

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
WASHINGTON

MEMCON - ROSS PEROT (continued page 2)

"The Viet Nameese came to me out of the sky. They contacted me"

"The nSC is trying to move heaven and earth to get Vessey in ahead of me".

"There is no down side to my meeting" "I'll tell Vessey everything".

"I'd make it clear to them Vessey is our man, and turn it over to him."

Ross then went into his concerns about Childress and Armitage, stating that the POW's are not 'their main concern'.

Ross specifically asked about the people in Viet Nam "Who's resisting the meeting with Vessey.?" "I can/get the Vietnamese to negotitate with Vessy, but I need the name of the person on the Politburo who is resisting".

Ross, who had heretofroe repeatedly told me and Fuller that he would not go to Viet Nam unless he was told that he would see live POW's, then stated that his people were now telling him it might take 2 or 3 trips to achieve this end. His people advbise that the V.N. want to 'size you up" (he made mention to his two people who have had 16 years of experience dealing with the vietnamese..) Made some refernce to "SUnshine Soldier" and 'it may take 3 trips". "I'd love to get a home run on the 1st trip, but that is unlikely. At least I will not be going in with a cake and a Bible" "My guys tell me they really want me there". "My guys say 'Ross, they don't know you, so things will go slowly at first' ".

"in the Friday meeting at the UN my guys brough up Vessey as neggotiator.

I'm glad to have Vessey substiute for me. I'm very high on Vessey as I've told ya'

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
WASHINGTON

Memcon- Ross perot (continued page-3-)

I suppose Craig told you that I am sevring all ties with the Reagan administration. Did he mention the Reagan Libray?" I assured Ross that indeed Craig had filled me in.

Ross again repeated his concern about going as private citizen. "They'd like to grab me as the ultimate hostage". With no government sponsorship he felt he'd be fair game for kidnapping.

"ALL I ask is the name of the guy in the politburo? Howard Baker told me someone was over there right now negotiating. (some specualtion that it might be Childress)

I told Ross, if someone is there now maybe the matter has been resolved about their seeing Vessey. "If that's so, Fine!."

I assured Ross that in having Howrd baker call Ross the president was 9ismply trying to get this whole matter back into proper channels.

I told Ross I would try to find out where the negotiating matter stood. He said "fine. Maybe Jim Cannon can call me, known him for a long time."

Perot was not angry, just calm and matter of fact. He feels he has been badly treated by all (though he didn't sya so, I think he means me too).

N.B. Before leaving for Equador I called howard Baker. Craig called Cannon, and is sending his notes to Cannon. Baker weill get his notes for Cannon. Craig talked to Colin who raised doubt about there being anyone in V.Nam from USC...

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Date 3/21

TO: *Jim*

FROM: CRAIG L. FULLER

I'll be home

tonight if

I can be of any

help.

Craig

3/21/87 -- 3:40 P.M.

TELECON WITH COLIN POWELL

- o Colin says he's heard that Ross is making calls again.
- o Ross has called Perutz and wants to know who is trying to cut him out. Perutz calls Armitage who calls Colin to find out what is going on.
- o I brief Colin on the call to the VP and indicate that the question we are trying to pursue is whether the Vessey mission is set. If it is not, can we give Perot the name of the person in Hanoi with whom we've been dealing so that Perot can directly or through an intermediary put in a good word for Vessey.
- o Colin says that we haven't been able to get far enough with discussions in Hanoi to communicate with them about Vessey. Hanoi, according to Colin, would rather deal with Perot. They have been stiffing the government because they would rather deal with Perot.
- o Colin agreed to do some checking and see if there is a way to get Perot a name that he could contact to ~~help~~ facilitate Vessey's mission -- it is possible that there is not name available, or that there is a name but the individual may not want his name made public.
- o In any event, Colin will call back.
- o CALL BACK (3:55pm): there is no one that we've been dealing with over the last few months because of their own internal situation and because ~~that~~ they believe that there is a "bigger deal" coming soon who will be bearing gifts and so our people have been stiffed.
- o we still believe that it is not wise for Ross to go... after 14 years they have denied live Americans... if they were to produce live people, can you imagine what will be asked for?
- o our policy interests not served by Mr. Perot's interests at the moment
- o we've not gotten our emissaries in in order to identify our real emissary (Vessey); hence, it would not be appropriate to have him negotiating for us... he should urge them to follow the proper channels and work through those in the US who actually represent the US.

(Perot)

TALKING POINTS FOR CALL TO ROSS PEROT -- 3/21/87

- o I'm calling after talking to Craig Fuller. He and the Vice President are leaving for Ecuador and they wanted me to follow up with you.
- o actually, the President has asked Howard Baker to follow-up with you on this matter.
- o however, when something as sensitive as this subject is raised, we've got to coordinate very carefully with Frank Carlucci and the national security staff.
- o let me tell you what we know and what we suggest --
- o it has not been going well with those in Hanoi and our emissaries have not been in contact with anyone who will commit to a visit by a high level US citizen.
- o therefore, there is no one individual whose name we can give you to contact should you go to Hanoi.
- o in fact, right now, the best interests of the US government might be served if you were not to go to Hanoi at this time.
- o should you decide to go to Hanoi, the best thing you could do is to try and convince them that they must deal through the proper channels and deal with those representing the United States.

Colin Powell

The man to reach is the foreign minister and deputy prime minister, Nguyen Co Thach (tock). *That's*

The k US has been in touch with him in the -past and ~~xxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxx~~ has worked with him. "principal interlocutor" on this matter.

But he is not ~~xxxxxx~~ holding up Vessey. We can't even get an advance team in there.

Prefer == get tock to let advance emissary in there, childress in bangkok or somebody ~~xxxxxx~~ if else if childress unacceptable, to prepare the way for ~~xxxxxx~~ the higher emissary, who would be vessey.

But Powell ~~xxxxxx~~ is reluctant to give them vessey's name now, the Vietnamese do not know he is to be the emissary.

But would be of great help if you could get the vietnamese to let a us ~~xxxx~~ rep in to pave the way for vessey

any chance you could come to washington to meet with craig fuller, colin powell - deputy nsc and a good man, le general, and me. *win get back to him about that,*

① I think you should also talk to the President. *ff.*

6 months

*W. 8 AM. - swain
Gouy mi as put above
Don't want the full De Res
you can't know
I don't want NSC*

They want to stop our "ambassador" in Vietnam like me

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Date 3/24/87

TO: JIM CANNON

FROM: THE VICE PRESIDENT

Howard tells me that you are going to see Ross. I thought you might like to have a copy of the attached for your files.

THE VICE PRESIDENT
WASHINGTONMarch 23, 1987
(San Antonio)Mr. H. Ross Perot
7171 Forest Lane
Dallas, Texas 75230

Dear Ross:

Upon receiving your call Saturday I called Howard Baker. I also informed Craig Fuller, who had previously briefed us on his two most recent calls from you. I understand that Jim Cannon will be in touch with you.

The President determined that Howard Baker would call you the other day, keeping Frank Carlucci fully informed.

I am sorry you feel you have had less than full cooperation; but I do understand your decision, relayed to me yesterday, to "get out of it" and convey whatever information you have to the new negotiator. As I recall, you strongly favored this high level negotiator concept. I helped get that concept put into effect and I know we have a good man.

I'd be remiss, Ross, based on our friendship of long-standing, if I didn't tell you I was offended by your comment to Craig knocking me for not calling you - instead of Howard Baker's calling you. The President properly made that determination. I have worked with you all along the way hoping that your energy and principled determination would lead to what you and I both want - the return of our POW/MIA's.

I will continue to do everything in my power to help gain their return. So, I am sure, will the President.

You asked if Craig had told me that you had cancelled your pledge to the Reagan library. He did tell me this. He has accurately reflected all that you have told him.

I accept your decision to "get out of it"; but I hope this does not mean that you are unwilling to pass along leads on this critical subject to those in the United States government who are working day and night to try to get the POW/MIA's released.

Mr. H. Ross Perot
March 23, 1987
Page two

The administration, for its part, will continue to keep this issue on the front burner. We can do no less. We owe it to those who served.

Sincerely,

George Bush
George Bush

P.S. Ross, I understand that you had a good talk with Tim Cannon. I'm very pleased. Given the new White House set-up, I will stay out of the "line", but will continue to assist the process any way possible.

bcc: Howard Baker
Frank Carlucci
Don Gregg
Craig Fuller



OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
WASHINGTON

March 2, 1987

Dear Ed:

The attached material provides details discussed only briefly with Ross Perot in connection with Mr. von Marbod.

Mr. Perot suggested that Mr. von Marbod may be "in the middle of this arms business."

He also indicated that Mr. von Marbod knows Assistant Secretary Armitage and was probably responsible for having Frank Carlucci ask Ross Perot to stop criticizing Rich Armitage.

I can confirm none of these statements. The attached is provided in the event any further review is thought to be necessary.

Sincerely,

Craig L. Fuller
Chief of Staff to the
Vice President

The Honorable Edwin Meese III
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
Washington, D.C. 20530

4/9/87

Q&A of 4/8/87 Powell v Perot

Q1: Intriguing that Vietnamese officials acknowledge existence of live prisoners. Did Thach or any other official tell him that in the presence of others, in a formal session?

A: No official actually came out voluntarily and said they were there. At first they said they couldn't be any Americans in Vietnam because the US Defense Department had long ago declared them all dead. But under Ross' strong questioning, and as he said he knew of intercepts of Pathet Lao traffic indicating we knew they are there, they talked of the possibility that US prisoners might be in the hands of the Laotians, and that if this were so, they the Vietnamese would be helpful in getting them from the Laotians. Ross said they believe our spy satellites can see and recognize people on the ground. But Ross emphasized that no Vietnamese official he talked with stated flatly that there are live American prisoners.

Q2: Who was with Perot?

A. He did not tell me the names, but said one had been with him at EDS and the other was a personal staff person who had made an advance trip into the country. I asked if one were a retired general and the other a retired navy captain and he said he did not know who I might be talking about.

Q3: Is there anything else Ross can do privately or is he ready to turn it over to Vessey et al?

A. He said he could keep talking to the Vietnamese guys between now and their election on April 19. He said that he has had calls from the Vietnamese at the UN asking trying to find out if he had seen the President since his return from Hanoi. The important thing Perot wants, he said, is acknowledgement from the President that he has received the Perot recommendation of the appointment of a senior negotiator, and that he the President accepts that recommendation and will act on it in the near future -- he referred again to the draft Presidential statement he suggested. "I want the Vietnamese to see that Perot doesn't waste any time."

After the election and the announcement of Vessey, Ross said, he would want to help Vessey by providing all the information and impressions he got from his trip to Hanoi, pay for his support staff, maintain his personal contacts with Vietnamese leader toward the objective of helping them improve their manufacturing, business methods and so on. "You see they have an incorrect view of what I can do for their economy, and I say let's capitalize on that for the

time being to get discussions started."

But he said he is ready to step back and be privately helpful as soon as Vessey is appointed.

Q4. What did Perot tell him about the Vessey mission?

A. That it should have a broad range of negotiating responsibility, and not be confined to MIA/POW issues.

Q5. What does Ross think the Vietnamese expect from the US?

