

tween ourselves and the North Vietnamese, as you have said. You had to go in to stop the foot-dragging in order to facilitate Vessey getting in. Is that right?

Mr. PEROT. They asked me to try to get them, to tell them that he was being considered and tell them about the Presidential negotiator and thing I found out from reading this, is the reason, I guess, they asked me, because our people couldn't get in. They wouldn't see them.

Senator McCAIN. Mr. Chairman, let me put a little different spin on that if I could. I was there in 1985. I can assure you the Vietnamese in 1985 had no interest whatsoever in negotiating with the United States or coming forward with any additional information, and they adhered strictly to the line that they wanted their \$3 or \$4 billion obviously, as their economic conditions deteriorated and as the end of the cold war came around, there was a dramatic shift in their position.

So let us not put the blame all on the U.S. Government, because between the end of the war at some time in the late 1980's, if anyone can show me any deviation in the North Vietnamese position, I would very much like to see it, No. 1. No. 2 is, we have a tendency to forget, I would like to point out again as I have from time to time again, cooperation by the Vietnamese on this issue could have resolved it years and years ago.

It has become very fashionable to bash the administration, some of them very dedicated men and women both in and out of uniform who have worked very hard on this issue and in a very dedicated fashion, made mistakes, yes, done things wrong, yes, and was there enough attention to the issue, yes, but the fact is that the Vietnamese held the key and the solution to this problem both in Vietnam and Laos all along.

In 1985, I guarantee you, because I was there, the Vietnamese were not interested in talking to anyone, whether it be Ross Perot, or Ronald Reagan, or anyone else. So I think that is an important aspect to put on this entire issue rather than to continually bash people who were part of the administration, who bear some culpability.

And people did not cooperate, I would suggest, Ross, until it became very much expedient for them to do so, for the Vietnamese Government themselves, and that is not to remove any obligation from the American Government and both public and private citizens for not giving this issue the priority that it deserved.

Mr. Chairman, could I go back to one other issue that I think that Mr. Perot might want to respond to, and that is this Powell versus Perot, 4/9/87. I do not know if we have gone through that or not, I am getting a little weary myself. But, then on the second page it says, question, what does Ross think the Vietnamese expect from the United States? Did we go through that yet?

The CHAIRMAN. Where is that?

Mr. PEROT. Are we in a deposition or what?

Senator McCAIN. This is Powell versus Perot, this is in this set of documents, it is dated 4/9/87. It is following the note from the office of the Vice President in Washington.

Mr. PEROT. Oh yes, this is interesting. I find it fascinating. This is a meeting I think that took place at National Airport. They wanted to meet with me. I met them at National Airport.

Senator McCAIN. It is about midway through.

The CHAIRMAN. Here it is, thank you.

Senator McCAIN. Let me turn to the second page if I could, Mr. Perot, their last question. I think you might want to comment on this. What does Ross think the Vietnamese expect from the United States, and you go through a series of things, allowing a piano player to go on a concert tour in the United States

Mr. PEROT. I've been to Vietnam and this is April 8. I've been to Vietnam. This exactly parallels my letter to the President.

Senator McCAIN. I understand and I also understand this is not your statement, this is Colin Powell's statement. I think that is important, to make that clear.

Mr. PEROT. No, I really think this is Jim Cannon, either that or somebody taped it, or Jim Cannon is writing the conversation down. That's my impression. Now, that may be from what I read from back here.

The CHAIRMAN. That is correct.

Senator McCAIN. That is correct.

Mr. PEROT. OK, it's Jim Cannon writing it down, taping it. Now, let me say this. As a citizen, I don't mind you taping me any time. I would like for you to tell me if you're taping me, you know, to put in a meeting, taped and not told, I find offensive. I found this very interesting. I don't remember anybody scribbling madly in this meeting.

Senator McCAIN. Actually, I share that view.

Mr. PEROT. OK, that's history.

Senator McCAIN. I think all of us are upset when we are taped without being notified.

Mr. PEROT. But it's accurate.

Senator McCAIN. Anyway, the bottom paragraph is the one I was just specifically asking about. However, Ross said I would give them very little, nothing but minor symbols until they come across with assistance in letting U.S. teams going anywhere in Vietnam or Laos to look for remains and live prisoners in Laos.

Is that an accurate statement?

Mr. PEROT. No, I don't believe that's accurate. Because they were always willing to let us roam around. Was there ever a time when they didn't let us go out—like that meeting—well, I was just with them once. And they basically said you can go anywhere they want to.

As a matter of fact, they wanted General Giap to take me to Hai-phong Harbor, didn't they? And I didn't go.

Senator McCAIN. I am not sure that you understand my question.

Did you say, "I would give them very little—nothing but minor symbols"?

Mr. PEROT. No, that part would be correct. You start off slow in a negotiation. You don't give away the store but you show good faith. The minor symbols are the things that I mentioned here.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me ask you a question, Ross. Do you think we are on that track now? I see a lot of missed opportunities along

the way here. But in the last year and a half, President Bush has now got significant numbers of people in there. We have the joint task force. It has been elevated in public consciousness and effort. And more importantly, the Vietnamese appear to be on a track with us: joint cooperation, if you will. And we have done some things.

