but there are some Government officials that this committee really has to put on the spot. And one you mentioned was the [CIA] station chief, whom we will be talking with later on.

But let me just ask you one question. Given the situation that we face and what happened in 1973 regarding Vietnam, you referred to the live-sighting reports on the map. There was a hearing last

week in which there were some witnesses who came, who have testified to the DIA that there was an underground prison facility. We also have a lot of testimony regarding the whole prison system in Laos, and the fact that we were in fact tracking, if you will, for want of a better word, intelligence of POWs in Laos. We have all of that on the record from witnesses. But when you get to the highest level Government officials, who really are the ones who would have to know, we do not get the answer. They say it is not true or they do not recollect it, or whatever.

How would you recommend that this committee move there? We have the subpoena power, but even a subpoena cannot force a person to tell the truth. It can force a person to come to the committee, but it cannot force a person to tell the truth. And it just seems to me that if we are going to get the truth, that is where it lies, at those policy positions back in the mid- or early 1970's, where the answers like which we have not been able to get. And it may not even be as high as the Presidents, frankly. And I do not believe that it is.

I believe that it is at another level, and we have not been able to pin those people down. And I say it has been darn frustrating for me, but we have not done it. I would just ask, you have been involved in this issue a long time. I respect what you have done, as I indicated in my remarks. Just a general question. What would you recommend that we do? Give us some advice.

Mr. PEROT. Well, my short answer would be, treat them like you just treat ordinary civilians.

The CHAIRMAN. Would you pull the mike a little bit closer.

Mr. PEROT. Treat them like you just treat ordinary civilians like me. Order them up here and tell them what they have to do. But, no, they are Government employees, so they get—you know, we got to coddle and burp them. But, on a broader basis, if you just want to get it done, and I know you do, I would get them all in a room and give them total amnesty—total immunity, I guess, is the word you use here, anything to get them to tell you the truth. Because with the truth you can move.

You see, these people are worried to death, a huge number of them are worried about their images. This is a town that lives on how it looks, not how it is. Now, so get them—just the fact, nobody is ever going to criticize them. They just come in and level with you on the whole thing.

You get all the guys who ran the war in Laos here in the room. Give them total amnesty. Get all the people around the embassy. Give them total amnesty. Maybe you could get a giant breakthrough of just a total disclosure.

Now, then again, we'll give you immunity if you give us everything. If we find anything after we have given you immunity that you didn't give us, we're talking probably criminal penalties. Maybe that clears the guys head and he gets it out of him.

Senator SMITH. Does it make sense to you from a negotiation standpoint, you did talk about it, and I could not agree with you more, that chasing down live-sighting reports, if in fact the Vietnamese or the Lao have people, they are certainly not going to be there when we get there if we know we are coming.

Mr. PEROT. Yes.

Senator SMITH. You have said that very succinctly. Do you think, does it make sense to you that General Vessey's role in this issue is limited to Vietnam and not expanded to Laos? Does that make any sense to you?

Mr. PEROT. It's too limited. In my letter I talk about giving him a very broad role. He needed to have a very broad role. He needed to be able to make decisions on the spot, without having to come back here and check with somebody whose name none of us would recognize, to see if he can bring a piano player in here to do a concert. Little things like that. Do you see what I mean?

He should be—then, with the Vietnamese, he said, look, let's let the young man come over here and play the piano. They said, General Vessey, you mean you can—sure. Bring him. I'll take him home with me.

Now, at that point, suddenly General Vessey is a man with clout in our country over there. Right now he is just a—now, keep in mind, I first brought up the name of General Vessey to the Vietnamese at the request of Senator Howard Baker.

Now, as history has been rewritten, they claim it was done earlier. But the facts are, the Vietnamese had never heard that General Vessey might be the presidential negotiator until I brought it up. Howard Baker asked me to bring it up.

Let me show you how sensitive they are. They were thrilled that we were following what they called the diplomatic process. And that is, if you want to send in a diplomat, you first say, is this person acceptable to you. They said, never before—they gave me a long lecture on how rude and arrogant our people had been that had been in to negotiate with them.

They were thrilled that we were saying, is he acceptable.

Then I set up with them a step-by-step procedure that they would follow and that I hoped that our Government would follow. And that is, that I would come back. I would tell them that General Vessey was acceptable. They were very pleased with the idea of having General Vessey. Then the President would announce that he was going to appoint a negotiator.

Then, privately, we would send diplomatic officials to talk with the Vietnamese to appoint General Vessey. Privately, they would send word back that he was acceptable. And then we would publicly announce General Vessey.

Well, the next thing that happened is the State Department had a press conference. I have got it right here. And said that the Vietnamese have been dragging their feet since last fall on accepting General Vessey. That was, I think, in April 1973. They had never heard of General Vessey until March 1973, and they certainly never heard of him in the fall.

I called General Vessey when I read that. I said, General, when did they first talk to you? It was much later than the fall.

And I was worried to death that this would foul up what I thought was a very delicate negotiation. And the way to do it is to do it diplomatically. Give him a broad role.

Let me throw in a couple of things here, Senator. No. 1, let's not have any military rescues. If anybody wants to talk more about that, I will be glad to. I know something about rescues. Let's not have any. I've never been for that. And we can go into that.

Now, when I last left JCRC, most of them were in Hawaii, and I never could figure out how guys in Hawaii were going to get information out of Laos and Vietnam. Think about it. Think about it. I assume you all know what JCRC is. If anybody doesn't, OK. That's the group that's supposed to be getting the people.

Finally, you looked at it, it was a relatively small number of people, most of them in Hawaii. Then there's an interesting—did you ever interview Colonel Mather?

You have interviewed him?

Senator SMITH. I have talked to him personally. I do not know if the committee has.

Mr. PEROT. Fascinating. This is the world's longest stationed in one place Air Force officer in the world. He has been in Bangkok forever. I never could get anybody to tell me why.

Now, I had authority from the President of the United States that anything I wanted to know I was supposed to get answer to. I never could get that answer. I finally ran into the chief of staff of the Air Force and I said, is there anybody in the Air Force that has been in one place longer than Colonel Mather? And I didn't even know if he would know who Colonel Mather was.

And he laughed. He says, no, he's got the world's record. I said, can you tell me why. He said, no.

Well, at this point, you and I both know he's a CIA guy in an Air Force uniform. Now, see, JCRC was kind of a Chinese fire drill all of these years when the information was hot. If you want to get in trouble as a refugee coming out of Vietnam or Laos, come in and talk about having seen Americans.

That is not a positive thing to do in the refugee camps. If you want proof of that, I'll produce a DEA agent who used to work in the refugee camps, who will give you chapter and verse on the fact that the word was out: Do not say anything about living Americans when you get to a refugee camp unless you want to get shipped back across the river.

Now, I'm not proud of our country acting like this. As a matter of fact, I'm disgusted. But we want the men back. Let's drop it. Let's give them immunity. Let's give them amnesty. Shoot, let's send them to Paris. I don't care what you have to do. Let's get on with getting the people back.

And it's the fear of disclosure on the part of all these people who have been a part of this web that keeps this thing in its limbo.

Senator SMITH. My time has expired, Mr. Chairman. I might just say, regarding Colonel Mather, that progress has been made. He has been moved now to the DIA office in Washington I hear. So at least he is out of the Bangkok area.

Mr. PEROT. No, I'm not saying—he may be a good man. But I'm just fascinated—

Senator SMITH. Well, he has worked on the issue a long time, and he has been in one place.

Mr. PEROT. I am just fascinated. He is the longest-living Air Force guy in one place I've ever heard of.

One last thing, if I may. The manmade island, Garwood's testimony. Has anybody been to the manmade island?

You see Garwood came out, when, in 1979? Believe it or not, nobody in our Government ever interrogated Garwood until 1986.

He was so alienated that they—again, here is the way the system works. They asked me to build—to meet Garwood, talk to Garwood, get Garwood comfortable enough so that he could be interrogated. I did.

General Eugene Tighe, who is retired, interrogated him. My secretaries typed up the tape. He refers to a manmade island where American prisoners-of-war were held. He is very precise about where that manmade island is. I kept saying to our Government, it's either there or its not there. Surely we can determine that.

Nobody, I guess, knows today. And Garwood, you know, is a turncoat, or whatever he is. But the facts are, he was allowed to roam around the country.

I'll never forget, on one occasion when I talked to him, he said, when you went to Hanoi, did you go into the airport? And I said, yes. He said, and they drove you straight into town? I said, yes. He says, you drove right by a warehouse where former POWs work.