A. Allowing their UN observer to go beyond the 25-mile limit. Permitting them to have some kind of an economic adviser, Vietnamese, stashed away in the Swedish or Swiss embassy. Allowing their prize-winning piano player to go on a concert tour in the US. Counsel on improving their economy. Help in training their workers in better building methods. The old buildings built by Vietnamese workers under the supervision of French engineers are still in great shape, but the newer ones built with the help of the Russians and Cubans are already deteriorating. Support for getting the Russians out of the country by diplomatic means. In time, permitting Thach to make at least an unofficial visit to the US. Ultimately, some form of trade with the US. And in time, Ross thinks, they would be willing to lease facilities in Camranh Bay to the US -- because the Americans who came ashore in Vietnam had money to spend in Vietnam and the Russians don't.

However, Ross said, I would give them very little, nothing but minor symbols, until they come across with assistance in letting US teams go anywhere in Vietnam or Laos to look for remains and live prisoners in Laos.

DRAFT

Dear Mr. President:

My findings on the POW/MIA study are as follows:

- 1) We left POWs behind at the end of the war in Vietnam.
- 2) Most of the men left behind were in Laos. The evidence is overwhelming.

-- There are 552 MIAs in Laos.

-- The Pathet Lao repeatedly made public statements about holding POWs.

-- The Pathet Lao had said repeatedly they would not release the men until they received the money promised in the Nixon letter.

-- The Paris negotiations with Vietnam did not include Laos.

-- The CIA could listen to the Pathet Lao radio system during the war, and had 95 hard cases. (I was personally briefed on this during the war .

- 4) We knew we had left men behind. Key people working on the issue expected a second group of POW's from Laos.
- 5) In the Spring of 1973, Congress decided not to pay the money President Nixon had committed in his letter.
- 6) Watergate was underway, and our government was not functioning well.
- 7) In April 1973, the Defense Department declared that there were no more living Americans in Southeast Asia. This is the greatest single mistake made on the POW issue. This was done at a time when we knew we had left men in Laos--(and probably in Cambodia and Vietnam).
- 8) In my recent visits with the Vietnamese, they said, "Why did your own government declare these men dead right after the war. After all these years, how can you expect us to take you seriously about looking for live Americans?"
- 9) It is unrealistic to attempt a military rescue of these men.

-- We don't have the military presence in Southeast Asia to do

it.

-- We don't know exactly where they are.

- The risk/reward ratio makes the whole idea impractical.
- 10) We should not spend more time investigating why the men have been left behind for fourteen years. Our attention must be focused on bringing the men home.
 - 11) There is only one realistic way to gain the release of the men--through negotiations.
 - 12) Several months ago, I recommended appointing a Presidential negotiator. I urge you to appoint a personal representative to negotiate with the Vietnamese. General Vessey is an excellent choice. He will have my full support.
 - 13) MIA family members and veterans groups will react positively to this action.
 - 14) General Vessey must report directly to you--not to the Secretary of State or the NSC, if he is to have the status needed to successfully deal with Vietnam.
 - 15) General Vessey's role cannot be limited to recovering the POW/MIAs and remains. This would make him ineffective with the Vietnamese. His role must be a broad one--to resolve the outstanding problems with Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

- 16) I have strongly endorsed General Vessey to the Vietnamese. (They did not seem to know much about him.)
- 17) The fact that he is a soldier, not a diplomat, is a plus to them.
- 18) They agreed to give me their reaction to having him appointed in the near future. They were pleased that we had reviewed this matter with them in advance. Apparently, we have not done this in the past.
- 19) My meetings were with the Foreign Minister, Mr. Thach. There is a good chance he will become the nation's leader, after the April elections.
- 20) We should publicly announce the recommendation that a negotiator be appointed as soon as possible, but we should not announce Gen. Vessey until we have received a positive indication from the Vietnamese, and until after the April elections--April 19[?]
- 21) General Vessey must be prepared to work on this matter full time, and make several trips to Southeast Asia.
- 22) In my meetings with the Vietnamese, I have carefully postured the conversations so that the MIAs would be found and returned from Laos. This approach allows Vietnam to release the men without criticism.

Vietnam stressed that Laos is a sovereign country, but that they will help us in every possible way. Foreign Minister Thach is very shrewd and knows exactly what is going on.

- 23) Information regarding conditions in Vietnam and Southeast Asia, and the concern of Vietnam's leaders was conveyed to me during the meetings. This may be helpful to General Vessey. Howard Baker has this information, but I am not including it in this letter in an effort to keep it brief.
- 24) The principal obstacle in obtaining the release of these men since the end of the war has been a lack of diligence and follow through by our government. Choosing a man of Gen. Vessey's stature, giving him a broad mission, supporting him with whatever resources he needs, and having him report directly to you is the strongest possible approach to gaining the release of these men.
- 25) I will maintain my contacts with the Vietnamese, if they continue to show an interest in me. Working as a private citizen, I will keep Gen. Vessey and the appropriate persons on the White House staff fully briefed.

Best wishes.

ANNOUNCING VESSEY AS THE CHIEF NEGOTIATOR

- 1) Publicly announce HRP recommendation that the President appoint a chief negotiator. The White House should do this, with the statement that the President has accepted the idea. (I have always excluded myself from consideration as the negotiator).
- 2) Make it clear that the chief negotiator's role is a broad one--not limited to POW/MIA issue.
- 3) After the April 19 elections in Vietnam, and after we get the green light on Vessey, announce Gen. Vessey as the chief negotiator.
- 4) I will make a very strong statement endorsing Gen. Vessey. This will have a positive effect on the MIA families and Vietnam veterans groups.
- 5) I will make it clear that my work is done, but that I will support Gen. Vessey's efforts as a private citizen in any way that is appropriate. (This leaves me room to continue to talk with the Vietnamese and be a sounding board for Gen. Vessey.)
- 6) I will need a way to provide direct input to the White House as well as Vessey, but not through the NSC.

April 8, 1987

The Honorable Ronald Reagan
President
The White House
Washington, D. C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

My findings on the POW/MIA study are as follows:

- 1) We left POWs behind at the end of the war in Vietnam.
- 2) We knew we were leaving men behind.
- 3) The men left behind were held in Laos.
- 4) The evidence that men were held in Laos is substantial--

-- There are 343 MIAs in Laos.

-- During the war, Pathet Lao officials repeatedly made public statements about holding POWs, including statements made directly to me.

The Honorable Ronald Reagan
April 8, 1987
Page Two

-- The CIA listened to the Pathet Lao radio system during the war, and had detailed information about live POWs in Laos. (During my trips to Laos during the war, I was personally briefed on this point by the CIA.)

-- At the end of the war, the Pathet Lao publicly stated that they would not release the men until they received the money promised in the Nixon reparations letter.

-- The Paris negotiations with Vietnam did not include POWs from Laos. The Vietnamese emphasize this point.

-- The Pathet Lao never released any POWs directly or explained what happened to the men they held. (A small number of men who were captured in Laos and turned over to Vietnam for detention were released by Vietnam, along with the other POWs.)

5) In the Spring of 1973, Congress decided not to pay the \$3.25 billion President Nixon had committed in his letter.

The Honorable Ronald Reagan
 April 8, 1987
 Page Three

- 6) Watergate was underway, and our government was not functioning well.
- 7) In April, 1973, the Defense Department publicly declared that there were no more living Americans being held in Southeast Asia.
- This is the most significant mistake made by our government on the POW/MIA issue.
- This was done at a time when we knew we had left men in Laos (and probably in Cambodia and Vietnam).
- 8) In my recent visits with the Vietnamese in Hanoi, they said, "Why did your own government declare these men dead immediately after the war? After all these years, how can you expect us to take you seriously about looking for live Americans?"
- 9) It is unrealistic to attempt a military rescue of these men.
- As a practical matter, we are not going to start a new war with Vietnam--even a small one.

The Honorable Ronald Reagan
 April 8, 1987
 Page Four

- We don't have the military presence in Southeast Asia to conduct a rescue effort.
- We don't know exactly where our men are held--and we must know exactly where they are held to successfully carry out a rescue.
- The risk/reward ratio makes the whole idea impractical.
- 10) We should not spend more time forming commissions to investigate the reasons these men have been left behind for fourteen years. All efforts must be focused on bringing the men home.
- 11) There is only one realistic way to gain the release of the men--through negotiations.
- 12) Several months ago, I recommended appointing a Presidential negotiator. I urge you to appoint a personal representative to negotiate with the Vietnamese. General Vessey is an excellent choice. He will have my full support.
- 13) POW/MIA family members and veterans groups will react positively to this action.

The Honorable Ronald Reagan
 April 8, 1987
 Page Five

- 14) General Vessey must report directly to you--not to the Secretary of State or the NSC--if he is to have the status needed to successfully deal with Vietnam.
- 15) General Vessey's role cannot be limited to recovering the POW/MIAs and remains. This would make him ineffective with the Vietnamese. His role must be a broad one--to resolve the outstanding problems with Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.
- 16) At Howard Baker's request, I have strongly endorsed General Vessey to the Vietnamese. (They did not seem to know much about him.)
- 17) The fact that he is a soldier, not a diplomat, is a plus to them.
- 18) They agreed to give me their reaction to having him appointed in the near future. They were pleased that we had reviewed this matter with them in advance. Apparently, we have not cleared such appointments in the past.

The Honorable Ronald Reagan
 April 8, 1987
 Page Six

- 19) My recent meetings in Hanoi were with the Foreign Minister, Nguyen Co Thach, who is also Vice-Chairman of the Council of Ministers.
- 20) You should publicly announce your acceptance of the recommendation that a Presidential negotiator be appointed. (The Vietnamese are expecting this announcement as a signal.)
- 21) You should not announce General Vessey as your negotiator until we have received a positive indication from the Vietnamese.
- 22) General Vessey must be prepared to work on this matter full time for many months and to make several extended trips to Vietnam.
- 23) During my meetings with the Vietnamese, I carefully postured the conversations so that the MIAs would be found in Laos and returned by the Laotian government. This approach allows Vietnam to avoid criticism for having held the men.
- 24) Information regarding economic conditions in Vietnam and Southeast Asia and other concerns expressed by

The Honorable Ronald Reagan
 April 8, 1987
 Page Seven

Vietnam's leaders were conveyed to me during the meetings.

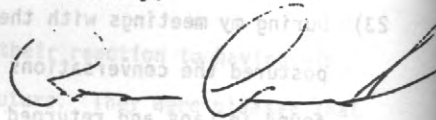
This may be helpful to General Vessey. Howard Baker has this information, but I am not including it in this letter in an effort to keep it brief.

- 25) The principal obstacle in obtaining the release of these men since the end of the war has been a lack of diligence and follow-through by our government.

Choosing a man of General Vessey's stature, giving him a broad mission, supporting him with whatever resources he needs, and having him report directly to you is the strongest possible approach to gaining the release of these men.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,



Ross Perot

FUTURE ACTIONS

- 1) Approve lifting the twenty-five mile limit when Foreign Minister Thach visits the United Nations. Perot will take him on a private trip across the United States, in appreciation for Thach's past willingness to allow search teams and POW/MIA delegations to enter Vietnam.
- 2) Allow a small number of Vietnamese to visit the United States to study our economic system. Perot will make all arrangements.
- 3) Allow the Vietnamese pianist to tour the United States. Granting a visa is the only action required. Perot will handle other arrangements.
- 4) Allow General Giap to make a private trip to the United States.
 - Lecture at the War College.
 - Visit with the Joint Chiefs.
 - Perot will take him to points of interest in the United States.