As Senator McCain said earlier, we have lifted part of the communications business opportunity. We have helped, some humanitarian aide; we have provided some prosthetics, and so forth. There are these little things now happening. And there appears to be a significant step up in their cooperation with us.

Do you think that we are now on that track that you talked about getting on much earlier?

Mr. PEROT. I would have to look very carefully at what we are doing. But since history would tell us, and facts would tell us that most of the survivors would probably be in Laos, and any time—any time—

The CHAIRMAN. So you think Vietnam is almost irrelevant then?

Mr. PEROT. No, no, no, no, please—

But every time—I would see—I know during the war—and Vietnam was a huge force in Laos, was the force in Laos, the big gorilla—they went anywhere, anytime, if they wanted to guard those prisoners, and Sam Neua, they could, etc, etc, etc. They were the muscle.

But when I talked with Mr. Thach, he was very careful to talk about the sovereignty of Laos every time we ever brought it up—Harry, correct or not?

Mr. McKILLOP. That is correct.

Mr. PEROT. Interestingly enough, the minute you would say Laos, they would kind of just freeze on you. So I would say you'd have to deal with Laos as a separate strategy.

I am not saying go back on what you did here. But we need to have a really well-thought-out strategy for Laos. And again, no criticism of General Vessey intended.

I think we need people who go there and stay there, are buried in it—not one trip a year. I do not think that is General Vessey's fault.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, General Needham is there. We have a flag officer who is there. You do not think that is adequate? I am just asking. I am not saying it is.

Mr. PEROT. I would have to know his mission, what can he do other than look for remains?

The CHAIRMAN. Well, he is following up on live-sightings. He is not allowed to negotiated, except as to the furtherance of the accounting process.

Mr. PEROT. I would have my negotiator close by, because time is critical now. These fellows are getting old. It has always been critical, but it gets more critical as they age.

Senator McCain. Mr. Chairman, could I make a suggestion? It may not be the proper time to do it—but Mr. Perot has only had about 45 minutes, I believe, during a brief break to respond to—to examine all these documents and respond. And I suggest that we leave the record open for Mr. Perot to respond in a way that he

chooses to do so, since he clearly had not been aware of any of these documents until this hearing took place.

The CHAIRMAN. I think that is perfectly acceptable. I do not have any reason—and we would leave the record open anyway.

Do you want to do that, Mr. Perot? Is that comfortable to you?

Mr. PEROT. What does that mean, sir?

The CHAIRMAN. That means that if you want to take some time to read through these, and you would like to respond in writing to the committee—

Mr. PEROT. Sure, yes, if there is anything—sure.

The CHAIRMAN[continuing]. On any of the aspects, so that we would be happy to accept it as part of the record.

Mr. PEROT. All right, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me just call to your attention, incidentally—because this has come up a couple of times, and this document—this is the first time I have seen this document. It just was presented to me, as a consequence of our discussion today.

But you cited earlier the Soth Petrasy comments. And I mentioned to you that in 1991 he was visited, and he retracts them. Just so the record is clear, that that is not a 1991 retraction, we have here an embassy, Vientiane Embassy cable, on a trip from Senator Ed Brooke, my predecessor in this seat—not immediate predecessor. And he went to Laos in 1973, on April 6 of 1973.

And in the course of his meeting with Representative Soth Petrasy in Vientiane, the Embassy reported back the following:

In the course of Senator Brooke's meeting with LPF Representative Soth Petrasy on April 6, the letter—I might remark to you, this is April 6. This is Operation Homecoming. This is about 2 weeks after the last flights, or right about the time of the last flights.

Soth Petrasy says LPF holds no more American prisoners in Laos.

Mr. PEROT. When did the Congress decide not to pay reparations?

The CHAIRMAN. Later.

Mr. PEROT. Are you sure?

The CHAIRMAN. Yes.

The joint military powers, the four joint powers were implementing the initial stages. This is right after, during the return—almost immediately that joint, four-power process was beginning to break down almost immediately. And we were accusing the Vietnamese of violations. And they were accusing us. And the process never really worked, obviously. And that is where part of the accounting broke down.

It was subsequent to that the Congress made its decision that they were not going to be forthcoming with the money. But at this time Soth Petrasy said that the only prisoners the LPF held were the nine who were returned to the U.S. Government in Hanoi on March 28.

Incidentally, this does not mean that this is true. I am just telling you what he said back then. Senator Brooke suggested that the search for MIAs not be linked to the ceasefire agreement, but that this activity be undertaken separately and start forthwith toward that end. The Senator suggested establishment of a joint body

effort to shed light on the fate of MIAs. Soth Petrasny agreed to transmit this suggestion to Souphanouvong at Sam Neua.