Now, that may or may not be true. But that's another little vignette that I can remember. But the key thing is, if you build a manmade island it's probably still there, right? And manmade islands don't look like regular islands.

The CHAIRMAN. It depends who builds it. If the Government built it, probably not.

Mr. PEROT. That's true.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Reed.

Senator REID. Mr. Perot, it is my understanding that in the late 1970's you were responsible for a rescue of some of your employees who were being held. Is that true?

Mr. PEROT. In Teheran, yes, sir.

Senator REID. And this was something that you did on your own, without the Government?

Mr. PEROT. Well, I used every resource in the Federal Government. I went to Teheran. I went to our Government in Washington. I went to our embassy in Teheran, which was the worst mistake of my life. Because, within 10 minutes after I'd left the embassy, a who's who of the revolutionaries were looking for me.

I had managed to stay alive in Teheran unnoticed until I went to the U.S. embassy. Then I had the interesting challenge of getting out of the country to get all the stuff ready for the rescue. Fortunately, we made it. But I tried the State Department. I tried with a lot of people. The person who helped me the most, interestingly enough, was Dr. Kissinger.

He actually had them out, but the General who ran the prison would not release them because it was a revolution and nobody was in charge. And we either had to lose them or rescue them, and we rescued them. Fortunately, we got them home.

Senator REID. Mr. Perot, you made a statement emphatically, in fact, you said, to make sure you are all paying attention, words to that effect.

Mr. PEROT. Yes.

Senator REID. And I took note of this, you said that Senator McCain and other prisoners were ransomed out of Vietnam.

Mr. PEROT. Right.

Senator REID. But we did not pay the ransom. I would like some more explanation of that.

Mr. PEROT. The Nixon reparations letter is what got them out. Then we didn't write—

Senator REID. Pardon?

Mr. PEROT. The Nixon reparations letter, which promised—I forget how many billions of dollars—was it \$3 billion or \$4 billion? Somebody must know—\$3.2 billion. Then, when the prisoners came home, Congress was angry and refused to write the check. But it was in anticipation of the check that we were able to get the POWs. And when you meet with the Vietnamese, that is still a very sensitive point. They feel we broke our word.

Senator REID. And that is one of the reasons that you personally feel that those people may have been left after the war, after Operation Homecoming, we have not had more cooperation as a result of the fact that we did not live up to the ransom letter, reparations letter?

Mr. PEROT. Yes. And specifically, in Laos, the Pathet Lao said they would not release the prisoners until they got their piece of the reparations. But men came out of Hanoi. Nobody came out of Laos. And about 2 months after the men came out of Hanoi, and less than 2 weeks after the Secretary of Defense and the Assistant Secretary of Defense were writing one another memos saying we have nobody out of Laos, we declared them all dead.

Senator REID. This is the Roger Shields—

Mr. PEROT. No, sir, this is Mr. Eagleburger and Secretary Richardson.

Senator REID. OK. Now, Mr. Perot—

Mr. PEROT. And then Roger Shields on the 14th ordered to declare them dead.

Senator REID. I have been looking through the material staff has prepared for us and listening to your testimony here today. I note that we have a 1969 Christmas trip, the wives went to Paris. The spring of 1970, the party in San Francisco. How many times did you personally go to Southeast Asia, twice?

Mr. PEROT. Three—four.

Senator REID. Four times?

Mr. PEROT. Yes. But three on business. Three on business. The Christmas, the spring, and then the 1987 trip.

Senator REID. And also people who are here in the room with you, Mr. Murphy and others, went there as representatives for you on other occasions, is that right?

Mr. PEROT. They were with me.

Senator REID. And did they go alone also?

Mr. PEROT. I can't recall.

They did go, yes, they did.

Senator REID. That is the information I have.

I would be interested—

The CHAIRMAN. Excuse me, Senator. Would you mind if I interrupt?

Senator REID. Of course not.

The CHAIRMAN. When you say three for business, you do not mean business for EDS?

Mr. PEROT. No, no. Three on this mission. No, no, there's no business for computer. That's myth number 903. No, the fourth one. Let me—three on the POW/MIA. Then, my wife was invited to

christen a ship in Japan. I took my children. The Navy invited me and my son to go on an aircraft carrier. We went to Hong Kong, left the girls. Ross and I went on the aircraft carrier.

I wanted him to understand war as a little boy. He stood on the flight deck and watched these great young people take off, fly missions over Hanoi, come back, thank God they all came back. But some of them barely came back. I mean, they were smoking. They had problems coming in. And he couldn't get over how young they were. You see, he had seen airline pilots.

Then I took my wife, my daughter and my son to Bangkok, and we flew to Laos. And they could literally see war on the ground. And we got to Laos, and we visited the people in Laos. We visited the people that we had worked with there. Visited the people in the embassy. Visited the missionaries and the doctors and so on and so forth.

And then we continued our trip. That was the fourth trip.

Senator REID. So four trips, plus trips that you directed that your staff take?

Mr. PEROT. The staff made, yes.

Senator REID. Do you have an idea, a rough idea, of how much money you have personally spent on the situation in Southeast Asia dealing with the prisoners-of-war?

Mr. PEROT. I think, and I could give you a very accurate figure, I think it was—during the war it was around \$3 million. And that was back when a dollar would still buy something. [Laughter.]

Mr. PEROT. They say that's close.

Senator REID. Mr. Perot, Senator Kerry and Senator Smith have asked you this question in varying degrees. Let me just ask it about as direct as I can. How would you personally resolve this POW/MIA situation if you had the authority to do so?

Mr. PEROT. No. 1, I would figure out everybody that ought to have—that would have to have immunity to come clean. No. 2, I would give them immunity and get them to come clean. And at that point, some of these hazy pictures would be crystal clear pictures. And as I said earlier, if we gave immunity and a person didn't come clean, then we're talking heavy criminal penalties later.

So there is an overriding reason to come—

The CHAIRMAN. Would my colleague yield for a minute there?

Senator REID. I would be happy to yield to the chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. The immunity you want to apply is immunity—if the issue lies over there we do not have any jurisdiction over them. I mean we do not give them immunity.

Mr. PEROT. No, no, no. I'm talking about all of the people here in this town who make your life so complicated.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, that does not get the fact if they are over there. How do you get them back if they are over there?

Mr. PEROT. OK. Fine. Then if you say we do not care about getting all the cards up on the table. Now, I think you've made an excellent point. Say, let's forget the clutter that's here. Let's forget the haze around the news story on the \$4 billion 1981 offer from the Vietnamese. You made a good point.

I could always zero in on Laos before and nobody inside the establishment, nobody who is sensitive will ever take you head to

head on Laos. Because you can't debate Laos. They'll duck it. They'll try to bring you back to Vietnam. In our first meeting I warned you. I said don't let them finesse you back to Vietnam. Stay focused on Laos. Remember?

Now, then, this gives you the same focus on Vietnam. You don't show up in Canada offering \$4 billion if you don't have something to sell. Right?

See, I will sell your prisoners back to you for \$4 billion? If that happened, that's a big ace. I would say, maybe just so that you really knew, you'd do enough diligence here to make sure this was clean. Then you sit down. Get the leaders of Congress and the White House to agree, we're going to go to the wall and get it done.

Then be very open with the American people on these issues that you have mentioned earlier, in terms of the anger and the reaction when people come home. I can tell you, these people desperately—over there—need us. These people desperately want us to treat them with dignity and respect. They desperately want to be brought into the world community.

We have tremendous leverage. Then you build the relationship. You work with them. I have every confidence that getting it done over there, if we had a consistent ongoing effort with people who know how to negotiate.

We have a problem in our country. Most of us don't know how to negotiate any longer. If we go to Sears and Roebuck and the hammer is marked \$5.95, and you either pay \$5.95 or leave. Well, now, you get out into some of the rural areas of this country and you find folks that understand how to negotiate because they still barter. And that is the type of—and you have people here in Washington who are good at negotiation too, but you've got to find someone who not only is a great person, but who can negotiate.

And then that person goes to Southeast Asia—and you've given me a free reign here—I would say don't come home. I say, wait a minute, you mean I can't do a 3-day junket and come back and have a press conference? No.

When can I come home?

When you've got the people. You come home on the plane with them.

Now, go and stay. Then just put the anchor down and go night and day, and give that person freedom to do a whole series of things to send them positive messages that we are really sincere. And then stay glued together here in Washington, because this is an issue that, particularly in a presidential year, in an election year, could breed a lot of divisiveness. Don't let this be a campaign issue. Just totally focus on finding out what it takes to bring these men home and get it done.