- 5) Approve Perot sending a small group of businessmen and economists to Vietnam to talk with them about rebuilding their economy.
- 6) General Vessey's mission must be a broad one--not limited to POW/MIA. If his mission is limited to POW/MIA, we are wasting his time, and we will not accomplish our objective. (It is my view that the Vietnamese will not even meet with him, if his mission is limited to POW/MIA.)
- 7) Have Marlin Fitzwater set the record straight--
- That Perot was asked to make the POW study by the President and Vice-President.
 - That Perot's conclusion was that a Presidential negotiator should be appointed.
 - That President Reagan concurs with the conclusion and that General Vessey is his choice.
- This will repair the damage done in Vietnam by the inaccurate State Department releases.

to review at month 4/9/87

chronology

sometime in 1986, before McFarlane left, Ross Perot talked to Pres Reagan, possibly with Nancy present, about Vietnam POW/MIA situation, offered to help, RR said yes.

Ross sent people in to Vietnam to see what might be done.

Mentioned to Don Regan, leaked to Sam Donaldson.

Mentioned recently to George Bush, who couldn't decide whether he should go as official or pvt xxx citizen. Ca

Bad, long-standing vendetta Perot v Carlucci- Cap

Baker asked to call Perot, xxx suggest he go as pvt citizen. Perot irate, at Baker, Bush, president, cancelled library contribution pledge Perot felt being invited to violate Logan Act, and jeopardize personal safety.

In conversation with Baker, he suggested Baker say hello to me.

Bush/Baker asked me to call him, see what I could do. Ross: live people

1st conversation pleasant, reviewed his version of issue :people, bones

then Colin Powell asked me to get him to consider clearing a team to be advance for Vessey to go in as senior negotiator (3/21)

end of conversation, Ross said leaving next day, in response to invitation extended through Vietnam UN Rep on behalf of FM Nguyen Thach

asked me not to tell anybody -- afraid carlucci try to stop him, even by creating accident. "Ive worked with those boys overseas, remember

kReturned about 3/30, asked to see baker, brief him. asked that his role be publicly ack, as signal to Vietnamese, wait until election 4/19

Baker/Cannon tuesday 4/7. Baker to Pres next day. Pres, VP, Carlucci unwilling to do anything at that pt. Pix to Carlucci: real.

Perot wants to retain Cannon: illegal under ethics rules

Cannon to Powell: What should we do. Powell somewhat willing to help.

Griscom: If one person alive, and RR gets him out, extraordinary event. If only bones, not too much for Pres *almost none*

Questions:

- 1/ any hope there is anyone alive? *1 in 100,000*
- 2? Vessey right person? Good health, arduous circumstance *yes*
- 3/ Guidance to JMC *True don't believe*

Carlet Ste Spencer X H

April 12, 1987

MEMORANDUM TO SENATOR BAKER

FROM: JAMES M. CANNON

SUBJECT: VIETNAM POW/MIA ISSUE

You asked me to make a private recommendation to you about Ross Perot and the Vietnam POW/MIA issue.

First, it is not clear to me exactly when and to what extent President Reagan talked personally to Perot about this issue. Discussions began when Bud McFarlane was Director of NSC, according to Perot, and took place from time to time since then. I don't believe we will know the facts about this unless and until I sit down with Perot and construct a chronology with specifics of what happened when and with whom, a chronological account that we can then check with President Reagan, McFarlane, and others involved. To do this will require some effort and cost; you can better judge its value.

What is most important now, at this point in the broader issue, is that --

-- NSC and/or Defense concluded that General Vessey should go to Hanoi as senior negotiator for the U.S., and

-- Perot has cleared the way for General Vessey's acceptance by the Vietnamese.

So, I suggest, let's go ahead. I believe NSC should proceed with the steps necessary to put Vessey in place.

I recommend the following:

1. Issue the White House press release this week, the draft of which I gave you and General Powell. It acknowledges that Perot studied the issue at the request of President Reagan, made a recommendation for the appointment of a senior negotiator, and that recommendation has been accepted. To do so may cost something in personal sensitivities; but it is the most expeditious way to get going. And not to do so will put the clearance for General Vessey back in the hands of the NSC staffers who -- for whatever reason -- cannot get into Hanoi to talk to Nguyen Thach and other Vietnamese officials.

2. Wait for the Vietnam elections on April 19.

3. If Thach wins, have the President's UN Representative, Ambassador Walters, arrange with the Vietnam

UN Representative to formally inquire whether Vessey is acceptable.

4. To backstop the UN approach, if necessary, ask the British and French, who I am told have representatives in Hanoi, to pave the way for Vessey.

5. Before Vessey goes to Vietnam, you might ask Ross to brief Vessey on who he met and what he saw and what advice he might have for Vessey.

From what I have been able to learn in a few days, the chances of finding a live prisoner in Laos or Vietnam are slim. After you left last week I went over to talk with Jack Marsh about the possibility of a prisoner, and he says the chances of there being one are "almost none." When I asked him to state the odds, he suggested 1 in 100,000.

Yet, we need to know. With Vessey in place, we could put in teams to cover Laos and Vietnam and answer the question once and for all, and recover the remains of Americans we know they do have.

In summary, I believe that you and President Reagan have an opportunity to write the last chapter of the American War in Vietnam, and I recommend you do it.

The country will be grateful when that finally happens, and history will not overlook what you have done to close that sad experience.

copy

April 15, 1987

Dear Ross:

It is important to me that you know the legal restriction placed on me in working with you on the Vietnam POW/MIA issue.

In essence, I can work with you on behalf of the White House; but on this issue I cannot work with the White House on your behalf.

The White House lawyers tell me I can work with you on any other issue or enterprise, and I could talk to anyone in the White House or Administration on your behalf on any other issue or project.

At any rate, here is a copy of the guidance I received from the White House deputy counsel. You might want to have your lawyers look at this.

Sincerely,

The Honorable Ross Perot
(By Hand)

A8 THURSDAY, APRIL 23, 1987

THE WASHINGTON POST

U.S. Says Vietnam Delaying Vessey's Diplomatic Mission

Associated Press

The Reagan administration said yesterday it has asked retired Army Gen. John W. Vessey, a former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to prepare for a diplomatic mission to Vietnam, but that actions by Hanoi have delayed the initiative.

State Department spokesman Charles E. Redman disclosed that President Reagan asked Vessey last fall to be an emissary to Hanoi to help improve efforts to account for missing American servicemen.

Redman said the decision was based on Vietnamese cooperation and it was to be aimed at exploring

ways that progress could be accelerated."

Since then, however, "the Vietnamese have not agreed to any meetings, technical or policy," he said.

Vessey, 64, a 44-year Army veteran, served in the Vietnam war and was chairman of the joint chiefs from 1983 to 1985. In early April he was appointed to a presidential commission investigating breaches in U.S. embassy security, an apparent indication of the dormancy of any Vietnam initiative in which he might be involved.

Since the fall of the U.S.-backed Saigon government in 1975 and the

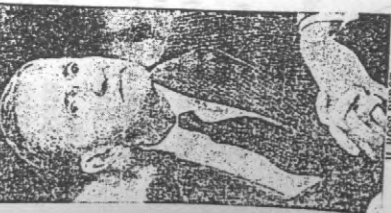
unification of the country under communist leaders, the United States has sought cooperation from Vietnam in accounting for approximately 2,500 American servicemen who were missing in action or failed to emerge from prisoner of war camps.

For a long time, Hanoi pegged its level of cooperation to U.S. willingness to improve general relations between the two countries, but it later said it would treat the POW-MIA effort as a separate, humanitarian endeavor.

Redman said the Vietnamese informed the United States that the delay in further meetings is due to internal political reasons.

"We hope that that's true and not an indication that they intend to attempt linkage to other political matters which they had previously agreed were separate from these humanitarian issues," Redman said.

Perot Negotiated Secretly With Hanoi on POW-MIA Issue



IL ROSS PEROT
... "I went as a private citizen"

By David Remnick
Washington Post Staff Writer

Dallas billionaire H. Ross Perot held three days of secret meetings on the POW-MIA issue in Hanoi late last month with high-ranking Vietnamese officials, according to informed sources. Perot confirmed the report, adding, "I went as a private citizen and at my own expense."

Perot told the Vietnamese that the Reagan administration wanted to send retired Army general John W. Vessey, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to Vietnam as a presidential envoy to explore the prisoner-of-war-missing-in-action issue.

A White House official said last night that the administration knew Perot was planning such a trip. Sources said that the administration "tacitly approved" the mission. Perot met with White House officials to discuss his trip after his return at the end of March.

In a telephone interview yesterday Perot said he met with Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach on March 25 and was "treated with every courtesy," but he would not comment extensively on the talks. "I still believe we left men behind," Perot said.

Perot said the Vietnamese reaction to the suggestion of a Vessey mission was "constructive." Perot, who has been working with the White House on the issue since last year, expressed frustration with the administration's handling of relations with Vietnam and said he would no longer help deal officially with Hanoi.

He criticized Wednesday's statement by State Department official the Vessey mission. "These negotiations with the Vietnamese are like a fine china plate, and that State Department comment was like dropping that plate on concrete," Perot said.

Perot said he is "finished" working for the administration on the issue and charged the U.S. government with "arrogance" in its recent dealings with the Vietnamese. Nguyen Dang Quang, the first secretary of Vietnam's delegation to the United Nations, said yesterday that his country was not delaying the proposed U.S. mission to Vietnam and was "seriously considering the proposal."

Last Friday, Vietnamese ambassador Bui Son Nhit met with State Department officials at Vietnam's U.N. Mission in New York. Quang said yesterday, "We asked if the United States had set a date for the mission, and they said it was up to Vietnam—when it was convenient for the Vietnam side."

The State Department has expressed the hope that the Vietnamese will not try to link resolution of the POW-MIA issue to any other issues, Perot, however, said. "For Gen. Vessey to be effective, he

must be given a role much broader than just POW-MIA. He must have the authority to discuss a number of issues important to both countries. Limiting his role is a mistake."

Perot's computer services magazine worth \$1.5 billion, has been involved in the case since 1969 when, at the request of the Nixon White House, he tested the Boeing 707s and tried to deliver food supplies to prisoners of war in what then was called North Vietnam.

He gained further notoriety when he and a team of self-styled commandos freed two of his overseas employees who had been jailed in Tehran during the Iranian revolution.

Last spring, Lt. Col. Oliver L. North, then an aide on the National Security Council, in an effort to free Perot from his jail in Beirut, asked Perot to put up a \$1 million ransom. Perot agreed, but the plan went nowhere.

Perot said the invitation to visit Vietnam came from Thach last winter.

ter and on March 19 the White House approved a plan for him to go, but as a private citizen. Perot says two associates to Vietnam for preliminary meetings before making his own trip last month.

"The POW-MIA issue is very controversial with the people at the village level," Perot said. "They are very critical of their leaders for spending so much time on it. They are a poor country and 100,000 of our own sons are missing after the war. Why don't we look for the remains of our own sons before we look for the remains of our former enemy?"

"The Vietnamese feel the room around there and search for remains. In exchange, we've been rude and arrogant in dealing with them."