It says Senator Brooke explained the economic situation of the United States; said that the growing opposition within Congress and the country to spend American money on reconstruction; had not decided not to but it was growing—particularly in North Vietnam. This opposition, the Senator noted, is strengthened by two events: the allegation of torture of American POWs by North Vietnamese and Viet Cong; and, indeed, the small number of American POWs returned in Laos, considering the large number of Americans missing.

Specifically, according to U.S. Government records, 318 American military are missing or were captured. Incidentally, he had no other information about capture. It was just simply missing or captured in Laos.

He mentioned they had no information on the fate of six missing Americans, that only nine had been returned.

Anyway, we will enter this into this record.

[The information referred to follows:]

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RECORD

INFO X00C / X0XX-2 IN-3 SAFOS-3 (u)

VZ2200AF3891LN862 C O N F I D E N T I A L

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ACTION

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SECJ8(07) ASDIWA(18) ASDIPA(06) LA(01) ASDISA(01) SECDEF: DIA
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CNO WASH DC
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FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE IMMEDIATE 348Z

INFO RUMHQDA/CINCPAC IMMEDIATE

HUNGREY/CDR JCRC NKP THAT IMMEDIATE

RUMTBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK IMMEDIATE 1293

RUMJIR/AMEMBASSY SAIGON IMMEDIATE 9211

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 VIENTIANE 269A

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGSI MOPS, PFCR, LA

SUBJECT: SENATOR BROOKE'S DISCUSSION WITH LPF
REPRESENTATIVE ON POW/MIA QUESTION

SUMMARY: IN COURSE OF SENATOR BROOKE'S MEETING WITH LPF
REPRESENTATIVE SOTH PHETRASY ON APRIL 6, LATTER FORMALLY
STATED THAT LPF HOLDS NO MORE AMERICAN PRISONERS IN LAOS;
SOTH SAID ONLY PRISONERS LPF HELD WERE THE NINE WHO WERE
RETURNED TO USG IN HANOI ON MARCH 28. SENATOR BROOKE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L

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Declassified
Per Dep Asst Sec
Pentagon Bureau
Kenneth Quinn
8/11/92
PDS

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SUGGESTED THAT SEARCH FOR MIAs NOT BE LINKED TO LAO CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT BUT THAT THIS ACTIVITY BE UNDERTAKEN SEPARATELY AND START FORTHWITH. TOWARD THAT END SENATOR SUGGESTED ESTABLISHMENT OF A JOINT BODY IN EFFORT TO SHED LIGHT ON FATE OF MIAs. BOTH PHETRASY AGREED TO TRANSMIT THIS SUGGESTION TO SOUPHANOUVONG IN SAM NEUA. END SUMMARY.

1. SENATOR BROOKE, ACCOMPANIED BY DOM, CALLED ON LPP VIENTIANE REPRESENTATIVE SOTH PHOTRASY MORNING APRIL 6 IN COURSE OF TWO HOUR 15 MINUTE CONVERSATION. THREE SUBJECTS WERE DISCUSSED: (A) RECONSTRUCTION ASSISTANCE TO INDOCHINA; (B) PROSPECTS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF VIENTIANE CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT; (C) POWS AND MIAs. THIS MESSAGE DEALS ONLY WITH LAST SUBJECT.

2. SENATOR BROOKE EXPLAINED THAT HE EXPECTS PRESIDENT NIXON TO PROPOSE TO CONGRESS A PLAN FOR RECONSTRUCTION ASSISTANCE FOR INDOCHINA IN KEEPING WITH THE AGREEMENTS SIGNED EARLIER THIS YEAR. WHILE THE PRESIDENT CAN PROPOSE SUCH A PROGRAM, THE SENATOR NOTED THAT CONGRESS CONTROLS THE PURSE STRINGS TO IMPLEMENT SUCH A PROGRAM. THE SENATOR THEN LISTED SOME OF THE DIFFICULTIES SUCH A PROGRAM WILL ENCOUNTER BOTH IN CONGRESS AND WITH THE AMERICAN PEOPLE: (A) THE ECONOMIC SITUATION IN THE UNITED STATES; (B) THE PENCHANT OF MANY MEMBERS OF CONGRESS AND A LARGE SECTOR OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE TO SPEND MONEY AT HOME RATHER THAN ABROAD; (C) THE GROWING OPPOSITION WITHIN THE CONGRESS AND IN THE COUNTRY TO SPEND AMERICAN MONEY ON RECONSTRUCTION OF INDOCHINA, PARTICULARLY IN NORTH VIETNAM. THIS OPPOSITION THE SENATOR NOTED, IS STRENGTHENED BY TWO EVENTS: (A) THE ALLEGATION OF TORTURE OF AMERICAN POWS BY NORTH VIETNAMESE AND VIET CONG; (B) THE SMALL NUMBER OF AMERICAN POWS RETURNED IN LAOS CONSIDERING THE LARGE NUMBER OF AMERICANS MISSING IN LAOS. SPECIFICALLY, THE SENATOR MENTIONED THAT, ACCORDING TO USG RECORDS, 318 AMERICAN MILITARY PERSONNEL ARE MISSING OR WERE CAPTURED IN LAOS. IN ADDITION HE HAVE NO INFORMATION ON THE FATE OF SIX MISSING AMERICAN CIVILIANS. OF THE 324 AMERICANS MISSING OR CAPTURED IN LAOS, ONLY NINE (7 MILITARY AND 2 CIVILIANS) HAVE BEEN RETURNED TO US. FURTHER.