Senator REID. Mr. Perot, I think from the testimony that we have heard during these many months—for example, one of the early hearings we held asked a man by the name of Mr. Bell, who had spent most of his adult life in Southeast Asia, and I asked him, I said, do you think there were prisoners-of-war left after Operation Homecoming? And he answered, yes. It was the first time that anyone had talked that way publicly before a congressional committee.

Mr. PEROT. Yes.

Senator REID. And I said, how many? And he said, about 10. Now, in closer scrutiny, he appears to be saying those people did not want to come home. But, regardless of that, he said there were 10 people over there.

Now, let us assume that he is right. And I think he was telling the truth to the best of his knowledge. Following up with what the chairman asked you, we have had the Vietnamese and the Laotians tell us that there are no prisoners over there. They have told us not once, but numerous times.

Now, let us assume they were lying. What can we do to get them to acknowledge that there were people there immediately after the war, even if there are not any now? What I hear you say, we need better negotiators. We need to barter. We need to offer them money. But I am not sure that is the answer.

Mr. PEROT. No. We need to go and stay. If we do a three-day turnaround and say, gee, they said they didn't have them. Or we do a 1-week turnaround and say, they say they didn't have them. I'm saying we need to just go over, make it clear before we come that this is a whole new era, make it clear that the U.S. Government is united in this effort.

Now, let's take Mr. Bell, though, for example. You know what happened to Mr. Bell? Have you all followed Mr. Bell where he is, what he's doing?

The CHAIRMAN. Very closely.

Mr. PEROT. He paid a big price for telling you that, right?

The CHAIRMAN. No, not necessarily. Not necessarily, no.

Mr. PEROT. He didn't?

The CHAIRMAN. No, not necessarily. No. Not necessarily. I mean that is not clear, Mr. Perot.

Mr. PEROT. What was his job and what is his job?

The CHAIRMAN. Well, I have met with him at great length and talked to him about that. And I just do not think it is that clear.

Mr. PEROT. But it was not a promotion, right?

The CHAIRMAN. No, I do not think it was a promotion.

Mr. PEROT. Did he have an office?

The CHAIRMAN. I think the issue, Mr. Perot—

Mr. PEROT. No, let's just take it a piece at a time, Senator. Did he have an office? Does he have an office? Where was he? Where is he? Did he when he first got there? Was he just sitting there? So those stories were wrong?

No, everything I've heard is that Bell got trashed as a result of telling you they had 10. And I don't know what the truth is. All I know is what I read in the paper and hear. He's in Bangkok now, is that where he is?

The CHAIRMAN. He is in Bangkok with a portfolio that takes him to each of the three countries in the region of interest, not just Vietnam.

Mr. PEROT. Right. OK. Well, then we'll drop that.

Senator REID. Let me just close, my time is gone, by asking this. It seems to me that there is sufficient evidence, if we were a jury, that there were some people left behind after Operation Homecoming.

Mr. PEROT. Right.

Senator REID. As a juror, though, I would have a difficult conclusion establishing now that there are still people there alive. Now, what information do you have, Mr. Perot, that there are still people there?

Mr. PEROT. All right. I think you're using reverse logic. Let's—the Pathet Lao boasted about having them. If this story is true, the Vietnamese claim they had them in 1981. Now, for example, if a country boasts about having our people at the end of a war, and if our own intelligence would reinforce that we did leave people there, and it does, the burden is on them to show us what happened to them.

Where did you bury them? How did they die? What did you do to them? See, we don't ever get to that level of detail, certainly not in Laos, because we didn't have a war in Laos.

See, you've got to—do you understand all the crazy nuances and sensitivities around Laos? A lot of it doesn't make sense. But when you realize, how did we have all these MIAs in a place we didn't have a war? It makes you wonder, doesn't it?

Well, the facts are, if everybody will quit worrying about history and start worrying about these men, is OK, Laos, we have coddled you ever since the war because there was nonwar here and we didn't want you to talk about some of the stuff that wasn't too pretty. But now, we want to talk about our men. You boasted you had them. What did you do with them?

Has anyone ever said the burden is on you? I don't have to prove to you that there is someone still alive. You, Laos, have to prove to us what happened to those people you claimed you have.

The CHAIRMAN. Before turning it over to the next Senator, if I could complete that. Would you accept the concept that Laos might not be able to account for everybody?

Mr. PEROT. A very primitive country. Triple-canopy jungle. I would accept—you asked me—in the context of your question, may not be able to account for everybody. Certainly the answer to that question would have to be yes. Could not account for most everybody? Absolutely, they could account for most everybody because they had them. And they had a list and they boasted about it. So what happened to them?

The CHAIRMAN. Let me just again say, when you say they had them, the committee at this time has no evidence in front of it that they had—when you say them—a significant number. There is no evidence to that effect. There is the Eagleburger letter, or memo, that says DIA lists approximately 350 U.S. military and civilians as missing or captured. Since that time the only evidence in front of the committee is to the effect that there were the nine people who were returned and perhaps a few others held, but a tiny number if they were held.

There is an Eagleburger reference to a concurrence of the DIA on a very small number who might have been held. There is no specific knowledge of 350, 400, ever being held. Now, do you accept that? Do you have other evidence that there were a large number actually held?

Mr. PEROT. You have left out the Pathet Lao boast. The Pathet Lao boasted about holding tens of ten at the end of the war.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me turn to that. Pethrasy was interviewed and he has repudiated his statements indicating that they held large numbers. I have a copy of his actual quotes here. He was interviewed on November 12, 1991, and he said his statements during the war years were only propaganda to increase the morale of the Pathet Lao.

He insisted on Government sincerity in accounting for all U.S. POW/MIAs, urged the charge to convey to the families of POW/MIAs there are none living in Laos. While clearly in frail health, he appeared alert, and his mental faculties were very acute.

Now, we and others have put strong pressure on trying to follow up with these people. He said there was no way I could know about any prisoners, whether in Laos, Cambodia, or Vietnam. As I said, I received the reports from Sam Neua and made statements based on these reports.

For the most part, I think that even the authorities in Sam Neua could not say with any accuracy how many aircraft had been shot down or how many pilots killed. As for the numbers captured, much of that was propaganda to mobilize the masses and strengthen the morale of the cadre.

So if you were to discount Soth Pethrasy, and if you were to read the Eagleburger memo as—and I read it very closely and carefully, incidentally—I do read it as suggesting that some people may have been held, and I read DIA as concurring in a small number, but I do not see this very significant number. I am just trying to deal with fact.

Mr. PEROT. What do you see when you look at the map?

The CHAIRMAN. I understand. Let me turn to that. Let's deal with this as well.

Mr. PEROT. This is the live-sighting reports.

The CHAIRMAN. I am going to be the devil's advocate here. I'm going to be the guy who's trying to ask some of the questions that ought to be asked, and I don't want my questions to indicate a belief, but I want them to test this process.

Mr. PEROT. Sure.

The CHAIRMAN. DIA appeared before us in several consecutive days of hearings on every single one of those flags. Every flag you see there is a report. We are analyzing every single report.

We have taken the strongest reports for Laos, and for Vietnam. Now, DIA, who is accused of discounting all of these reports out of hand, says to us that 93 percent of those flags are resolved, that 69 percent of them, or 1,091, are reports that they can equate to an American who is accounted for, i.e., somebody who did return, to missionaries, to civilians who have been jailed from time to time for violation of Vietnamese Code, and all the members of the committee accept that they exist.

24 percent have been determined to be fabrications. Now, that is DIA's determination. We may determine that we do not agree completely, conceivably, with all of that.

7 percent, 109 of them, are unresolved first-hand reports that represent their current focus of analysis and analytical determination.

4 percent, or 62 of them, pertain to Americans reported in a captive environment that are still the subject of investigation.

3 percent, or 47 of them, are reported sightings of Americans in a noncaptive environment, i.e., an American working as a truck driver, married with a Vietnamese family, or some such statement.

Now, that leaves some flags up there, Mr. Perot.

Mr. PEROT. Is this all Vietnam analysis, or Vietnam and Laos?

The CHAIRMAN. This is Vietnam and Laos. Now, this leaves some question marks. I think it is very important for the press and for the public to understand, DIA is not suggesting there are not some legitimate questions up there, and I think every member of the committee accepts there are some legitimate questions in these, but there are not 900 unresolved flags up there.

Mr. PEROT. How many do you put in the legitimate question category?

The CHAIRMAN. I think the 110 are legitimate questions.

Mr. PEROT. Can we agree that if there's one, the principle is the same?

The CHAIRMAN. I beg your pardon?

Mr. PEROT. Can we agree if there's one, the principle is the same?