As of Jan. 14, 1986, the Department listed 2,441 American still missing in action. A total of \$137 million has been recovered.

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

April 24, 1987

STATEMENT BY THE ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR PRESS RELATIONS

As a correction in today's press briefing, the government was not aware that Mr. Perot had gone to Vietnam until after he had returned and provided the White House with a debriefing.

April 24, 1987

MR. FITZWATER: He told me this morning he thought that was all it could be because that's all he could imagine it being, but I don't think -- I didn't ask the question quite that way.

Q Well, how could --

MR. FITZWATER: It's an interesting question. I don't know. Maybe call Rhett Dawson. Well, I'll tell you, let's figure it out afterwards and we'll post it, because we might have to go to several sources to find this out.

Bob?

Or better yet, why don't you call Inouye. Let's call Inouye and ask him. That'd be the easiest way.

Q Get him on the phone --

Q -- speaker phone. (Laughter.)

MR. FITZWATER: What are you talking about, Senator?

Bob?

Q Would you review please whether the Counsel and the committees see the entire diary or excerpts?

MR. FITZWATER: Excerpts. E-x -- (laughter.)

Bob? Bill?

Q You're losing control in here, Marlin.

Q Don't you think it's important to the credibility of the this whole excerpt -- that you be able to say something that goes to the point of what, if any, Iran or Contra material would not be in these excerpts -- what would be excised?

MR. FITZWATER: They would all be included -- everything related to Iran would be included.

Q Everything related to Iran and the Contras will be included in these excerpts -- you can say that flatly?

MR. FITZWATER: I can -- yes.

Ira?

Q Can we get to Ross Perot?

MR. FITZWATER: Sure.

Q There's a story in the newspaper that says he went, as I recall, without looking --

that he went to Vietnam with the blessing -- the tacit blessing of the President, now will not conduct any further negotiations because the State Department acted arrogantly in talking about it. Did the President give his blessing? What's going on in these negotiations? And attack the State Department, please.

MR. FITZWATER: Well, there's a lot -- it's difficult to describe the process, but to the best of my knowledge, the situation is that Ross Perot has been interested in and involved in the MIA-POW process for a long time. He has committed a considerable amount of his time and energy and money to this issue and has consulted with people in and out of the administration on a variety of levels about this for a number of months. His role is unofficial as far as the administration is concerned. However, he has discussed this matter, from time to time, with the President, the Vice President, the Chief of Staff, and others.

His most recent trip we were aware of. He did discuss it with the Chief of Staff. And we wished him success, as we have in all of his endeavors on behalf of POWs and MIAs.

Q Was that when he was in to see Regan shortly before Regan's departure?

Q Right, that's correct.

MR. FITZWATER: I think that was a case -- he was in to see Regan, but he was -- I think he was also in to see Howard Baker.

We have consistently said that we would welcome anyone who has information on POWs and MIAs. We certainly welcome the support of a man like Ross Perot. Now, when you get into specific relationships with departments and so forth, I don't really know what they are, but I would prefer to leave it to --

Q First of all, does either the law or the Tower commission report give you any pause about having a private individual conducting what amounts to diplomacy?

MR. FITZWATER: He is keeping the government informed of his actions. He's doing them on his own. One can go into Vietnam on his -- on their own. And so we have no reason to be concerned that I'm aware of.

Q Are you disappointed that he's now discontinuing it -- appears to be?

MR. FITZWATER: I don't know what his plans are now.

Q Perot feels that Colonel Childress has undercut him and has consistently tried to keep him out.

MR. FITZWATER: I know that he has had differences with several people in and out of the government, some private groups as well as some government officials that he has not agreed with in terms of the course of action. And our response has been that we welcome his ideas and he's free to help out in any way that he can. But I simply won't get involved in any of his personal discussions with government officials.

Q Well, Perot feels that many times -- or he wants to see more records and you've denied him, although you gave him access originally to some of DIA's records, that you deny him the right to see all of the records pertaining to this issue.

MR. FITZWATER: It was my understanding that he had seen all of the records pertaining to this issue. Now, there may be some debate there, but I know that we have been very forthcoming in involving him in reviews of records and reviews of documents, discussions with government officials. I know that he has been very involved with the know of

head of the DIA and with the CIA and others. And I don't know of anything that has been denied him.

Q Well, let's face it, his view is that there still may be people alive over there -- or there still are people alive over there. As I understand it, the administration's view is that there is no credible evidence to that extent that you've seen. Is that correct?

MR. FITZWATER: We don't have any credible evidence. But like him, we have to assume that it's possible and we certainly welcome his work in that behalf. That's what guides our policy. We have people working all over the world searching for POW's and MIA's.

Q Then what do you need him for?

MR. FITZWATER: We welcome everybody. If you want to go, Ira -- anybody.

Q You mean I could talk to the head of a foreign government or a representative of a foreign government on behalf of the United States --

Q -- called the Logan Act --

Q -- on behalf of United States' aim? Which is the --

MR. FITZWATER: We couldn't say you'd pass yourself as the Undersecretary of State. (Laughter.)

Q No, but --

MR. FITZWATER: But if you wanted to go to China and he was willing to talk to you, you could sure do it.

Q Wait, I thought that's against the law -- when you're representing --

Q Go, Ira. (Laughter.)

Q That's not against the law?

Q Marlin?

MR. FITZWATER: Sarah?

Q Only when Jesse Jackson does it.

Q Mr. Perot said that recently -- pardon my cold -- Mr. Perot said that he was asked by the White House to look into this. Now, how could he be asked by the White House to look into this and be given all of these records, and all of this access to top people, and all this information and still be an unofficial representative?

Q Ollie did it.

MR. FITZWATER: Well, it's kind of a fine line there in a sense, but I do want to try to draw it. And the line is that we appreciate his work. We have tried to be helpful. We have gotten him involved, in a sense, of showing him as much as we possibly can.

Q The door.

MR. FITZWATER: But he is not operating as a government representative.

Q Marlin, Perot came in about two months ago and suggested this visit, but he also wanted the President's endorsement and consent to his being the lead representative or agent with regard

MORE

#2059-04/24

to the MIA issue and he was turned down on that. Now was there a subsequent meeting? And was he given that kind imprimatur at the subsequent meeting?

MR. FITZWATER: I don't know of any subsequent meeting. As far as I know, the status is unchanged.

Q But you said he met with Regan. I presume he met with Regan on that instance, which, I think was about two months ago.

MR. FITZWATER: I don't know.

Q And you said he meant with Baker afterwards.

MR. FITZWATER: He's been back in since the trip and briefed us on the trip as well.

Q But did he meet with Baker before going? Did he get a different response from Baker than he got from --

MR. FITZWATER: That I don't know.

Q Well, you just said that he presumably met with Baker as well as with Regan.

MR. FITZWATER: Yes, I think --

Q So if he did, that could be a later set of instructions, and that is, indeed, what he wanted. He wanted control and he was perceived around here as a pain in the ass.

MR. FITZWATER: His instructions did not change at anytime. His instructions were that --

Q He had no instructions in the first place.

MR. FITZWATER: Our reaction has been the same from the beginning -- that we welcome his work, we hope he is successful, but he is not a government representative.

Q Has he briefed the President since he's been back?

MR. FITZWATER: Saul?

Q Marlin, just as a matter of principle, why should he be anymore effective than the United States government?

MR. FITZWATER: I don't know that he is. It's simply that he has the interest and --

Q And the principle.

MR. FITZWATER: -- the money, and the time, and he's willing. And we welcome --

Q Doesn't the United States have the interest of the

MR. FITZWATER: We have all of that and we're doing an awful lot. And we think we've done a very good job in this area.

MORE

#2059-04/24

Q Isn't there a -- the real -- one of the holdups is there -- that we need a political settlement of some sort of

MR. FITZWATER: Well, I don't -- I couldn't --

Q And are we willing to do that?

MR. FITZWATER: I couldn't tie the two together. I mean, our search for MIA's and POW's is --

Q So, he's more effective than --

MR. FITZWATER: -- a separate issue.

Q -- the United States government in this thing?

MR. FITZWATER: I wouldn't say that, no. He is effective and we are effective.

Q What time is it?

Q About noon.

MR. FITZWATER: Walter.

Q In light of Mr. Perot's willingness to pony-up money to pay for the release of hostages in the past, aren't you a little concerned about him in any way unofficially or otherwise representing the interests of the United States in trying to get these people out of Vietnam if, indeed, they are --

MR. FITZWATER: He doesn't represent the interests in the United States. He's free to do whatever he wants in a private basis.

Q If, in fact, he were to use some of his cash resources to obtain the release of individuals held in Indochina, would the administration support that?

MR. FITZWATER: We would not support that or encourage that, no.

Q Well, you went to him and asked him for money in the hostage crisis in Lebanon.

MR. FITZWATER: Well --

Q Two million bucks.

Q Oli.

MR. FITZWATER: I don't know what Oliver North did, but the United States policy remains the same -- that we do not believe in ransoming for hostages nor do we encourage other countries or persons to do so.

Q And that applies as well to POW's or MIA's if, indeed, there are any alive.

MR. FITZWATER: Well, I think that's different than a hostage situation, but again, a private citizen can do what he wants to do.

Q If they're there against their will they're hostages.

Q Marlin, come on --

Q Now, wait a minute, wait a minute -- can I follow -- you seem to be endorsing the notion that the United States might

MORE

#2059-04/24

indeed support paying the ransom for the return of any people --

MR. FITZWATER: No, no.

Q Well, how can you distinguish between a POW and a hostage in Lebanon?

MR. FITZWATER: I don't mean to. I must have said that wrong. I don't mean to.

Q You said it's different than a hostage situation.

MR. FITZWATER: Well, I was saying -- but what Perot is doing --

Q But, to state it clearly, would you say that the United States would oppose paying any money for return of people from Indochina -- by the government or any private citizen?

MR. FITZWATER: Having trouble there, Dan?

Q By the government or by any private citizen?

Q Essentially, you aren't. (Laughter.)

Q Marlin --

MR. FITZWATER: Suzanne.

Q You said you welcome Perot's efforts at -- but he was still a private citizen and you all turned down his request to take prisoner of war and MIA duties away from Richard Armitage, the Assistant Secretary of Defense. Do you all oppose that?

MR. FITZWATER: I'm not aware of his requests.

Q Mr. Perot asked of you all, I believe, to get rid of -- take those duties away from Mr. Armitage because he suspected that he was not carrying these duties out in the best interests of the country.

MR. FITZWATER: Well, we have a lot of people involved in the POW, MIA situation. As you know --

Q Mr. Armitage has the duty for the Defense Department.

MR. FITZWATER: That's correct. We think he's doing a fine job.

Q Marlin --

MR. FITZWATER: Barry.

Q New subject?

Q Yes.

Q Yes.

Q Yes.

MR. FITZWATER: Thought you'd never get in here.

Q Is the President upset by Stanford's rejection of the Reagan Library?

MR. FITZWATER: The President is comfortable with the decision.

MORE

#2059-04/24

*10/10
Statement from White House*

Some months ago I asked Ross Perot to look into the Vietnam POW/MIA issue, get to the bottom of it, and make recommendations to me about what the U. S. should do to resolve it.