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MORE. THE PATHET LAO HAVE NOT GIVEN UP ANY ACCOUNT OF THE FATE OF THOSE CARRIED AS MIA.

3. THE SENATOR EXPLAINED AT LENGTH BOTH THE HUMANITARIAN AND LEGAL PROBLEMS CREATED BY NOT KNOWING WHETHER A MIA IS DEAD OR ALIVE AND NOTED THAT MANY OF HIS COLLEAGUES BELIEVE THAT THE ADVERSARY HAS NOT DONE ENOUGH TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ON MIAs. MANY MEMBERS OF CONGRESS ARE DISINCLINED TO SUPPORT RECONSTRUCTION AID UNLESS PROPER ACCOUNTING PROCEDURES ARE ESTABLISHED FOR MIAs. SENATOR BROOKE SAID THAT THE PATHET LAO MIGHT WISH TO KNOW ABOUT THE SENTIMENT OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AND OF THE MEMBERS OF CONGRESS REGARDING RECONSTRUCTION AID FOR INDOCHINA AND APPLY ITS CLOSE RELATIONSHIP TO THE PRISONER AND MIA PROBLEM.

4. SENATOR BROOKE SUGGESTED THAT THE PATHET LAO PROVIDE INFORMATION ON POWS AND MIAs BOTH IN THEIR SELF-INTEREST, (I.E. TO STRENGTHEN THE ARGUMENTS OF THOSE AMERICANS FAVORABLY DISPOSED TOWARD RECONSTRUCTION ASSISTANCE) AND ALSO TO ALLEVIATE THE SUFFERING OF FAMILIES WHO HAVE LOVED ONE MISSING OR CAPTURED DURING THE WAR. THE SENATOR POINTED OUT THAT HE WAS SPEAKING AS A MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH AND NOT FOR THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH. HE BELIEVES THAT CONGRESS NEEDS SOME INDICATION THAT THE FORMER ADVERSARY WISHES TO COOPERATE WITH THE USG ON ISSUES OF VITAL INTEREST TO THE UNITED STATES, SUCH AS POWS/MIAs. IF THE CONGRESS IS TO VOTE FUNDS FOR THE RECONSTRUCTION OF INDOCHINA, INCLUDING NORTH VIETNAM, THE SENATOR OPINED THAT PROBABLY EVERY ONE OF THE 100 SENATORS HAS A CONSTITUENT WHO HAS A LOVED ONE MISSING IN INDOCHINA AND THESE CONSTITUENTS REPRESENT A VOCAL AND SIGNIFICANT GROUP INFLUENCING THE MEMBERS OF THE SENATE. AS A POLITICIAN, THE SENATOR SAID, SOTH PHETRASY SHOULD UNDERSTAND THIS PRESSURE.

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Mr. PEROT. What we have here is a man in 1970 who was very open about it; who in 1973—a couple of months earlier—was boasting about holding tens of ten.

The CHAIRMAN. Agreed.

Mr. PEROT. And now suddenly he does a 180 degree on us. And so I guess, you know, the fashionable thing to do is say gee, let's take whichever story you told we like. You pick the one you like.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me just say to you that is the problem here. We all understand that.

But in terms of dealing with the realities of getting people back, or of assets, and why they would keep them or not keep them, you have to try to weigh these things.

When we confronted the Prime Minister point blank on this subject of nonaccountability, we got the same kind of sort of "this was history; this was part of the past; terrible things happened in war"—that kind of—the very kind of comments that Souphan gave us. Only he had given them to us more directly saying they were killed.

Now all I am suggesting is that one of the things the committee has to evaluate is the possibility that people were simply taken out and killed because the asset value had changed, given the politics and the status of the situation. We do not know the answer.

Mr. PEROT. Where are their remains, Mr. Chairman?

The CHAIRMAN. This is a question that we need to pursue. And we have—

Mr. PEROT. If you have to go down that train in your thinking, then you say all right, you killed them. Where did you bury them? It is very important to our country and to the families.

The CHAIRMAN. We asked all of those questions—

Mr. PEROT. Can they be returned?

The CHAIRMAN[continuing]. And we are not satisfied with the answers we have received obviously.

Mr. PEROT. But in the meantime, they get full, diplomatic status. That is their reward for playing games with us.

Senator SMITH. I would like to just weigh in on that for a moment, on the Petrasy thing.

It is interesting—it is true there are two stories that Mr. Petrasy has told here that is a matter of public record. What he said to Mr. Brooke, it is also a matter of public record what he said to you and others in the public and to the world in the 1969 through 1973 period.

I think if we are going to enter in the record a document that says that he retracted it or recanted it, then we also—I would make a point, Mr. Chairman, we enter into the record the cable where he said that they were seen, which would be—

The CHAIRMAN. They are already in the record.