The CHAIRMAN. Absolutely. That's exactly what Senator Reid was getting at, Senator Smith and myself.

Mr. PEROT. The number is not important to me.

The CHAIRMAN. I agree, the number is not—well it is important in some regards.

Mr. PEROT. Well, you want to account for them, certainly.

The CHAIRMAN. Precisely, and also because there is a great deal of myth surrounding this issue—about 200 people in tiger cages in a camp, or 400 people were moved from point A to point B.

Now, what the committee is trying to do is bring this down to an area of reality. That reality suggests that some people may have been left behind and that they were unaccounted for at the end of the war. We have as many as 130 question marks. General Vessey has acknowledged his list is 135.

I might add, DIA itself, which gets great discredit in this process, has a list of 269 that it began with, 190 of whom were in Vietnam, many of whom are resolved, but still today they acknowledge there are some 60 or so very legitimate question marks.

So we're here for a real purpose, but I want to make sure that we keep it to the base of reality, and that is where I think Senator Reid's question was directed.

Mr. PEROT. Well, I cannot give you what I believe to be the precise number left. I am more than happy to sign on for the numbers you've just given, because they demonstrate that we've left people behind, and that is the question I think we're all concerned about, and if it's just one, the principle is the same.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator McCain.

Senator MCCAIN. The principle is the same, Mr. Perot, but the magnitude of the problem is clearly different, I think you would agree, and the principle is that we have to continue to do everything we can. That's why this committee is in being, and we've had other committees, and I think it's ample testimony to the tenacity of the American people that we continue to pursue this issue until we get it resolved as much as possible.

You have already said that you believe that there are Americans that were left alive in Southeast Asia. Do you believe there was a conspiracy to cover up this information?

Mr. PEROT. I have never said that. I don't even want to discuss it.

Senator MCCAIN. I didn't ask if you'd said it. I just wanted to know if you believed it.

Mr. PEROT. I don't want to discuss it because I think it hurts getting anybody back home. I don't have proof. I have never spent a minute looking for conspiracy theories, proof of conspiracy, for one simple reason. It is counterproductive to getting the men back home.

Senator MCCAIN. But it's very important in our efforts to find out whether there's Americans are alive or not, or if there's a conspiracy then our problem is one thing.

Mr. PEROT. Then you'll have to talk to somebody who's a conspiracy theorist. I am not.

Senator MCCAIN. So your answer is no, you don't believe there's a conspiracy?

Mr. PEROT. I haven't spent a minute studying it, so I don't have a position, and I would encourage that we not focus on that. I don't think it has anything to do with getting the men home. I think if we focus on that, it has everything to do with the fact that we'll never get the men home. I think it is the fear of that that has delayed it 20-some odd years in getting the men home.

Senator MCCAIN. Well, I respectfully disagree, because I think if there was a conspiracy to cover up this information, we have a serious problem, a much more serious problem on our hands, because we have hundreds of men and women who may be involved in the most terrible kind of activity as opposed to a situation where either accidents were made, or for whatever rational reasons, men were left behind.

If there's no conspiracy involved, I wonder why you would want to immunize—give people immunity to testify?

Mr. PEROT. Well, I basically—the question all came up that they felt that you had to get some testimony. If you don't need any testimony—if there's something you need to know before you sit down and have serious negotiations, the thing that keeps coming up, say gee, we came over, we had a brief trip, we asked them, they said they didn't have anybody.

Now, let's go to the Middle East. I want to buy a camel—

Senator MCCAIN. I'd rather focus on Vietnam.

Mr. PEROT. Stay with me for a minute. I want to buy a camel. I'm out in the middle of the desert—you don't want to hear this story? I don't want to waste your time.

Senator MCCAIN. Please proceed. The chairman has agreed to give me additional time.

The CHAIRMAN. I want to make sure you have a chance to explain it.

Mr. PEROT. I'm just trying to give you a one-on-one lesson on negotiation.

Senator REID. I want to hear about that camel.

Mr. PEROT. I'm in the middle of the desert. I find a tent, I find a camel. It's a three-legged, one-eyed, 40-year-old camel. I stop my jeep. I go to the tent. I ask the Arab, would you like to sell your

camel? He said, oh no, it's my son's pet, it's like a member of the family. We couldn't sell it.

Being a good American, I jump back in the jeep and drive off. He chases me across the desert saying, I thought you wanted to buy the camel?

You know, step 1 in a negotiation is no, I don't want to do it. You see, you've got to build trust, confidence, and respect. The Vietnamese, if you spend time listening to them, just listen, listen, listen—and maybe we'll get into some of that if you have time.

They are so sensitive, and they are so angry, and they are so frustrated, and they so desperately want to be a part of the world community. All of the pieces are there to get this thing resolved, but I think that we really have not gone into what I'll call long-term, intensive negotiations with them. I believe that if they ever felt that it was to their advantage to clean this up, they would.

Laos has no incentive at all. They've got full diplomatic recognition. We'd have to really sit down and come up with a good plan on how to get Laos' attention.

Senator McCAIN. Mr. Perot, since you brought it up again, I don't believe that I was ransomed out of Vietnam. I believe the B-52's got me out of Vietnam, and I think that it was clear that after the North Vietnamese grossly, blatantly, outrageously violated the Paris Peace Accords, which clearly mandated that they not invade and conquer South Vietnam, after they did so, that the American Congress and people very justifiably were not prepared to provide any money, nor am I at this time, as a result of their invasion and conquering and subjugation of South Vietnam.

So we have a difference of opinion, clearly, as to what brought the Americans home, of which I have previously acknowledged your tremendous and very key and vital effort, for which I am extremely—and the rest of the POWs and families remain very grateful.

By the way, I will provide you information. I am told by staff that Mr. Bell is now at a higher grade and is paid more highly than he was before he testified before the committee. I'll be glad to try and get that specific information to you.

In the case of Mr. Garwood, Mr. Perot, did you know that Congressman Gilman and another Congressman—I believe it was Congressman Wolf, I'm not sure—visited Mr. Garwood immediately upon his return?

Mr. PEROT. I may have been told that.

Senator McCAIN. Well, he did, and Congressman Gilman has several times stated he specifically asked Private Garwood at time if there were any Americans alive, if he knew of any live Americans. Mr. Garwood denied that at that time. Several years later, after Private Garwood was court-martialled for his behavior while he was in Vietnam and convicted, he then came up with the information that there were Americans alive.

I am not saying that he's not telling the truth. I'm saying there is certainly conflicting information concerning that.

Mr. PEROT. I believe he told me in one conversation—and we should check this with General Tighe and the record—that he wanted to talk about it when he came home, but he was on orders

from his lawyers that he shouldn't talk about it until his court martial was completed.

All I did was respond to the U.S. Government's request to finally get Garwood down on tape. I arranged it, General Tighe did it, my secretaries typed it. We gave it to the U.S. Government.

Senator McCAIN. What year was that?

Mr. PEROT. That would have 1986.

Senator McCAIN. And he returned in 19—

Mr. PEROT. 1979. If they'd asked me in 1979, I would have tried then. They waited till 1986 to ask me.

Senator McCAIN. Then the premise is that you would have been able to overrule the advice of his lawyer?

Mr. PEROT. Nobody asked me. He might have said no to me, but I'm just saying I didn't want to interfere with the Government's business. They asked me to do it. I assumed they had interrogated him. I was shocked when I found out they hadn't.

Senator McCAIN. I'd like to just briefly touch, Mr. Chairman, on some memoranda that have been received which I know will be of some interest. The first one is from Mr. Craig Fuller, Office of the Vice President, telephone conversation with Colin Powell.

I hope that Mr. Perot will be or has been provided copies of this.

The CHAIRMAN. I don't know that he has.

Senator McCAIN. I think he deserves being able to have it.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me be sure we get that. Let me tell you what, Senator. If it's possible, why don't we make a copy of it, and while we're doing that we'll interrupt and then come right back to you.

Senator SMITH. I haven't seen it either, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. It has been distributed to the committee.

Senator SMITH. I apologize.

The CHAIRMAN. We'll get you a copy right away, Mr. Perot.

Senator McCAIN. I'll wait till the next round, then, to ask about it, because I think Mr. Perot deserves to be able to see that before he's asked about it.

Mr. Perot, I would just have another comment. You said, if you want to get in trouble, if you're a refugee, that you should say something about, make a live-sighting report or a sighting report. I would be very interested where you got that information, because clearly, again, that's a gross violation of the instructions of our Government to people in the refugee camps.