After working on this for some time, Ross concluded that I should appoint a senior level negotiator, reporting directly to me, to work with the Vietnamese and Laotian governments to establish an effective working relationship between our nations, and to explore fully and resolve the POW/MIA issue.

After careful consideration and discussion, I have decided to accept this recommendation. In the near future I will choose and announce a Presidential negotiator.

We must fully account for all POW/MIA's in Southeast Asia. I believe my decision to send a senior negotiator to Vietnam and Laos is the most practical and effective way to resolve this issue with finality.

*4/10 News to Colin Powell (for
" to Ross Perot "*

*Tell Ross - ~~message~~ 1-100,000
Very good candidate
upto job
deal for job*

Senator DASCHLE. It says: in a DOD sponsored press conference held April 12, 1973, I made the statement that DOD had no specific knowledge indicating that any U.S. personnel were still alive or held prisoner in Southeast Asia. This statement has been the basis for all subsequent answers from DOD to questions concerning the possibility that Americans may still be held prisoner in Southeast Asia.

It was a totally accurate, factual statement at the time that it was made. In light of more recent events, I believe this answer is no longer fully satisfactory.

Do you know what events he was specifically referring to, Mr. Perot?

Mr. PEROT. No sir. I just read it. I'm like you. I've been trying to get it for years. We're back to where we were this morning. Wouldn't it be nice if everybody just put the cards on the table. Then we could go over on the other side, where the productive work could be done and negotiate. Instead, we stay preoccupied back here.

The same people that call me night and day for 20 years, the same people that asked me to send my people back into Tehran, and I did. The same people that were calling me for support for General Dozier, etc, etc, etc.

The same people who rewrote history here back 2 or 3 months ago in terms of leaks to the press, have been boasting last week that I would be taken out by something they were going to give to one of the Republican Senators at the last minute. And I guess I'm looking at it.

Now the fascinating thing is, if you read it all, it confirms everything I've said. If you go through and cherry-pick it, you could have fun with it. If you look at it carefully, you will conclude they were tape recording my conversations, which I am underwhelmed with. The same people who would call me at 3 in the morning asking for \$1/2 million in Rome in an hour.

The CHAIRMAN. Could you show me that just so I can get up with you here on the taping.

Mr. PEROT. All right. Let's just start right here. Wait a minute. I'm disorganized because I just got to see it for a minute.

The CHAIRMAN. Take your time.

Mr. PEROT. There's a handwritten note here. Let's just go to, memorandum for the files from the Vice President, March 21, 1987. A lot of direct quotes in here. No, that's not the one. The better one is somewhere else.

Oh, yes, let's start with this first one here on top. Typewritten version of Howard Baker, Jr.'s 1987 talking points. You've got the original handwritten document here with no date on it. Then you've got the typewritten document with the date on it.

Then you go way back here into these files and you get a completely different indication of the conversation. Now, I'm going to need—you know, to really be able to answer you as concisely as you would like me, I'll need an hour or two to play around with this. But the point is, what the handwritten notes says doesn't confirm with what this says back here, and whoever put it together didn't have their act together.

All of these inferences that have been coming straight from the White House to the press over the last few months, that they didn't know I was going to Hanoi, that I was acting on my own, that I was disrupting their negotiation, if you read back through this material—they didn't have any negotiations. They couldn't get in the door. They didn't have anything going on.

They had a disagreement in terms of whether I should go or not. I knew that. The National Security Council—some of them didn't want me to go, some of them thought it would be productive, etc., etc., etc. And you look through here, and you see an internal dispute going on, which I was aware of, and it is really fascinating to wade through it. I would say, I hope this is declassified. It would be interesting for the press to have access to all of it.

The CHAIRMAN. This is declassified and it will be released.

Mr. PEROT. Because it tells—if you read the whole thing and analyze it, I think it tells a pretty accurate story. But, now, here's one for you.

The CHAIRMAN. I'm trying to protect Senator Daschle's time here.

Mr. PEROT. I don't want to waste your time, sir. Let me just say this one. It's a three-liner.

We still believe that it's not wise for Ross to go. After 14 years, they have denied live Americans. If we were to produce live people, can you imagine what will be asked for?

I rest my case.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me just say, Mr. Perot, before Senator Daschle, I don't think there's any reason to be defensive about what's in here. The committee offers this as part of effort to reveal everything.

Mr. PEROT. Well, I would like to have a couple of days to go through it, and then in 5 minutes we could have put it in perspective. Right now, it's just a—it's a combination what might have been taped phone conversations transcribed in 40 pages.

The CHAIRMAN. I certainly concur with you, Mr. Perot, that it needs to read in its whole, and we are trying to do that. Senator Daschle.

Senator REID. Would you yield for a second? I think it might be instructive, after people get their general questions asked, to invite Mr. Perot back some other time, at his convenience, after he has had time to go through these in more detail.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, let me just say, Mr. Perot volunteered to come back tomorrow after the others testify if there is a revision of history here. I have told him that he will have the opportunity to come back any time that he sees fit, if allegations are made that are contrary to his memory or to fact. And that invitation remains open to him. Senator Daschle?

Senator DASCHLE. Just to close that point, I guess I am really amazed, and share your frustration, I guess. But I am amazed that given this memo, and the acknowledgement in print by Dr. Shields that he made a mistake in saying what he did publicly, that that information has been under wraps, has been submersed in all of this investigatory effort for the last 20 years.

It is phenomenal to me that we've lived under some myths pertaining to information that we knew existed as early as May 24, 1973.

Mr. PEROT. Did this come from the Defense Department? Do we know where this finally came from? So they had it all along, they just wouldn't give it to us.

Senator DASCHLE. That is correct. It goes to a broader question that I was going to pursue with you, and I'd be interested in your observations. You mentioned, oftentimes, your frustration with leaks and your amazement at how quickly information from burrows of the Defense Department or the Congress are released so accurately and so frequently.

I would be interested in your observations as to why, given the power of this information, given the kinds of reports that we know now to exist, why, given propensity for leaks, there have not been more consequential leaks relating to this information in the last 20 years?

Mr. PEROT. I don't know, sir. It's a good point. Everything else leaks, this doesn't.

Senator DASCHLE. We've had four administrations. One Democrat, three Republicans in 20 years, and I am surprised that more information has not come out.

I know I am out of time, but let me just ask one other question, and that has to do with a statement that you have made frequently, and I understand why you have made it. That is that the Laotian Government has a willingness to trade information, to trade something for something. To trade information for some kind of compensation, perhaps, some kind of remuneration.

Is it your view that the Laotian Government is monolithic, and has the capacity to deal with the United States as a monolithic entity in Laos? In other words, would it not be possible that there are other entities who would be willing to come forth for something less than \$4 billion, and if so, why would they not come forth?

Mr. PEROT. That monolithic, I guess, is relative. Would you say that our Government is monolithic?

Senator DASCHLE. No.

Mr. PEROT. I would agree. So, I don't think that there is any—you know, it's probably—it is quite different from our Government, but it certainly is not a place where one person knows everything, has access to everything, has a booklet on where each person who may be surviving is held, etc., and who could give it to us, who is a Government official.

If it serves the Government's purpose—see, Laos is sort of the golden child in this whole thing. Laos has been pampered since the end of the war. This is something we want to forget. These are things we don't want to talk about.

We don't want to talk about clean rice and dirty rice. We don't want to talk about the Golden Triangle. We don't want to talk about the drugs that may or may not have been moved during this whole process.

I don't want to get into that. I hate to even bring it up, but I'm trying—and the only reason I bring it up is so that you understand why Laos is sort of in a special category. I say, at this point in time we say to Laos, look, friend—and we have treated you as friends.

Here is the overwhelming evidence, most of it from your own people in their own posts, some from our signal intelligence, some from other sources. Here is the picture in 1988. Here is your statement saying you killed them.

We put all this on the table at one time and say, if we are to remain friends, then you must now fully face this issue with us, and then start the negotiation. I don't think money is the issue at this point. We've already bear-hugged Laos ever since the end of the war. With Laos you have one situation, with Vietnam, you have another.

Senator DASCHLE. Well, I have overextended my time. I thank you.

Mr. PEROT. But I suggest to you that the key thing here, and our core problem is summed up right here in this little three-line statement. See, this town focuses on how things look, not how things are. Everybody has been worried to death since this whole issue keeps coming up, is how will it look if they ever come home.

That's not the issue. The issue is, they're our men. They went into combat for us. We left them. We owe it to them to bring them home.

It won't look pretty back here, but we can build a consensus here that it was the right thing to do, and we can build a consensus here that all the mistakes were honest mistakes, and we can build a consensus here that we won't waste a minute looking for scapegoats, and that we will have all of that energy spent on welcoming these men home 20 years, 20 some odd years late.

Senator DASCHLE. I buy that. I buy that rationale completely. I must say, though, because you and I both agree neither the U. S. Government or the Laotian Government is monolithic, our ability to control that spin on all of the information out there and what may or may not have happened is limited to the degree that they have unanimity with regard to suppressing that information.

And we both know, because we have both been subject to leaks, how impossible it is to suppress it for 2 months, much less 20 years. But it has been suppressed here, if we assume that that is the motivation, successfully, and suppressed in Laos.

Or there may be the fact that there just is nothing there. One or the other. Either we have been able to suppress it that successfully on both sides or there is nothing necessarily appropriately suppressed.

Mr. PEROT. Well, you know, the fact is that this has been suppressed for years. The President and the Vice President supposedly asked the Defense Department to give it to me. I was after this hot. Now, it exists, right? It exists.

I suggest that there's only one appropriate course of action at this point, and that is put the right team in place, give that team the authority and responsibility, give them a broad mission, give them the absolute support of the President, the Congress and the American people and go night and day.

You say, but how do we know it will work? I would rather see it tried in a world-class way and fail than to sit here and debate whether or not I could predict in advance it would work. I'm sure we all would.

Senator DASCHLE. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Robb?

Senator ROBB. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Perot, to followup on that particular line and to give us some guidance, let me suggest, first of all, that I think that this committee has attempted to fulfill the role that you have just described.

I cannot say that ultimately we will meet with the success that you or we would like to meet with, but we have tried to cut across some of those lines. I think it is fair to say that it is a broadly representative committee, that would not feel bound to make any particular information or try to put a particular spin on any information that would inhibit the production of every bit of information.

I say, particularly about the chairman, and the vice chairman, and the professional staff, they have done a very diligent and thorough job in pursuing whatever information is available.

To assist us in the remaining months of our authorization, I wonder if could start with Laos and ask if you are aware of any specific information, any specific documents, any specific locations that have not been brought either to this committee or to public attention that we should ask for, or should seek, or should followup on?

Is there any information that you are aware of, as with the Shield document, apparently, which you knew about but have not received? Are you aware of anything that relates to Laos or its records—which I must confess to you that some of us who have looked into that situation found meager at best. They simply do not keep very many records, and they were not disposed to do so, unlike the Vietnamese who keep rather extensive and exhaustive records in some cases.

But is there anything that you know of, any piece of this equation that is either in existence, or you have reason to believe exists that has not yet come to the attention of the committee or come within the purview of the jurisdiction of this committee?

Mr. PEROT. I would get, if possible, total cooperation from the executive branch, and get every piece of signal intelligence from Laos, and have NSA and the other agencies that deal with it directed to analyze it, looking for every needle in the haystack regarding information on MIAs in Laos.