Senator SMITH[continuing].—Part of the record.

But I also think it is important to point out because when we went to Laos, and all the comments that Mr. Kerry made about Mr. Souphan were correct. He did deny any live Americans, thoroughly refused to take any correspondence from families which I tried to give to him, at the request of the families. He refused to accept.

But I also think it is important to point out that one of the specific and most solid request that I made on behalf of the committee was that we have—we, the committee, had the opportunity to meet with Mr. Petrasy. And that was made very clear to Souphan. It was the one request that was firm, other than Souphan, himself, that we really wanted to see. We were denied that access.

Subsequent to that, the staff director, recently, went back again to Laos to try to meet with Petrasy. And we were again rebuffed.

So I think it is important just to get it in perspective for the record that Petrasy has not talked to the committee, directly. We have asked for access to him and have not received it. So I just think that is important for clarification.

And I just want to make two more quick points. There was a lot of debate here a while ago on a Colin Powell conversation at the White House. I think it is important to clarify that that memorandum that was referred to here was not Colin Powell's own words, as he had written—in fairness to Powell we should say that that was Craig Fuller's characterization of what Colin Powell said. It may be accurate, but it—

Mr. PEROT. Craig Fuller, or Jim Cannon? Where is this?

Senator SMITH. It was a cover page—

Mr. PEROT. Cover at the top?

Senator SMITH. Yes, on 321, To Jim—I assume that is Jim Cannon; From Craig Fuller. And I assume that that goes with that. But I am not clear. There is a cover sheet with that on there.

So I am assuming that that is Craig Fuller's characterization of a conversation with Powell. I may be wrong. But that is accurate. That should be stated for the record so the words are not put in Powell's mouth that he did not say.

The CHAIRMAN. The words of General Powell that I read were directly from his deposition.

Senator SMITH. Well, I was not referring to that. I was referring to the memorandum. And also—

Mr. PEROT. I had not had an opportunity to see General Powell's deposition, or Senator Baker's deposition, or Frank Carlucci's deposition.

When I met with the President of the United States it was with the understanding that only Senator Baker would be in the room—clear understanding.

When I got there, he told me that the National Security Council had insisted on being present, and he could not stop it. And I said fine.

I want to make several things as clear as I can. No. 1, somebody has—I have read in the paper somewhere someone has mentioned that somebody claims we did not go through my letter in the meeting. Is that true in any of those depositions, or not?

That we did not go through my letter in the meeting with President Reagan, and he never saw the contents of my letter. Does anyone claim that?

The CHAIRMAN. I believe it is possible, if my recollection serves me.

Both Senator Baker and General Powell state that there was not time to go through the whole letter. But they do not have a recol-

lection of what points may or may not have been covered from the letter. But they do not—

Mr. PEROT. That is a fair statement. Because the letter has addendums.

We went through the letter. I did not take him through all of the—in terms of future actions, I gave that directly to Howard Baker. And I think I went through future actions. But it was the comments about the Vietnamese. One of the two I gave directly to Senator Baker.

One other thing that has been brought to my attention, is I have not seen Mr. Childress' deposition. He has some statement about a meeting we had in his deposition? Can anybody tell me if that is true?

The CHAIRMAN. What?

Mr. PEROT. That I met with Childress or talked to Childress, and that I said we will offer \$1 million a prisoner, and if they don't take that we'll double it?

Nothing like that ever occurred. Nothing remotely like that ever occurred. That's just a myth.

The CHAIRMAN. I would be fascinated to know where you hear all these things about the depositions.

Mr. PEROT. I think I read it in the papers—it just pours in.

The CHAIRMAN. I beg your pardon?

Mr. PEROT. I mean reporters call me. Senator—

The CHAIRMAN. Who calls you? People call you who have read these depositions?

Mr. PEROT. Yes, reporters, mainly from Washington call me. And they have it, reading them.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, reporters do not have these depositions.

Mr. PEROT. Well, they had mine. It was in Newsweek this week.

The CHAIRMAN. No, we talked about it—your deposition, not a word of your deposition has been quoted.

Mr. PEROT. As soon as your guys hit Washington after my first meeting with them in Dallas, everything they—

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Perot, now we are working backwards here. You say to me you have received telephone calls.

Mr. PEROT. I get called by reporters, and the stuff just blows past me.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me ask you a question. Has somebody called you about those depositions you have just referred to?

Mr. PEROT. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. Somebody quoted your depositions? Quoted you depositions?

Mr. PEROT. People have called me and asked, say how long was the meeting and all that stuff. Did you go through the letter—I just want to make it clear, we went through the letter. We went through the letter.

I want to make it clear that Childress and I—if that is in his deposition—nothing like that ever occurred.

Mr. BRYANT. Senator, I might add that I believe that that remark has been attributed to Childress.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, it is my understanding—

Mr. PEROT. Well, if it is in his deposition, it is dead wrong.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me just say to you that Mr. Childress apparently has released a statement to the press, which he put out—when did he put this out? He put this out yesterday, in which he said I recall only three conversations—three occasions when I had direct interaction with Mr. Perot: two phone conversations and a meeting that lasted 1 to 2 hours.