I visited the refugee camps and personally saw that the first or second question after name is, do you know of any Americans alive anywhere that you have been? So I would be very interested in any documentation you could provide that would show that someone has gotten into trouble because they reported that they had seen a live American or had information about Americans, including the fact that there's been 15,000 reports received since 1975. Would you tell me how you know that people get in trouble?

Mr. PEROT. A young man who was with the Drug Enforcement Agency brought it to my attention. He had worked inside the refugee camps, and I'm sure I can reconstruct his name. I've got it somewhere. Hopefully he's still with the Drug Enforcement Agency and you can talk to him. He was on the West Coast with DEA the last time I talked with him.

I got permission from DEA to send him back over. They gave him some time off. He went back over, went into the camps, and he can brief you on what he found is the current status.

He's married to a lady from Thailand and could speak the language, and so was able to be quite effective with the people in that part of the world, or at least that's my perception, so he can give you his experience.

But basically, over the years, I have had a constant in my life of talking to Vietnamese refugees and what-have-you who have wound up in the United States that it was not wise to bring up live-sighting reports coming into a refugee camp.

Senator McCAIN. Well, you know, a lot of the information we had was that many of the refugees felt that the fastest way you could get to the United States of America, and it did happen on several occasions, is if you did report having seen a live American, and I think it's well-documented that some of those individuals were brought directly to the United States who had reported that.

Mr. PEROT. I think if you check that, that's a small number in the early years. That turned out not to be a free ticket pretty early in the game.

Senator McCAIN. I think one of the reasons why that happened only in the early years was because we found out that they were using that as a way to get to the United States.

There's another memorandum here that I want to ask about, Mr. Chairman. I don't know if Mr. Perot has seen it or not. It's a version—typewritten version of Howard Baker's March 19, 1987 conversation with Mr. Perot. Have you seen that?

Mr. PEROT. No, I haven't. I haven't seen anything. It hasn't even been leaked to Newsweek yet.

Senator McCAIN. Well, it's rather important. Do you recall a conversation with Mr. Baker on March 19, 1987?

Mr. PEROT. Well, let me hear the conversation. You're giving me a date, a time, you're hitting me cold. Just read the conversation, and I can tell you whether or not I recall the conversation. I doubt if I could tell you whether it was that date.

Senator McCAIN. I think in fairness to you, Mr. Perot, I think maybe you ought to be able to look at it rather than me relay it. I'll be glad to wait until the next round.

Mr. PEROT. Read it to me, and if I had it, I'll tell you we had it.

The CHAIRMAN. His time is up and other Senators are waiting. What I want to do is try and keep—we're a little off the schedule, but we are going to have another round, and Senator McCain will come back on that.

Senator McCAIN. Mr. Chairman, I believe it would be fairer for him to be able to look at it and digest it.

The CHAIRMAN. We are going to be taking a break. Let me just announce that there are a couple of votes coming up back-to-back, so what we'd like to do, Mr. Perot, I understood you were going to stay with the other panel, is that correct?

Mr. PEROT. Right.

The CHAIRMAN. We appreciate that enormously, and if you're willing to, we can take our lunch break earlier because of the votes and then come back and resume with you in the early part, rather than stay through. I told you we'd try to finish up around 1:30.

Mr. PEROT. Just, you know—I don't expect any courtesy, but the same committee that coddles all these guys in the middle of it, if you would give me the documents you want to ask me penetrating questions about before I read them in the New York Times, I would appreciate it.

The CHAIRMAN. We don't have the vote yet, so we're going to go to the next Senator, but any articles or any of this subject we would be happy to provide you during that period of time. I don't want you to have any surprises here.

Mr. PEROT. That's all right. I'm just a taxpayer, you know. Treat me like dirt, go ahead. If I ever get a job with the Federal Government, I'll get special attention.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Grassley. Could we have order, please?

Senator GRASSLEY. Mr. Perot, I would like to refer back to the discussion about Dr. Shields.

Two questions, the first one not as important as the second one: whether or not, you know, where that document might be, and second, and most importantly, can you tell us who directed Secretary Clements to tell Dr. Shields that they should all be declared dead, because I doubt in my mind that Secretary Clements would make that decision at this level on his own authority.

Mr. PEROT. I don't know where the document is. Dr. Shields told me he had a copy at one time. I don't know whether he has one or not. The other one should be in the files of the Secretary of Defense. I don't have any idea who gave Secretary Clements his instructions.

Senator GRASSLEY. Well, let me ask you this: do you believe, in your own mind, that somebody would have given Secretary Clements instructions on that decision, or maybe I'm wrong and he made it at his own level?

Mr. PEROT. I just don't know. Has he appeared, or isn't he appearing here—Secretary Clements?

The CHAIRMAN. He will be appearing here.

Mr. PEROT. I would suggest you just ask him, because I don't know.

The CHAIRMAN. He has already been deposed, I might add.

Mr. PEROT. I don't know, I'm sorry.

Senator GRASSLEY. And that's satisfactory, if you don't know. I don't expect you to say anything else.

Referring to Richard Allen's—and the newspaper report that was out in the 1981 Vietnamese offer to exchange POWs for reconstruction financing, did Richard Allen tell you that? Did you hear from Richard Allen's own lips anything along that line?

Mr. PEROT. No.

Senator GRASSLEY. You did not. Do you have anything that you could say that would shed any light on that supposed conversation and that supposed deal?

Mr. PEROT. The story's been around. I've heard the story for years. Never had the proof, or near proof, that you have now. I think I'm correct in saying that there is a list of Canadian names around this story. Does your committee have those?

The CHAIRMAN. The committee does not. We talked about that earlier. Obviously, we would be—

Mr. PEROT. Let me dig through my files.

The CHAIRMAN. We're trying to turn those up.

Mr. PEROT. If there's a list of Canadian names around this, I'm not sure, but that story is not a new story, and it's a story that was always on the surface with names floating around it, including Canadian names, but none of the proof. See, you're back to the people in the room situation, and now you're getting close to the people in the room.

But again, let's assume it happened, and let's assume that in good faith the decision in the meeting was, let's not pay ransom, let's go get them, which is the story that is floated around. Let's just go get them.

Well, in all candor, that was a bad decision, but it could have been an honest decision. You can't rescue people if you don't know where they are. That was the flaw in that decision.

There's an interesting phenomenon. In this same timeframe, suddenly the Defense Department sends a guy down to me for money for a rescue. Fascinating, under the let's go get them theory. I declined, called the Defense Department, said this is a serious mistake. Then, in that same time—

The CHAIRMAN. What's the date of that?

Mr. PEROT. This was 1981, sir, in that period. I can't be more precise. In that same period, the Defense Department sent someone down and they wanted me to give financial support. I said no.

Then later I learned that a rescue attempt was made and a Colonel Garrity, who was the same officer in charge of the Marines at the Beirut airport was in charge of that whole operation and, when I did my 1986 study, I asked to see Colonel Garrity. It turned out it was very difficult to get to see him, so on and so forth; finally had a meeting in the CIA.

I do not know exactly who Colonel Garrity is, had an excellent reputation. Still does, I am sure. But was very much involved with the CIA and, at that point was retired; and I believe working for the CIA. And we had a meeting that was not that productive because nobody ever got that precise, but the rescue attempt was made under his direction.

And so, let's assume that the decision was, let's go get them. Honest mistake. No villains. It did not work. The thing that intrigues me though is, you don't ask for \$4 billion unless you have something to trade. That is the strongest possible proof Vietnam still holds the high cards, that they feel we will pay big money for our men.

Senator GRASSLEY. In regard to the Pathet Lao, so-called ambassador that you had a meeting with, Soth Petras, just your general view. Because of criticism of him, do you believe that he was in a position to know what he was talking about and that he told you the truth when he spoke about the number of prisoners of war?

Mr. PEROT. I had no reason. I have no reason not to believe it. I reported to the U.S. Government. They were fascinated with it. Nobody at the time said, oh, he's a liar. You cannot trust him. Ignore him. Don't go over there and talk to him. Everybody was fascinated. They were absolutely fascinated with the possibility that he said he might give us a list. They were not surprised when I came back the next day and said, well, he didn't give us a list. But no negative attacks were made on his credibility by the people

representing the U.S. Government in Laos at the time this took place.

Senator GRASSLEY. On another point, I would like to have you discuss your impressions of the intelligence information on POWs that the DIA held in 1986; specifically, I would like to know what conclusions you might have reached then about the possibility that American POWs remained in custody in Indochina as a result of your reviews of those intelligence files.

Mr. PEROT. I think my conclusion would closely parallel those of the Tighe report. And the fact that there was substantial evidence that they had left men behind.