Senator ROBB. I appreciate that approach.

Mr. PEROT. Which we don't have yet.

Senator ROBB. In essence, that's the course committee is taking. But the specific question I'm asking is, are you aware of any specific document or any specific source of information with enough precision so that we could say, not give us everything you have, but where is the X document? Is there anything that relates to the situation in Laos or elsewhere?

Mr. PEROT. I would like to see all of the—again, you probably won't like my answer—all of the information around why we had these military forays into Laos in 1981 in that area; why we suddenly started doing this.

Senator ROBB. What information do you think that might elicit for the committee that we do not already have?

Mr. PEROT. Well, you don't send troops in to rescue somebody unless you have a reason to believe they're there, right?

Senator ROBB. Presumably.

Mr. PEROT. Otherwise, it's just a fire drill. I would then suggest that you go to the special units and have them—again, I'm assuming you can get full disclosure—special forces units and have them give you every drill, every exercise, every plan they had for a military rescue in Laos.

And have you go to the Navy SEALs and pin them down—no, not pin them down, but if they have the clearance, give you a full disclosure on the efforts of the Navy SEALs, and specific questions around a Navy SEAL team that may have been involved in an effort of this type.

I want to make it clear. I don't have videotapes of what I'm about to tell you, but it's reoccurring. Considerable indication that a Navy SEAL team, either most were killed or all were killed, and some indication that a few were captured and were put on display to some senior people who visited from other Communist countries. I would try to get full disclosure of that.

I think I've mentioned the Colonel Garrity operation. I'd want full disclosure of why we did that. I think, if you ever get full disclosure, it will lead you back to the 1981 meeting on the \$4 billion offer. Now it jumped out of Laos and jumped back to Vietnam, but the point is these are things—they were being kept in Laos. That's the theory.

Check those things out. See if they're smoke or mirrors, see if they're real. I know the Garrity thing is real. I would—I'm back to pictures, signal intelligence, things like that that people seem to be very interested in. I doubt that if there's any chance at all that you've been exposed to all of that.

B-52 pictures. The walking K picture in 1988. I mean, these are things that I've seen, so God knows what else is there.

The CHAIRMAN. The record should show that a number of the concerns you have just raised are very legitimate concerns of the committee. We are about two people away from completing an analysis of one of the them, and the committee is very interested in it. There were these events. They did take place. Real people have talked to us about them, and it is an analysis of important.

Senator ROBB. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was going to make essentially the same point, that a significant amount of information is available on some of the things that you alluded to.

But if I may, and I do not want to be unduly repetitious, but the committee has cast a very wide net with regard to any potential source or sources of information possible, and have tried to bring, at least within the purview of some of the special professional people that we have, the opportunity to review anything that relates in any shape or form.

I am now asking, however, if there is anything that we should use instead of the shotgun, the rifle.

Mr. PEROT. Let's grant everybody immunity that might have been in the 1981 meeting with the Canadians, and ask for everything about that meeting. Is that a rifle?

Senator ROBB. It is closer to what I am looking for, in other words—

Mr. PEROT. You don't have anything on that meeting now, is that correct?

The CHAIRMAN. No, we do. We have deposed Richard Allen.

Mr. PEROT. No, excuse me, you don't have—one thing about these folks, they keep a lot of notes.

The CHAIRMAN. Are you talking about the Canadian side of it or our side?

Mr. PEROT. I would say start with our side, because I'm sure there's all kinds of notes, like this thing I was handed just before lunch. Get access to it. I'm amazed at what people write down, frankly. And if you can ever get it, then you've got something to look at.

And if you're really bored, go the Reagan Library, because I never cease to be amazed at what floats out there loose.

Senator ROBB. Let me ask the question—

Mr. PEROT. And if you can't find it, call the Republican Opposition Research Group, because they know how to get into the system. [Laughter.]

Senator ROBB. We are going to attempt to maintain the bipartisan flavor of the committee.

Mr. PEROT. I'm just telling you how to get the job done, Senator. I'm not trying to be partisan.

Senator ROBB. With respect to sources, you are being more precise than perhaps you have been on other questions, and I appreciate that. Let me ask another question of the same nature.

Again, it is in the hopes that you can assist us in doing as thorough a job as possible, and that would be to focus on any individuals. Are you aware of any particular case that relates to a specific POW or someone whose case has not been satisfactorily resolved in terms of the information that is available that either we do not already know, or do not have access to?

Or, if we could find out what happened to this individual based on knowledge that you have that we might not have that we could get, given the subpoena power of the committee, is there any person that you know of that falls into that category?

Let me just complete it and say, one of the concerns of the committee, obviously, was to examine the question of whether there might be any remaining Americans being held against their will in any of the countries that you have referred to.

Do you have any information about a specific individual who, in your judgment, does fall into that category, or might fall into that category, or who at one point did clearly fall into that category and whose current fate is unknown?

Mr. PEROT. Well there's a Marine pilot. I'm embarrassed, I can't remember his name, because I've met his whole family. I've got a file on him. We got a fingerprint on him which I thought—an alleged fingerprint on him which I thought, well, this is great because it either will or won't match.

Then I asked the people around the Defense Department, I said, what are the odds that we will have the fingerprint of a Marine pilot flying into combat? They said Perot, we will have the fingerprint. It's a million-to-one that we wouldn't have it. I said, OK, let's get the fingerprint.

Well, the fingerprint didn't exist. So then I went to the commandant of the Marine Corps and said, I can't believe you don't have fingerprints on a guy flying combat mission. He couldn't believe it either. He and his aid, number two man in the Marine Corps, an-

other general, dug into it and came back in a few days and said, we don't have it.

Then I went to the FBI and said surely there is some way to do this. And the FBI then explained to me that there might not be. Then I went to his family, very carefully, and asked them if there was any chance that they might have had a fingerprint like from when he got his drivers license as a young man or what have you. We swept the State, and what have you, and couldn't find a fingerprint.

I think there's a distinct possibility that this man was flying CIA missions over Laos. If he was, his file may be in the CIA and not in the Pentagon. If they wouldn't give me the Roger Shields memo, which is pretty innocuous compared to the fingerprint, I guess I shouldn't be too surprised that I never could get the fingerprint. It would be nice to get that fingerprint. Now, I can give you his name, and I will call your office and give you his name.

There's another odd one. Again, I'm working from memory, see. And the last time I was buried in this was 1986. Everybody kept popping up a CIA agent named Jerry Daniels, I believe is his name, who was in Bangkok, who allegedly was buried in trying to get people out of Laos, and who was killed in his apartment. And who, according to all the stories I've been told, is now buried on the ranch that we gave to Vang Pao or helped him acquire when we brought him to this country.

Vang Pao was a Pathet Lao leader of choice that we created over there. And I would say that I would really suggest that if you can get this information—I tried and was assured that there was nothing there, and couldn't get anything—I would think that, if I were doing it, I would at least do a quick sweep on Jerry Daniels to find out, and I can get you more detail on him, more detail on his dad, etc, etc, etc.

The last time—this is all from memory. His mother was living somewhere in the area there, never approached her, but to make a long story short this just kind of floated around like—see, the interesting thing. A lot of things that floated around have come true or near true, like the 1981 \$4 billion deal is looking more and more and more plausible.

Jerry Daniels may or may not be plausible. I'd check that, now. On specific cases, I'll be glad to go back and dig through my files. If come up with anything like that that I feel that—I would use the test that I would spend time looking for it. I'll pass it on to you and you can use your judgment.

Senator ROBB. Thank you. That would be very helpful. May I just ask one final question? You have already made reference to the kinds of intelligence that we have. We have a certain amount of signal intelligence. We have a certain amount of human intelligence.

We have a certain amount of imagery that we have attempted to examine to the extent possible, and to the extent of our ability to make some sense out of the voluminous information, as you indicated earlier, which has not all been thoroughly analyzed because there is so much of it.

With all of that information available to us, do you have any suggestion as to why we have not been able to come up to date,

either through any of the regular sources or for this committee, for that matter, with any precise information with respect to any specific individuals.

Again, that is the frustration we have is dealing with lots and lots of generalities. And we appreciate the role that you have played, and the symbolism you bring to it, and the commitment that you have, but in order to accomplish our mission, we need to find—somehow to identify with something more with concepts, i.e. names or the kind of specificity that will give us the ability to follow up.

Do you have any sense of why, with all of that information, we do not have more to date with respect to the kind of specific closure on cases that would put many families at rest and would give more confidence to the many people who are concerned about the fact that these cases remain unresolved?

Mr. PEROT. Well, you'd be better to ask the DIA that question, the people who have been running these cases all these years. You've read the Gaines reports, the Brooks reports, the Tighe report, the tight filters, the mind-set to debunk, and so on and so forth.

That, again—see, I would not spend a lot of time in this area. If I were calling the shots, I'd spend all my time working with people on whoever may be left alive. I would urge that we put somebody with a broad mission over there, somebody with a broad mission in Russia, and that we, as I say, just say let's work on it and let's build a consensus here in this country that we're not going to keep people paranoid about it back here. But there's only one mission, and that's to get them home.

I think if we tried to get the name, address, and telephone number of somebody held in a remote village in Laos, as a reason before we do anything, we probably never will get him.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Kassebaum.

Senator KASSEBAUM. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Perot, I would like ask, you believe that there are still Americans there, and that is a given. Do you believe they are still held in captivity, or are they just those left behind?

Mr. PEROT. I think we have people held in captivity. I think we have some people who were captured in remote villages who have been assimilated into the villages. As I said earlier, I think you'll have people that have Laotian families come out of there.

And they are not turncoats. These are people who probably spent 10 years in a cage, realized their country had left them, and decided that they could have at least a shred of a life outside the cage if they were allowed to go out in the village and do productive work, and assimilate into the society.

Senator KASSEBAUM. But do you believe that there are some who would be held in captivity today?

Mr. PEROT. Yes.

Senator KASSEBAUM. Based on any substantial evidence?

Mr. PEROT. I don't have any videotapes, no.

Senator KASSEBAUM. Did you mean to imply in your comments earlier that you think that there may still be some live Americans being held in Russia?

Mr. PEROT. Yes. If you—let's just take the evidence. There is a, oh, a journalist that spent a great deal of time accumulating evidence at the end of World War II. I believe his name is Bill Paul. A number of his stories appeared in the Wall Street Journal. This is Americans captured at the end of World War II by the Russians and held.

Then, take General Mark Clark's testimony about several thousand Americans left behind in Korea. Then, just take the Russians' own testimony, commentary, plus the signal intelligence that we have about Americans being flown from Vietnam to Russia, and you have the pattern.

Senator KASSEBAUM. Well, I realize you said that earlier, but what I am asking is, do you believe they are still there today? Do you still believe there are some in Korea today?

Mr. PEROT. Well, let's assume—you take 10 people 20 years ago. Then the question is, do you still have them? The burden is on you. What did you do with the 20 people? Russia took X people. Russia, what did you do with those people? Laos kept X people. What did you do with those people?

See, what it seems to me is there's a mindset in this country that you want to see 60 Minutes film these guys live walking around somewhere, and then say well, gee, now maybe we ought to go talk to the Laotians about doing it.