So that is his statement that he has made public. It is not a committee document.

Mr. PEROT. But does that say—does he say when I met with him for 1 to 2 hours?

The CHAIRMAN. 1987, 1979 time period?

Mr. PEROT. Absolutely not. That is after this was over.

The CHAIRMAN. The first phone call was in late 1984, soon after a Wall Street Journal article. The second conversation was sometime in early 1985. And my third interaction, I believe took place in the fall of 1986 in the Pentagon. That is his statement.

Mr. PEROT. What does he claim we talked about?

The CHAIRMAN. I do not know. We would be happy to make this available to you.

Mr. PEROT. If he makes a claim that I had any conversation with him about paying—first-off, anybody that understands negotiations in business would say the dumbest thing in the world you could do is say yes, I'll offer you \$1 million a man, and if you don't take that I'll double it. If you don't take that I'll double it—nobody's that—I mean please. Give me a break. That's just the kind of goofy stuff—

Now, you've got to keep in mind this is one of your key guys on the National Security Council that has these fantasies in his head. So there is nothing I can do about it. It's just part of the joy of trying to help out, I guess.

Senator McCAIN. Explain to me how that is different from the roadmap which has been basically the position of the United States vis-a-vis Vietnam. In other words, if the Vietnamese take certain steps, then we take certain steps. And it is clearly laid out.

How is that different from your philosophy which is negotiating, we have said, if you will stop the war and stop your involvement in Cambodia we will take certain steps. If you will then show progress on the POW/MIA issue which, in the minds of many that they have, they have because of the setting up of the office in Hanoi for live-sighting reports, etc. We will do certain things in exchange for that.

How is what the Government is doing, the U.S. Government doing now different now from what you suggest?

Mr. PEROT. You are on a different subject, right? You are on a completely different subject.

Senator McCAIN. You have said several times about how—

Mr. PEROT. Childress and this \$1 million thing he was talking about, nothing like that happened.

Senator McCAIN. What I am saying is that you have said on many occasions that what you need is tough negotiations, with offering them certain incentives.

Mr. PEROT. We are not talking about the Childress conversation now.

Senator McCAIN. Yes, sir.

Mr. PEROT. We are?

Senator McCAIN. I was asking a general question. I am sorry if I leaped off of the Childress comment.

Mr. PEROT. If we are off of Childress, I am with you. I was focused on this thing that makes no sense at all. We never had a conversation on it. It is somewhere on the record or in the press releases, or you name it. And I just wanted to make sure you gentlemen and ladies understood that nothing like that ever occurred. That is really stupid. That is dumb, in terms of how you do something.

Senator SMITH. Mr. Chairman, I had one more point. Oh, are you finished, Senator McCain? I am sorry.

Senator McCAIN. Laying that matter aside, could I ask again the problem that you have—if you have any—or how you would proceed differently from the way that the U.S. Government has laid out a certain roadmap toward normalization of relations between the United States and Vietnam. I think this is an important question. Because if you have very different views as to how we should proceed, as opposed to the policy of the U.S. Government now—and that is a policy. I know it is a policy. You may happen to disagree with it, but there is a policy. I would be very interested in your views as to how the U.S. Government should proceed in order to best resolve this issue, as opposed to the roadmap they have laid out with the Vietnamese at this time.

Mr. PEROT. I would have to study the roadmap plan. I am not that familiar with it. I would have to see the details. Devils are always in the details. So I would have to study the details. And if I had any suggestions, I would be glad to give them to you. I have never seen the roadmap plan. Is it a written book or document?

Senator McCAIN. It is pretty well known.

The CHAIRMAN. There is a speech or a cable that sets it out—I forget which—or both.

Mr. PEROT. But it is not something that average citizens see. I have never seen the roadmap plan.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, it has been written about publicly in the papers.

Mr. PEROT. That is a reporter's version. I was—what I am saying is if you would like me to comment, or if someone would send me the detailed roadmap plan, I would be glad to comment on it.

The CHAIRMAN. The roadmap essentially is what you have been articulating, which is a process that is flexible, whereby if they will cooperate with A, B, C, and D we will take steps to show our good favor as a consequence of their cooperation. It is not specific about what those steps will be, and when they will occur.

But it is simply as they show good cooperation, we will take steps to show our appreciation for that cooperation. And so we have, indeed, taken such steps as the office has opened Hanoi, as more remains have been returned. As they have acceded to our request for access to the prisons, we have lifted partially the embargo with respect to communications equipment.

We have proceeded on some humanitarian assistance and so forth. And that will grow, we assume, as their cooperation continues to grow. That is essentially an on-going negotiating process.

Mr. PEROT. Run by whom?

The CHAIRMAN. It is run under Dick Solomon—it was under Dick Solomon, now he is leaving to go to the Philippines. But it has been under the Assistant Secretary of State for Far-Eastern Affairs, with the inter-agency group under the Secretary of State, Ken Quinn, White House, NSC and others involved, in joint agreement.