Senator GRASSLEY. Now, on the next point. And this is not meant to be confrontational. It is just an opportunity for you to express your viewpoint. Because I am sure somewhere this will be brought up, or you have even had to respond to it before, that your interest in Vietnam was commercial; for your own commercial accomplishments. So, would you please discuss your interest, if any, in becoming involved as an entrepreneur in investments or business ventures in Vietnam?

Mr. PEROT. Never had any interest at any time. When you consider the fact that everything I did angered them—hardly a unique position for them to suddenly want to bear-hug me. But that was never an issue. I am very fortunate in that I can do business anywhere in the world that I want to. And why in the world would I want to go to an undeveloped Third World country to do business? It is probably one of the least attractive places in the world to do business.

On the other hand, any time an underdeveloped country's senior officials visit with me, they will always talk about capitalism because they see me as a capitalist. For example, if senior officials, you pick the country, from Russia to the Philippines, to South American countries, people that come in just to visit, immediately they'll go, how can we make a more dynamic economy in our country? That is just a constant in my life.

Now, when I visited with the Vietnamese, they raised the question about the need to have a better life for their people. In my letter to the President, I suggested that he send a team of people as a gesture of goodwill, to help them put together a plan for their economy. Small thing to do, plans. As you know, blueprints do not create buildings. You can have a blueprint for a house and still not have anywhere to sleep, right? Until you build the house, nothing has happened. Just little things like that.

Here is the most significant conversation I ever had with the Vietnamese about business: One night at a dinner he was asking me questions or they were asking me questions about how you create a free-enterprise economy, and I said, well, if I were you, I would see what do my people need. And since I had been on your streets, I see that all your people ride bicycles, but that most of those bicycles, or all the bicycles, seem to be built in other countries.

So, I would say, maybe we should build bicycles here. Then I would put together a plan to build a bicycle factory. And probably in the middle of it I would conclude that I can't really build a competitive bicycle. Then I would go to the country in the world that makes the best bicycles and try to do a joint venture. They would

be willing to do it because my people buy bicycles here on the streets.

Then, you have built a new little industry in your country and you have created jobs. And if you build world-class bicycles, not only do you have bicycles for your people, but you have bicycles you could export. And I said, now, that is the way you look at business opportunities.

That, I am sure, totally bores everybody in this room. But if you tell a story like that in Russia, or in Vietnam, or in countries where nobody understands how you do it, it is like you had given them the keys to the kingdom.

I told that story and, if that is the expression of anything, other than just having a conversation in the evening. I did not offer to build a bicycle plant. I don't know how to build a bicycle. I never suggested anything other than, here is the way you would create jobs for your people.

The idea for that came as I watched a man on the curb of the sidewalk with nothing but a file in his hand build a sprocket for a bicycle, and I thought, well, these people really have interesting skills. If you can do that with a file and a piece of metal, it would be fascinating. And so, when they brought it up a couple of days later, I said, well why don't you build bicycles. I doubt if they ever took me up on it.

I have had no business conversations with the Vietnamese, have no interest in business conversations with the Vietnamese. When my associate, Mr. McKillop, went over at their request several times, after my trip, they would discuss—or always raise discussions of how you build companies and what have you.

They sent this letter of intent totally unaware. I have never responded to it. I told Mr. McKillop not to respond to it. I told him never to go back to Vietnam again, because the last thing I wanted to do was get involved in anything other than MIAs. All I have done is spend millions of dollars out of concern for these people and their families.

And I certainly do not want to see—forget that—there is no business opportunity in Vietnam that I am interested in. But, certainly, in this case, I would not mix my concern for these men with that. And I can give you—for example, the Russians wanted me to do the same thing. They asked me to move to Russia and help rebuild their economy. Now, isn't that interesting?

See, everybody in Washington says, oh, that is politically correct, right? They have still got our guys from World War II, and Korea, and Vietnam. It is OK to do it in Russia. And I can go on and on. Other countries that want me to do the same thing. These countries are desperate. They need help.

Vietnam is the same situation. When you think in terms of negotiation, that is an interesting piece of leverage. If they thought we would help them build a series of small industries that would put their people to work and, over a period of time, help them rebuild their economy, you could get a lot swept up in a hurry.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Brown.

Senator BROWN. Thank you. I wanted to follow up on your basic agreement with President Reagan and Vice President Bush, when they asked you to come and take a look at this question to review

it. As I understand it, you agreed on the condition that, if your report indicated action was warranted, that they would take action.

Mr. PEROT. Yes.

Senator BROWN. Do you feel they honored that commitment?

Mr. PEROT. No, but I know why.

Senator BROWN. What should they have done that they did not do that was indicated?

Mr. PEROT. In a perfect world, we would not have had Iran-Contra but we did, and it was at a time—see, when I started there was a deep concern and a willingness to act. And then, out of the blue, Iran-Contra hits and suddenly the whole Presidency is at stake. Everybody is on the defensive. Everybody is going through their files, etc, etc, etc.

This was no time to get anything done. And they did not want to get involved in minor issues like this at that time. So as I have said many times, I felt like I have been caught in the cycle twice. At the end of the war, we had Watergate. And now, at the end of the study, we had Iran-Contra.

It was just unfortunate, but again no villains, no conspiracy. Let's just say, it happened. And now let's go back, take the worst numbers, get down to the last three—30 percent. Say there is 10, there is 15. However many are left held against their will, the principle is the same as if there are 50,000.

Senator BROWN. Earlier this year, when the committee visited Southeast Asia and talked with Government leaders in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, we asked Government officials in Laos what happened to our POWs. We reiterated the same evidence we have heard today, that you are well familiar with, of a number of Americans, a significant number of Americans that were down there that were reported alive that we know landed on the ground. We reiterated the fact that only a handful were turned over to the Vietnamese and put to them squarely the question, what happened to them?

The statement given to us by, I believe it was their deputy secretary of State or an equivalent position—John, you may want to correct me on his title. Perhaps he was an assistant, but the number two man in their foreign affairs department—was simply that at that time, they did not understand the importance of POWs to us, that they have come to understand now, and that they simply killed them.

You, of course, have had enormous contact with the Laotians through a long period of time. How do you evaluate that statement?

Mr. PEROT. First, I have not had enormous contact with the Laotians. Every time you go to Laos, the U.S. Government stonewalls you from getting to the Laotians. So you don't have that.

I don't think anybody can argue with that very much. So let's take it step by step. The Laotians have gotten everything they want from our country, including full diplomatic recognition. They don't need any headaches on this issue. To them it is a minor issue. Your group was in Laos how many days?

Senator BROWN. A couple of days.

Mr. PEROT. Couple of days. All they had to do is slow-dance you for 48 hours and get you out of town. And they got full diplomatic

recognition after you left, right? Not that you gave it to them, but it happened. In other words they did not want anything to interrupt that. That was in progress. They got it. Now, the only thing I would suggest, say: Gentlemen, if you killed them, where did you bury them?

I had a very interesting conversation one time when they were worried to death about how it would look if they killed a group of people. I am back in Vietnam now. And I said, if you will openly admit it, we can turn it into a positive thing, believe it or not. They said, how do we know it will be positive?

I said, look at what the Russians did around the Polish officers. You remember the Polish officers that they killed. And they finally said, we killed them and here is where we buried them. And from the world's point of view, that was a positive step because it accounted for the men.

I would spend a great deal of time saying: Gentlemen, No. 1, you boasted that you had them; no. 2, you said that you would give them back if we paid the reparation money, your share; no. 3, we didn't do it; no. 4, we declared them all dead a couple of months later; no. 5, we kept giving you everything you wanted over the years, we coddled you versus Vietnam because we never really had a war with you.

See, being captured or killed in Laos is just as painful as being captured and killed on Normandy Beach in World War II. So, to the person on the ground, it just is—you know, it is just as intense as World War II.

But, Laos has had all this special treatment over the years. Now then, if we don't ever say—see, you boasted—I took you down through the chain. You boasted about it, so on, and so on, and so forth. Now then, now you say you killed them, well, where did you bury them?

Senator BROWN. I should mention, at least for the record, the person we talked to and received the statement from was the vice minister of foreign affairs. His statement was that the villagers killed them, not necessarily official representatives of the Laotian Government, although, as you know, it was not the most formal Government at the time.

I think your suggestion that we ought to follow up with regard to where the bodies are buried I think is appropriate. Hopefully, that is being done.

Mr. PEROT. I have one concern here. I think we should put a tremendous premium on live Americans. Because if you can just kill a guy, bury him, and satisfy us, that is not exactly what we have in mind at this point in time. I think we need to keep—so we would have to be careful how we approach whatever—you get what I am saying here. I wouldn't want them to suddenly say, we will bring this problem up.