If you look at how big Russia is, if you look at where their prison camps are, if you look at how remote they are, if you just take the challenge I mentioned earlier today of trying to find a specific person in one square block, if I'm allowed to move them around, you realize you're not going to get it done by saying, we're going to sit here, do nothing, pontificate, and wait for proof.

We have got to send people over, work night and day, and put them under tremendous pressure. Russia needs a lot of things from us. We're in a position now to talk turkey to Russia. Russia understands. Believe me, Russia understands that they could build a tremendous amount of good will in this country.

Senator KASSEBAUM. And as you know, they have said—and their records are being opened totally to us. And they have said that they would provide all the assistance that they could to us in this.

Mr. PEROT. I'm not interested in their records. Just pull the people together.

Senator KASSEBAUM. Well, it does take some records, too. I think we have to look at that to see what, indeed, they may reflect.

Mr. PEROT. Well, could I suggest that we say, fellows, why don't you just first do the best you can, and then pull your records while you're bringing everybody out that's still alive. We'll pick them up the minute we can. Then, we will do a clean sweep at the end by going through every record, accounting for every grave, accounting for every single individual.

I think at this point in Russia's history, certainly Mr. Yeltsin could gain tremendous support in this country by releasing the remains or the living Americans that are still held over there.

Senator KASSEBAUM. Between 1973 and, say, maybe even before that and 1985, you evidently did not do anything in an active way regarding the prisoners of war in Southeast Asia. Is that correct?

Mr. PEROT. I just responded when people asked for help. I did a lot of things for the families. If my Government asked me to do anything, I responded.

Senator KASSEBAUM. But you have never been a person that has impressed me as being someone who necessarily just waits until you are asked. But you have been very aggressive, you have cared a great deal, I wonder why, in a way, you put it somewhat on a back burner at that period of time, both through the Ford and the Carter administration when, perhaps we should have still be aggressively pushing.

Mr. PEROT. Well, why didn't you?

Senator KASSEBAUM. Well, I was in Wichita, Kansas, and I must confess I did not know nearly as much about it as you do.

Mr. PEROT. Well, I was in Dallas, Texas. I did not put it on the back burner. Any time a family has called me, night or day, check with the families. Any time my Government has ever called me, night or day, I responded.

Now, all of the people who are involved with this on a full-time basis who have lived in Asia, and so on, and so forth, some of whom you referred to as hoaxers, and I've said I don't know who's a hoaxer and who's not, I would always patiently listen to their calls; did not respond when they wanted to do anything that was aggressive, I would just listen.

And anytime anything ever came up that seemed to me that might be worthwhile, I would contact the Government and say, is this anything we should look into or not. And so, you might just say it was a slow period with our Government.

Senator KASSEBAUM. Well, I guess that I might make the suggestion that perhaps President Bush ought to appoint you chief negotiator right away.

Mr. PEROT. I don't think he will.

Senator KASSEBAUM. Well—

Mr. PEROT. You have to remember this is, you know, it's the same man that called me a monster 2 months ago. So you wouldn't send a monster to Southeast Asia, would you?

Senator KASSEBAUM. I'm suggesting that in all seriousness, because obviously you still believe there is much that can be done, and I would think that and would welcome those who would want to take part in as active a way as you do. Thank you.

Mr. PEROT. I want you to read this before you go much further in terms of, you know, everybody writes down their own views here on this stuff that's taking place right around my Hanoi trip. So, you've got all the turf problems, all the power problems, everybody who, you know, feels threatened, etc, etc. And it shows you, if you really want to understand why more doesn't go on—there's inter-mural sports going on here on the inside as opposed to focusing on getting our men home.

Senator KASSEBAUM. Well, I think we can find that almost anywhere we look. It can be right here in the U.S. Senate as well.

Mr. PEROT. Yes, but not where human lives are concerned, that's the point.

Senator KASSEBAUM. That is not the point. No, it really is not, because I think for those who care enough they rise above that and go ahead and make the case.

Mr. PEROT. Again, I have responded again, and again, and again, and again. Now let's see, 1991. This is after all of the junk that I had to wade through. Only in America would you have spent the years I have on this issue, the dollars I have, placed my family's life at risk, and then be asked by you why I didn't do more.

Senator KASSEBAUM. No, Mr. Perot, I was not asking that. It just—

Mr. PEROT. OK, well fine. But it sounded like that to me. You know, I wish I could have done more.

Senator KASSEBAUM. There was a period of time there where, after your involvement, and perhaps it was just because you weren't asked, and it may have been that those administrations were not doing what they should have done, but you obviously have had a keen interest.

Mr. PEROT. Yes.

Senator KASSEBAUM. And I personally think that everyone should take advantage of the interest, and the dedication, and the knowledge that you have.

Mr. PEROT. I'm finally at the point when I'm called by these folks over there—they call me from time to time, want me to drop everything, send people to the other end of the world. My opening words—and it's to the point where they laugh about it—I say, is this something you all want to talk about, or do you want to do it?

I'm not willing to be used any more. There's a term in the horse business, used hard and put up wet. I've been used hard and put up wet again, and again, and again for good causes. And I'm happy to be used hard and put up wet.

But I guarantee you on this one, if they want me to get into it again, we've got to have a clear understanding that we're going to do it and not just create a mirage here, and not have guys in here writing memos about, how will it look.

It won't look pretty. It never looks pretty when you're getting something done. You know, they say about sausage, you don't want to be around when it's made, right? But if you're going to get something done, you've got to quit worrying about how it looks and do it.

Senator KASSEBAUM. With that, we certainly do agree. Thank you.

Senator SMITH [presiding]. Just a parliamentary point before I recognize Senator Kerrey. We are about 5 minutes into a vote. We are going to keep going. Senator Kerry has already gone over to vote, and he will be coming back. So we are going to keep going, if that is OK with the witness. Senator Kerrey?

Senator KERREY. Now that we have got you in a good mood, Mr. Perot, it is time for my questioning. [Laughter.]

Senator KERREY. First of all, let me do some separation. It seems to me this committee is charged with the responsibility of looking in two directions. One, looking back, trying to figure out what happened and narrow the cases, trying to get more precise with the information, and in that regard it seems to me that we have managed to both get more information that gives us more comfort, and get more information that makes us more uncomfortable.

I mean, this whole last barrage of stuff that has been released is good news. We are finally getting information released and into the

public arena. But in many ways it increases the problems of the committee. And I understand that you have received a bit lately as well.

But I assure you, the problem of looking back at this thing is an important one, and we are trying in good faith to examine it without suggesting that anybody is unpatriotic, or anybody is not doing all they could for their country.

The more difficult problem for me, that I would like to begin with, is the problem of looking forward, which is how do we bring our men home?

Mr. PEROT. Right.

Senator KERREY. Let us assume that there is one, which I think this entire committee has to assume that there is. Let us assume that we have got one person over there. What do we do?

Do you think, Mr. Perot, that in order to do that that the United States should consider lifting the Trading With the Enemy Act restrictions, should begin low-level contact in a diplomatic way, should consider some extraordinary diplomatic action of that kind in order to change in environment between the United States and Vietnam?

Mr. PEROT. You don't give the other side what he wants in a negotiation unless you're going to get what you want. So, don't do something as a giant bold move like that. This is my suggestion.

I would listen, first, if I'm going to negotiate with you. The wisest thing I could do is have a long visit with you where I listened and I understand what you want.

Senator KERREY. Your answer is no, you do not think we should do—

Mr. PEROT. I would not do a bold move and hope that they would reciprocate. They now have what they want. Why should they do anything? That's Laos. They have what they want. Why do anything? What we basically need to do is say, gentlemen, our country can no longer tolerate this. We want to build a friendship with you.

Laos, we have a friendship with you. Russia, we have a friendship with you we are trying to build. Russian, you are over here every day asking for help. I've got now three balls in the air. And we'll probably have three different solutions because they're three different cultures. The worst mistake we can make is assume that they will react as we would in a negotiation.

They are Asian. They are very, very, very different. And we have to listen to them, understand them, find out what they want, work out a plan with them. And then I think the chances are excellent that we can do it, because they really need our help.

Senator KERREY. So, let me get it clear. You are saying, as far as the Trading With the Enemy Act, restrictions keep them in place?

Mr. PEROT. I can't hear you.

Senator KERREY. As far as the Trading With the Enemy Act, restrictions that are currently in place, there has been some discussion about lifting those. You would recommend leaving them in place at this point, subject to getting a satisfactory negotiation for all information or release of our people?

Mr. PEROT. Sir, I would suggest that we have a series of meetings and listen. Make it clear in those meetings that we have come to

finally resolve these problems. Listen, listen, listen. And then develop the strategy.

If we develop a strategy in public here today, they know it before we go over there. And as good negotiators on their side, we'll be at a disadvantage.

Senator KERREY. OK. But you are essentially saying, no, then? Or you are saying that we should have some meetings?

Mr. PEROT. I would say, I wouldn't tell them here on television in the country and have them watch it on Cable News tonight. I would go over and listen to them. I would listen.

Now, a good person in a negotiation will always take an extreme position. They will take an extreme position. We need to listen. But you need to always remember, they need us more than we need them.

Now, what we have done for some 20-some odd years is treat them rudely, treat them with disrespect, punch them around, etc, etc, etc.

Senator KERREY. You are talking about the Government now, not the people?

Mr. PEROT. Our Government and Vietnam, and it has not produced the desired result. I suggest that if you even listen to them for an hour, or if you read the portion of the letter to the President, where I explain what their sensitivities are, you will start to see, at least back at that point in time, the beginnings of a negotiating strategy, but not a negotiating strategy yet. But you'll see the beginnings.

You would realize that sending low-level bureaucrats—middle-level Government employees from the National Security Council in to punch them around only infuriated them. Now, if you sent a senior-level person, like General Vessey, who, they considered a peer, and he did something like that, that would not offend them as much as these junior people.

Now, of course, General Vessey wouldn't do that. But we have all of this scar tissue from what has been done improperly, and you need to have a senior-level person with a broad mission. Not a senior-level person whose only mission in life is to try to get the POW/MIAs out. A senior-level person whose mission is to try to resolve this whole problem, including diplomatic relations.

Senator KERREY. All I am trying to do, sir, is to suggest that we have got a paradox here of trying to get into a negotiating position without being in a position to actually negotiate. That is the paradox. And we are dealing with a Government, Vietnam, that lies to its own people. Why should I believe that they are not going to lie to me?

We are dealing with a Communist Government that has, for the past 17 years, lied to its own people. So why should I reach the startling conclusion that somehow they are going to tell me the truth? It seems to me that we are in a position—and by the way, for all the abuse that we have given them, they have taken a few actions in the last 17 years, I think, that would justify some harsh treatment of them in return.

I have just been notified that I can vote and come back and ask so more questions. Is that possible?

The CHAIRMAN [presiding]: Yes. I do not want you to get squeezed here, so if you want to go vote, we will hold some time until you return.

Senator KERREY. I will be right back.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Perot, let me just tell you that with respect to the Richard Allen meeting that you have alleged to a number of times, which you indicate there is a significant amount of substance to or something, the committee has not yet drawn that conclusion. We have been reading in the newspaper, as you have, and I guess some people like to try this issue, or not try it, that is the wrong word, but make the judgment of the evidence on the basis of, sort of, partial leaks to the press. You are very familiar with this.