Mr. PEROT. Where does General Vessey fit in?

The CHAIRMAN. General Vessey has been the instrument of negotiation and sort of measurer, if you will, of their good faith in the POW process. And he has reported directly to the President and Secretary of State and NSC on that process.

Mr. PEROT. So he just works on the POW issue?

The CHAIRMAN. He has worked exclusively on the POW.

Mr. PEROT. In my judgment, that is a fatal flaw right there. Whoever is in charge of this thing, we should not separate the two. In other words, he has a specialty summit. He also has all these different specialties here. Somebody in State is in charge, I would say, to get it done.

You really need to have somebody who reports directly to the President, and who has the confidence of Congress. Because they are very sensitive to Congress, in Vietnam, very sensitive to you. They feel you reflect the people. They talked to me at great length about that.

And rather than take your time now, if there is anything you want me to read or study, I will be glad to do it. I cannot comment on it. It is too general.

Senator SMITH. Mr. Chairman, could I just come back to a final point?

In my comments, I think from the Vietnamese point of view, I suppose, the roadmap would be looked at as something that was imposed upon them, or directed to them—not negotiated.

I am not saying I disagree with that. I am just saying that that is probably the way that they would look at it. But in listening to your comments a short time ago, Mr. Perot, the exchange between you and Senator Kerry on negotiations, and how you looked at the thing within the administration during the 1985 to 1987 timeframe, during the Reagan years, you seemed to sense that there was some drifting, if you will, in terms of negotiations.

I think that the public comments—if one analyzed what is out there—probably would substantiate that. I do not know about the internal workings. Because I was not part of the administration.

But let me just give you a brief example. In February 1986, Richard Childress—who we just discussed here, who was certainly a major player on the issue during this period of time—wrote a very detailed article in American Legion Magazine, dated February 1986, in which he said the Vietnamese pledged to resolve the POW/MIA issue—American MIA Issue: America's long night of darkness may be over, as the talk produces hope for POWs. Then he says, quote, the Vietnamese pledge to resolve this issue within 2 years.

It was the first written agreement since the end of the war, and is a result of intensive negotiations at both the policy and technical levels between the United States and Vietnam.

It is our current judgment that Vietnam has made a policy decision to resolve—that resolving the issue is in there just—and have

publicly welcomed it. And that was written in a national magazine, very widely read.

And then at the same time, or roughly the same time, the minutes from the board of directors' meeting of the League of Families—this was dated April 5—in which the executive director, under her report, Ann Mills Griffiths says it was clarified the Vietnamese public commitment to resolving the POW/MIA issue within 2 years had been made in July 1985. But Griffiths clarified the chronological sequence of events, and emphasized that although there was no agreement, no signed agreement, the U.S. commitment had been made clear, repeatedly, to the Vietnamese.

So again, you could get into semantics with a signed agreement, written agreement—was it written and nobody signed it, or what? But the point is it is—these two very influential people within the administration who are listened to when they speak on the issue, were sending out different signals. And I think this probably contributes to the confusion, and perhaps may give an example of why some type of a more direct negotiated policy was needed.

And I would just ask you one question—and I agree with your assessment of General Vessey, and I respect him very much, and have worked with him very closely over the years on the issue.

But do you believe that his powers of negotiation, if you will, should be expanded to Laos?

Mr. PEROT. Somebody needs to do it. Somebody needs to do it. And if we impose the roadmap on them, whoever did that made a huge mistake. If I force you to do something, I automatically create bad will. If you and I mutually agree that this is a good idea, we have set the tone to get something done.

So I would say based on my meetings, the two that I had, and I listened—these are really, really, really sensitive people. It is an Asian culture. They move at a totally different pace than we do. They don't look at facts the same way that we do. We have to understand them in order to deal with them.

And then if we're patient and work with them, we have a chance to resolve this issue. If I were directing it, I would put all of the energy, and I would put enormous talent around negotiations at resolving the issue. And I think we would see a breakthrough. And I would say this. Let's look at the downside. Let's assume that nothing happened. That's what's going on for 20 years. It can't get worse.

And who knows, you might have a breakthrough if you dealt with them carefully and sensitively, and in good faith.

Senator SMITH. I would like to thank you, Mr. Perot, for a long afternoon. I know the chairman is getting ready to wrap up. We appreciate all of your testimony, all of the witnesses.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Perot, a couple of things—just sort of house-keeping. First of all, you mentioned at one place in your deposition something to the effect that there were a couple of parts of it that you thought might damage Vietnamese-U.S. negotiations, in the deposition.

Mr. PEROT. I'd have to see it in context. I can't remember where it is.

The CHAIRMAN. We would like you to point that out to us, perhaps, so we could deal with whatever part that is. Because we want to release that, obviously, commensurate with this.

Second, you just made a very perceptive comment—among others—but that particular one about the feelings, and mutuality here. Ambassador Lang of Vietnam, in New York, has conveyed to us the following message. This was in response to questions that we raised about the live-sighting process.