Senator BROWN. I guess my question, though, was to get your feeling of whether or not you believed that statement.

Mr. PEROT. I would say without any question, because the country is so primitive and it is so decentralized that there were some men killed when they crashed. Not at the time of the crash, but they would make it safely to the ground and be killed by the local people.

Some of that occurred. On the other hand, we have this evidence. If you can get our Government to ever stop playing games and just lay it on the table to you, if we knew who they held, at one point in time.

Senator BROWN. So you believe that there is substantial evidence that indicates that not all of them were killed?

Mr. PEROT. Yes. Now the people that were held at the end of the war may have been killed later. But, let's go to 1988. There is a picture floating around of—a satellite photograph, in Laos, USA walking K. You must have it. Does your committee have it?

The CHAIRMAN. Yes, we do. We will be analyzing that at another hearing.

Mr. PEROT. USA walking K. Walking K is a distress signal. Satellite photograph, 1988, Laos. And you say, well, I mean with the mindset that some people seem to have you say, well, but that was 1988. Can you see a walking K tomorrow? God I hope so. I don't know. But that is 1988, a long time after the war, somebody.

You have seen the photo of the B-52 stamped out in the grass? The CHAIRMAN. Yes, and we are going to be analyzing all of those publicly with the DIA.

Mr. PEROT. You see, then we look at all this, and then we take—and I think you should take the view, all right, let's just squeeze it down as tight as we can. Then I think I could get 100 percent of you to agree that, if we could squeeze it to zero, there is no issue. But we are not even close to zero. Even with the tightest squeeze we can put on it, we are still over a hundred and something people.

And we have all agreed that if there is one alive the principle is the same.

Senator BROWN. Your memo to the President of April 8, 1987, is very direct, very concise, very to the point. It starts off, no. 1, we left POWs behind at the end of the war in Vietnam; 2, we knew we were leaving them behind; 3, the men left behind were held in Laos. The memo goes on. Obviously that speaks directly to the concerns of the investigation of this committee.

Are there sources of information that led you to those conclusions that this committee has not yet heard from? I appreciate that that supposes that you have had access to all of our sources, and you may not have. But I ask the question because, if there is any source that we have not looked at or reviewed, we would appreciate your guidance.

Mr. PEROT. Have you reviewed the NSA people who came in under oath and gave you the signal intelligence information they had collected?

The CHAIRMAN. Yes, we have.

Mr. PEROT. That would be one of the more obscure things, I guess. If you have the time, if you could ever vacuum out everything that was collected electronically. See, they collect so much they can't get through to analyze it.

But if we could ever go through and analyze everything that was collected electronically, if we could ever get all of these fellows who took all of these unusual oaths, that collected all this, just to sit down and tell you the truth, with no fear of retribution, I think you might be staggered by what they could produce for you, in a relatively short period of time, that they collected, in terms of

Americans being on the ground. Americans being incarcerated in specific places. Americans being taken to Russia, etc, etc, etc.

You know, the signal intelligence. That is a world-class operation. And I have one other suggestion. If anybody ever brings up to you that this would compromise their ability to collect, laugh at them because this is 20-year old technology that collected this, and they don't even use that stuff anymore. So this has nothing to do with that. They are a whole lot better at collecting now than they were then.

Senator BROWN. That is a very valid point. I might also suggest that, if there is any additional details, any additional sources, and additional thoughts in this area of things we ought to check on, follow up on, I hope you would feel free to supply that at your convenience.

If, in reflecting on this, other things occur to you because it seems to me that it is essential that we not leave this task undone. That we don't leave any sources untapped. That we not uncover any ground that could be helpful on this.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator, let me interrupt you there if I can for a minute. I think you are at the end.

Senator BROWN. I have a couple of additional questions. Obviously, we have another round.

The CHAIRMAN. We will. Let me say, Mr. Perot, I want to make sure that we proceed in the manner that we agreed to. And, if we do not, I absolutely do not want you to feel that somehow the committee is detouring from that in a way that somehow abuses you as a taxpayer or citizen.

Now, we agreed that we would go straight through and I am willing to do that.

Mr. PEROT. I am here at your pleasure.

The CHAIRMAN. We want you to be here at your pleasure, too. What I would like to just ascertain is, I am willing to go on. You had voluntarily, I take it, made the decision that you wanted to be here this afternoon for the presentations of your colleagues. We welcome you for that purpose. And it would certainly make sense so you could review those memos.

We have another vote after this. If we took a break for lunch and returned—and we will pick up with Senator Daschle's questioning and then Senator Robb and go in the same order that we are. Senator Robb, after that Senator Kassebaum, and Senator Kerrey.

And then, we do have some additional questions, on—I know, Richard Allen on the conversations with the President regarding this. And I think there are some explorations with respect to the negotiations that can help shed some important light on it. So, only if you are willing to, voluntarily, we can take a lunch break and come back.

Mr. PEROT. That is fine. Whatever you want.

The CHAIRMAN. I think that will work best. We will break for 1 hour until 1:30. We stand in recess.

[Whereupon at 12:30 p.m., the hearing was recessed.]

AFTERNOON SESSION

The CHAIRMAN. The hearing will come to order. Mr. Perot, if you could resume your place. Thank you very much. I am sure I do not need to remind you, but I want the record to show that you have been sworn this morning and will continue under oath.

As for this morning's testimony let me just say, if I can, Mr. Perot, first of all we are very grateful to you for your decision to afford the committee that break, and then to proceed now.

I would like to suggest that for the sake of all the Senators who, I know, have a lot of questions, and for the sake of the dialog here, if we can try to keep it as focused and as targeted in the answers and questions as possible I think it would be very helpful. And the rapidity with which we can proceed will depend to a certain degree on the length of the answers, and the scope.

Let me turn now, as I said I would, to Senator Daschle.

Senator DASCHLE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Perot, I would like to begin by following up a little bit more with regard to the Eagleburger memo and what may or may not have happened as a result of an understanding that it existed, no. 1, and no. 2, a realization on the part of Dr. Shields that he did not feel very comfortable saying what he did when he said it.

Was there any effort—after it became clear that you were not going to get it from either the Government or Dr. Shields, was there ever an effort made to find additional routes to at least acquire whatever information may have been in the memo, as you understood it at the time?

Mr. PEROT. You're referring to Dr. Shields memo? After trying through the Government, and trying again back with Dr. Shields?

Senator DASCHLE. That is correct.

Mr. PEROT. I felt I had no other routes to go, so I made no further efforts to get it.

Senator DASCHLE. Did Dr. Shields indicate that to the extent he felt uncomfortable with what he had said publicly and how it conflicted with the private information that he had shared with you, that as crucial as that information was, it seems to me that at that point that was as close to the proverbial smoking gun as one will get?

It seems strange that after its consequences were fully realized, that nothing apparently was done either by Dr. Shields or anyone else to ensure that that information was more fully exposed.

Mr. PEROT. Well, you know, I agree that that should have been fully exposed. I had no knowledge of the Eagleburger and Richardson memos at that time. That's only recently popped out. And we're back in 1986 now, when I first learned of the Shields memo, and interestingly enough, I am looking at the Shields memo for the first time right now, and still have not read it, which is fascinating when you look at the stack of information I was about to be bargained with by Senator McCain that I had never seen.

I asked this committee to build a two-way street. Anytime, night or day, you have ever asked me for anything, I have given it to you. I am absolutely offended that this type of information is withheld from me and is supposed to be shot at me piecemeal.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me just say, Mr. Perot, so you do not get agitated about this without cause because no one on this committee saw this packet until this morning. As you know, we are in the process of declassifying. We are literally receiving documents through the day on a daily basis. None of these documents were in the hands of this committee.

I believe there was a deposition of Howard Baker Friday—last week. And the documents were literally being copied by this committee last night at 9 p.m. Senators are seeing these documents for the first time this morning.

So that is why Senator McCain wanted you to have a chance to read them, and that is the nature of the declassification process. We are receiving things on a daily basis. I can assure you, nothing was withheld from you or from anybody else.

Senator DASCHLE. Mr. Chairman, I must say it is the first time I have had a chance to see the memo and I am intrigued, to say the least, by the opening paragraph in the memo. And I think for the record it is important that, since we have made substantial reference to some of the data found therein, that it be made part of the record at this time.

The CHAIRMAN. The full packet of documents will be made part of the record.