I want to make it clear that we have deposed Mr. Deaver. We have deposed Mr. Allen. We will be deposing Mr. Ed Meese shortly. We have, as you have stated, a Secret Service agent that is out there available to be deposed at some point in time. And there are three people who have not yet been deposed, which are the only group of people that we can place at this meeting.

Now, I know that some people—

Mr. PEROT. Now, the other three—who are the other three, Senator?

The CHAIRMAN. The other three are President Reagan, President Bush and Secretary Baker.

Mr. PEROT. Yes. The Secretary of State.

The CHAIRMAN. Secretary of State Baker.

Mr. PEROT. This is in 1981?

The CHAIRMAN. Yes, James Baker.

Mr. PEROT. And in 1981?

The CHAIRMAN. He was chief of staff at the time to Ronald Reagan.

Mr. PEROT. Chief of staff, right. OK. Right. I understand. I got my time schedule.

The CHAIRMAN. Beyond that, if anybody has any evidence that the committee can glean that others might have been at this meeting, that would be helpful.

Mr. PEROT. Can I ask a question? As a private citizen, you guys descend on me one afternoon, demanded I go through my files. I have just gotten back in town, produced all my records for the first time I get hit with it, have to have them the next morning, stayed up late that night doing it. Then, the next day was tied up all day giving a deposition. Why are Government employees different?

I mean, why can't you get—if these three folks—why can't—look, human lives are involved here.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me just say to you, Mr. Perot.

Mr. PEROT. They are involved here. Why don't these three—why don't you just say, fellows, come on over and tell us what you know?

The CHAIRMAN. Before you pop a gasket on this one, let me just tell you absolutely clearly, no one is going to be treated differently here. This committee has issued subpoenas. We will continue to subpoena anybody who does not come forward voluntarily. And all of these members of the current Government, as well as former, are being deposed.

Mr. PEROT. Now, you're a former prosecutor.

The CHAIRMAN. President Nixon is available to be—he is going to be deposed. And we are scheduling them as rapidly as we can. But we are doing it in an orderly process. And we are beginning with, in a sense, the people in the lower positions and working up the chain of command, so to speak. And it has proved to be an interesting process and I think a fruitful one.

Did you want to add something?

Mr. PEROT. Yes, sir. I just find it interesting that as a taxpayer I come up here at my own expense voluntarily. And as a Government employee, apparently you have to depose people.

The CHAIRMAN. No, sir. We deposed you, Mr. Perot. We are deposing—

Mr. PEROT. Excuse me, excuse me, subpoena. Subpoena. I used the wrong word. You have to subpoena these people—

The CHAIRMAN. No, we have not had to—let me just say to you, not one Government official has so far required a subpoena.

Mr. PEROT. All right, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. They have come up voluntarily. So I think it is important to keep this in its perspective. We are proceeding to the best of our ability, I think, methodically and we are, as you can tell, from the evidence that is coming out. Incidentally, some of which supports the contentions you have made.

If we were going to, sort of, assess where we are today, we have evidence before this committee that people were not accounted for. The Government has acknowledged now that people were unaccounted for. We have a number of Government employees who have acknowledged under oath that they believe there was evidence that some people were alive in 1973 and unaccounted for.

The committee has evidence that people were held prisoner, were last known to be alive in captivity in 1973 and unaccounted for. Now, that is a new body of evidence that has never been in front of a congressional committee and never been out in public. So that sustains part of what you have said.

Moreover, we have evidence that there were incursions, as you have said, in the 1980's, in an effort to try to get people. We are examining those. Indeed, we are very interested by precisely what knowledge existed to permit people to make the judgment to do that. And we will assess it as we go along here.

So, in point of fact, Mr. Perot, there is evidence that supports some of the conclusions that you have drawn. What is of interest to the committee and, indeed, what is vital to the committee is to understand on what basis you drew that evidence, you drew those conclusions. It is obviously not possible for you to have used the Eagleburger memo, which you only learned of today, to draw the conclusion in the 1980's. It is not possible to have used some of the other evidence that has just surfaced.

So, in 1987, when you wrote the memo, the question is, and this is why this is so important for the committee, what did you then know yourself what was the evidence? And the reason we ask that question is not to put you in some defensive test, but to understand how each person who came to conclusions got there. And that is why we want to know it.

Now, for the purposes today—

Mr. PEROT. Do you think you know it now?

The CHAIRMAN. I beg your pardon?

Mr. PEROT. It's in the memo itself why I drew that conclusion.

The CHAIRMAN. I understand you drew it on the basis of live-sighting reports. You drew it on the basis of the—

Mr. PEROT. May I State my own—

The CHAIRMAN. I just want to make sure I understand it. May I? Is that correct? On live-sighting reports. On the basis of the Laos visit. And on the basis of the Sig [signal] intelligence that you had seen previously. Is there anything in addition to that?

Mr. PEROT. All right, sir. It's right in the President's letter, and it goes back to the briefing at the embassy. It goes back to Soth Pethrasy's comments. And then that's the core right there. I have known about General Walters' testimony since whenever it occurred, the mid-70's I believe, 1976.

And so all of those pieces have been there, and that was the basis that I used in my letter, and it's clearly stated in the letter.

The CHAIRMAN. Fair enough.

Mr. PEROT. And it's not some philosophical moonbeam conjecture on my part.

The CHAIRMAN. In the letter you say—this is the letter to the President of the United States, dated April 8, 1987, paragraph one, "We left POWs behind at the end of the war in Vietnam. We knew we were leaving them behind. The men left behind were held in Laos."

You specifically exempt Vietnam. I take it you did not believe and did not have evidence that anyone was held in Vietnam?

Correct?

Mr. PEROT. No.

The CHAIRMAN. That is not correct?

Mr. PEROT. No.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, it does not state Vietnam. It says the men were held in Laos.

Mr. PEROT. My purpose here was to present a black-and-white, simple, irrefutable statement that we left men behind. Once you go from Laos to Vietnam it turns gray.

The CHAIRMAN. What, it turns gray?

Mr. PEROT. It turns gray.

If you recall our first meeting, when I said the minute you get into this, the minute you hit the intelligence community, they'll try to get you to focus on Vietnam. Keep it simple. Stay with Laos. And watch them go silent on you.

The CHAIRMAN. OK. Turn to Vietnam for a moment.

Mr. PEROT. So that's the reason. Excuse me just a minute.

The CHAIRMAN. Certainly.

Mr. PEROT. I am writing to President Reagan. I wanted to make sure he understood it. I wanted to make sure that he had it fixed in his mind that we had left—we had done nothing in Laos. That's the reason I focused on Laos. And it keeps going here.

I've got the CIA thing here. I've got the end of the war, when the Pathet Lao boasted about holding the prisoners. I've got the Paris negotiations.

The CHAIRMAN. OK. Did you at that time, Mr. Perot—and I accept what you said about Laos, and we will come back to Laos—

did you have any specific evidence with respect to a POW or POWs in Vietnam at that time?

Mr. PEROT. I don't have any videotapes, no, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Not—

Mr. PEROT. What do you want as specific evidence, Senator? I've been asked this a hundred times today. Do you want—what would you consider specific evidence?

The CHAIRMAN. A credible live-sighting report that was in the hands of DIA at the time that they deemed—

Mr. PEROT. Oh, sure, they are there. You've got your percentages there. They're there.

The CHAIRMAN. But I'm trying to get at what your judgment was made on.

Mr. PEROT. Yes, I don't have the names and longitude and latitudes in my head at this point.

The CHAIRMAN. OK. Now let us assume, let us go to the next step. Let us accept that. We are in 1992. We do not have a longitude and a latitude. We do not even have a name. We have a presumption, a possibility, in some cases some evidence, dating back 20 years. You have again and again said that you have got to sit down with these folks. You cannot find them. You have got to negotiate them out. Correct?

Mr. PEROT. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. Now, I still want to get at this, and I am not trying to be tricky or anything. I truly do not see how you get out of a circular argument here. We have gone to the Laos. We have gone to the Vietnamese. They say, we do not have them. You say, I believe you do have them. So you say to them, where are they? They say to you, we do not have them. You say, well, I am willing to negotiate. We will pay money. We will set up whatever. They say, we do not have them. You say, I believe you have them.

Mr. PEROT. I would not have said any of this.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, where does it end? Show me exactly how this negotiation produces somebody 20 years after the fact, when they deny that these people exist.

Mr. PEROT. They need us very badly in Vietnam.

The CHAIRMAN. I accept that.

Mr. PEROT. They need to be accepted in the world community very badly in Vietnam.

The CHAIRMAN. They have stated that.

Mr. PEROT. Their preoccupation is, why do we think you want these people after you declared them dead? That's right in my addendum to my letter to the President.

The CHAIRMAN. I understand. But they have gotten beyond that. I have had conversations with them and others have. You can get beyond that. When you sit there with them and say, what does it take to get somebody out, they say to you, we do not have somebody.

Mr. PEROT. I wouldn't—again, and I would say again, having listened to them, I wouldn't approach it that way. I would just sit here, listen to them. Let them talk about the fact that we have treated them rudely. We have treated them as though we won the war. We don't treat them with dignity and respect.

Then you get an hour lecture on the fact that they can't do more on our people because they have over 100,000 MIAs, and their people get very angry when we work at the village level trying to get something done. Just let all that come out and listen, listen, listen. Then you'll see patterns.

Then you'll understand what's important to these people. Then you start working with those things. They have tremendous medical needs.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Perot, I understand what is important to them.

Mr. PEROT. They have tremendous educational needs.

The CHAIRMAN. I have had hours of conversations with them, as have you. General Vessey has had hours of conversations with them. Ken Quinn has had hours of conversation with them. Richard Solomon has hours of conversation with them. People have sat there, and we understand what they want.

They want recognition. They want the embargo lifted. They want to be part of the world community. They would love it if we paid them some of the money that was promised by Richard Nixon. There is a list. But our policy is not to do those things, because we want the accounting for the POWs.

Now, how do you get beyond that? Where is the starter here?

Mr. PEROT. I think the one common factor in what you said is it is just about time somebody gets up the learning curve, then his tour is over and somebody else comes in and gets up the learning curve.

The CHAIRMAN. But this can go on forever.

Mr. PEROT. Well, that's why I suggested earlier that you put the right teams in place in these countries. Give them the total support of the Congress and the White House.

The CHAIRMAN. What is wrong with General Vessey?

Mr. PEROT. General Vessey has a narrow mission. General Vessey has only been there five times.

The CHAIRMAN. What should he be empowered to do, to normalize?

Mr. PEROT. No, no, no.

The CHAIRMAN. Should he be empowered to lift the embargo?

Mr. PEROT. He should at least be able to show them that he is a man of tremendous influence in this country who can, if they need some medical help, produce it like that. If they need some help in education, produce it like that.

The CHAIRMAN. So we should deal with them? We should help them?

Mr. PEROT. But I'm in little minor areas. Let me give you an example. Back when the war was going on and our prisoners were still in Hanoi and Laos and wherever else they were, at one point they showed up and said, we would like to negotiate the release of very ill prisoners for medical equipment. And this is during the war. I went to the White House. I said, what do you think about this? They looked at the medical equipment and said, Ross, this is fail safe. Fail safe. They can't even keep it working. And if they can keep it working, there's no way you can turn it into anything that will hurt our people.