[The information referred to follows:]

Arent Fox Kintner Plotkin & Kahn

Fred D. Thompson
202/857-6464

August 7, 1992

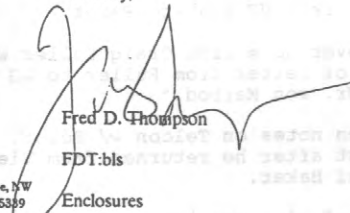
J. William Codinha
Chief Counsel
Senate Select Committee
POW/MIA Affairs
705 Hart Senate Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Bill:

Please find enclosed the documents which you requested. The White House Counsel did not get back to me until mid-afternoon. I have not included a copy of the one-page narrative of Senator Baker's, which I understand you know about, since I also understand that it is under White House review. Therefore, I am sure you will resolve that issue with him.

We would appreciate the opportunity to review Mr. Cannon's deposition before his Committee appearance on August 12.

Sincerely,



Fred D. Thompson

FDT:bls

Enclosures

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Catalogue of Materials Submitted to
U.S. Senate Select Committee on POW/Mia Affairs
On Behalf of James Cannon

- 9/14/86 News clip from El Paso Times of AP story that President Reagan had asked Perot "to get to bottom of POW issue."
- 3/18/87 Original of letter from Mike Deaver to HHB about the POW/MIA issue and suggesting that President Reagan appoint former President Nixon to head a group of private citizens to get information and recommend action.
- 3/21/87 "Memorandum for the files from Vice President March 21, 1987." (Evidently these are VP Bush's notes on a telephone conversation with Perot.)
- (same day) Fuller note, hand-written, to JMC
- (same day) 3:40 p.m. memo, with no name, probably by Craig Fuller, about a conversation he had with Colin Powell.
- Talking points, apparently for JMC to make in a telephone call to Perot.
- JMC rough draft of points to Perot, with notes in JMC handwriting about his going to Vietnam.
- 3/23/87 Copy of letter from VP Bush to Perot
- 3/25/87 Handwritten cover note from Craig Fuller with attached copy of letter from Fuller to AG Ed Meese relating to "Mr. von Marbod."
- 3/30/87 JMC handwritten notes on Telcon w/ Perot, apparently just after he returned from Vietnam, asking to brief Baker.
- Undated Copy of Draft of six-page letter from Perot to President Reagan.
- 4/8/87 Copy of seven-page letter from Perot to President Reagan. Signed by Perot.
- Undated "Future actions" list from Perot, apparently including with 4/8/87 letter to President Reagan.
- 4/9/87. JMC Memcon, apparently summarizing Perot answers to questions asked on behalf of Colin Powell.

- 4/9/87 JMC chronology of Perot developments for discussion w/ Army Sec Jack Marsh
- 4/12/87 Memo JMC>HHB: Summary recommendation on what to do about Perot and the POW/MIA issue.
- 4/15/87 JMC letter to Perot advising him of the legal restriction preventing JMC from working for Perot as a private consultant in behalf of the POW/MIA project.
- 4/23/87 Wash Post AP clip "U.S. Says Vietnam Delaying Vessey's Diplomatic Mission."
- 4/24/87 Wash Post news clip headlined "Perot Negotiated Secretly with Hanoi on POW-MIA Issue."
- (same day) Partial transcript of WH Press Spokesman Marlin Fitzwater on Perot in Vietnam.
- Undated Draft statement from WH about Perot w/ JMC notes.
- File of miscellaneous notes

Reagan asks Perot to get to bottom of POW issue

DALLAS (AP) — Billionaire H. Ross Perot said Thursday he is investigating the Vietnam prisoner of war issue at the request of President Reagan, hoping to learn whether some U.S. servicemen still are being held prisoner in Southeast Asia.



Perot

Perot has said that he believes U.S. citizens are being held in Southeast Asia, but he refused to disclose details of his newest mission.

Air Force Brig. Gen. Robert Risner, a seven-year Vietnam prisoner of war who will assist Perot, said the goal of the investigation is to produce evidence that will force the government to take action.

Perot declined to say whether he might act on his

"The president and the vice president asked me to dig into this issue — go all the way to the bottom of it and figure out what the situation was — then come see them and give them my recommendations," Perot told the Dallas Morning News.

Panel scales back plans for veterans monument

AUSTIN (AP) — A committee planning a Vietnam and Korean war veterans inonument at the Capitol lowered its sights Thursday because fund-raising has been slow and the park where the monument was to be built has been scrapped.

The committee has collected just more than it needs to pay three selected artists to produce models of their designs. Rep. Frank Collazo, D-Port Arthur, chairman of the Texas Veterans Memorial Committee, said the original designs will have to be scaled down or completely redrawn to fit a new site the committee approved Thursday.

own to free any remaining POWs or if he is limited to proposing a course of action.

The Dallas billionaire has assembled an informal group of experts, including at least two retired generals and some former Vietnam-era prisoners of war, his aides said.

MICHAEL K. DEAVER AND ASSOCIATES

SUITE 450

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March 18, 1987

Dear Howard:

Recently I've had some time to think about many things I haven't taken the time to pursue for years. The continuing issue of American servicemen Missing in Action or Prisoners of War (MIA/POW's) still alive in Laos and Vietnam was brought to my attention recently after a visit with several representatives of Veterans groups who sought my advice and help. One was William E. LeGro, a retired United States Army Colonel who was senior military intelligence officer in Vietnam from early 1973 until our forces left, and also John M. G. Brown, a Vietnam veteran active in MIA/POW activities with Vietnam veteran groups.

These gentlemen are concerned that official efforts to obtain the release of Americans held in Laos and Vietnam are stymied. They, along with many Americans, are convinced that Americans are alive and being held in Southeast Asia and that United States government action to free them is stymied. They are quite upset with what they believe is a lack of action and commitment by your POW/MIA Interagency Group, and especially with Richard Armitage, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, who heads the Group.

As an example, they told me that a recent study in the Department of Defense by Lt. General Eugene Tighe concluded that Americans are being held in Laos and Vietnam. According to my visitors, General Tighe's report has been classified and not released because it is counter to current policy.

At the heart of the problem, according to my visitors, is a standoff between our nation and the Lactians and Vietnamese. We refuse to negotiate with them until all missing Americans are accounted for, a policy that, perversely, prevents negotiations concerning the release of Americans held prisoner.

They believe our policy to be especially unfortunate when new leadership in Laos and Vietnam seems anxious to normalize relations between our countries.

Because matters of diplomacy are involved, my visitors believe that official action concerning missing Americans should be transferred to the Department of State and handled on the Ambassadorial level, replacing present low-level "technical" discussions originating in the Department of Defense. I disagree. If we ask any of the interested agencies, we will not get any more answers than we have received over the past fifteen years.

What has been suggested to them, I suggest to you, is the appointment of a distinguished American to look into this situation and report back to the President within a specified time. The report's conclusions would then form the basis for future American policy.

The logical candidate for this assignment is former President, Richard Nixon. It occurred on his tour of duty and he would be believable to the issue.

In addition, I suggest that you read the Tighe Report and any other government documents concerning the issue, and give serious consideration to having the President appoint someone to take a close look at current policy concerning these forgotten Americans.

I remember a Ronald Reagan who wore a POW bracelet for years and met continuously with the wives and families of those held during the long years of captivity, and I remember Ronald and Nancy hosting dinners for every California returned POW and their wives upon their return.

No other President will address this issue if Ronald Reagan doesn't do it in his remaining two years and, above all else, it's the right thing to do.

Sincerely,

Mike

Michael K. Deaver

The Honorable Howard H. Baker, Jr.
Chief of Staff to the President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

MEMORANDUM

personal
(self-typed)

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM FOR THE FILES

FROM VICE PRESIDENT MARCH 21, 1987

phone call from Ross Perot 2.00 P.M.

"I'm shutting down my operation"

A frustrated Ros Perot called me. He requested the name of the Viet Nam Politburo member that US Govt was negotiating with in order to get the Viet Nameese to accept the Vessey role as mediator.

"Our guy met with Viet Nam Ambassador to the U.N." (I think the meeting was Friday 3-20 --- gb guess).

Ross detailed a litany of gripes. He never got the green light on his advance trip to Viet Nam. (N.B.This is the first I ever heard that he requested such a green light). I send the advance people in anyway. The advacne people , on their second time in, got an invitation for me to come there (I think this was the invitation that he actually got through UN Ambassador yesterday.).

He is upset because the government's top two people (RR + GB) got me into this . I could never get an answer ot anything, he says.

I tried through Carlucci. Carlucci says "Will you get off Armitage's back if we appoint a negotiator?"

I reminded Ross that I had told him that his suggestion of a special negotiator had been approved. I told him the name of negotiator. He replied" Yes, but I had already been told of both the approval and the name" (strange twist here).