And he wanted us to know that Vietnam has made the maximum effort at implementing the agreements that were reached between the two countries, including those between Minister Nyeng Kahm and General Vessey; and between Mr. Leihli and Mr. Solomon.

Vietnam will continue to do so in the future. And he wants to make that point very strongly. The ambassador said that the message for the United States side to understand is that the recent feelings and concerns of the Vietnamese people are committed, in cooperation with the United States to resolve the issue. The suggestion made by the Vietnamese side at the latest technical meeting of MIA experts of the two countries were aimed at improving the effectiveness of the investigations and live-sighting reports. It is absolutely not a change of the rules, as alleged by Colonel Cole.

Nevertheless, the Vietnamese side should point out that in its view, short notice investigation is not a good, cooperative way. Because it is a manifestation of distrust of the United States side and Vietnamese side. And this has caused great irritation among the Vietnamese people and officials.

So we have to, obviously, try to recognize in this that there is something to be gained from mutuality.

Mr. PEROT. Didn't they say in the last few days that we were impinging upon their sovereignty or something? Didn't I read that?

The CHAIRMAN. This was the issue of live-sighting. They have agreed to continue.

Mr. PEROT. But you see, if they are angry about it, and it is being imposed on them, seeing live-sightings will not resolve the issue. I think we are giving too much emphasis to live-sightings, and not enough emphasis to negotiation.

The CHAIRMAN. You have said that.

Mr. PEROT. Too many times.

The CHAIRMAN. Most pointedly in the afternoon. And I think the point is well made. We are, obviously, going to examine that and balance it against other approaches that are in front of the committee.

I would like to particularly thank you for today. You have stayed way beyond the time that you had agreed to with the committee. Let there be no question in anybody's mind about your availability or readiness on this issue. I think the committee has been very direct throughout this process.

When you were potentially running, and questions were raised about your nonappearance, well we stressed the need to have you come. And I think today has been very informative. And you can understand the give and take with Senators is a lot better than a piece of paper—as much of an impingement as it is on your time.

I think the committee kept faith with the notion that you were appropriately indisposed; and we tried to reach appropriate accommodation. I want to thank you personally, Mr. Perot, for doing that. You have made yourself available at every one of our requests. You have answered every one of my phone calls. You have never resisted making yourself available to our staff when they have needed information.

I think that the same kind of commitment that you brought to this originally is still part of your life. And I said at the beginning of this hearing, I say again—Senator McCain has said it, and others have said it. And you have received awards. That there is no question but that your personal output on this; your personal commitment not only made life easier for people, but I am convinced saved lives.

There is no question but that people appropriately hold you near and dear for that kind of patriotism. And that is what it is. You have carried this issue with you. You have taken a lot of flak for it at times, and for other things around it.

I am mindful of the comments you made in your deposition about Clair Booth Luce's comment about people who do good deeds getting their just punishment at some point in time. I know you have gone through that a lot. I just want you to know the Members of committee respect that. I hope you respect the need. And I think you have, in your presence today, the need for us to make this open.

Your being here today—notwithstanding the repetition of it; notwithstanding the fact that you have told many of these things to us before—shares it with the public in a way that is very special to our country.

I know that you care about that. It is what makes us unique. We can air these things like this in ways that no other country on the face of this planet dares to do. And notwithstanding the incompetence we sometimes uncover, or the negligence—and sometimes in nefarious approaches, but rarely, thank God.

Notwithstanding that, it works. And I think that this is evidence of that. And this committee, with your help and the help of other people, is going to be able to render to the American people an examination of this issue that has never been rendered before.

We may leave some questions out there because we are not capable, as humans, of resolving all of this 20 years later. But the record will be more complete. And the evidence will be greater and I think the effort more significant—thanks, in part, to your participation and contribution.

So for the committee I want to thank you for this day and for your help, which I know will continue in the weeks ahead.

Mr. PEROT. I will be glad to help out.

Mr. Chairman, if I could make a closing comment?

The CHAIRMAN. Tomorrow morning we will meet at 9:30 here, beginning with the testimony of General Peroots. And the record will remain open for purposes of—

Mr. PEROT. And check to see if it was a scam on the tape.

The CHAIRMAN. Also, if you would—you mentioned the one item you were going to talk to us about privately. If I could meet with you afterwards, privately, I would like to talk to you about it.

Mr. PEROT. Just one, closing comment, if I could—

I would spend all my time and energy in negotiation. And I would have people who know how to negotiate, negotiate. I would go to extremes to avoid any sense of scapegoating, looking for scoundrels, etc, etc, etc. Because if we do that, we will delay getting the men home.

And finally, I understand this very—say—skeptical, prove it, prove it, prove it process. But let me give you an analogy.

If when Murphy Martin had brought Mrs. Singleton into my office I had said prove that your husband went down in Laos. Was there ever a beeper? She would say well, I don't know. I'd say check with the Air Force or I won't talk to you anymore. She came back in a few days and said there was no beeper. I said, well, he was killed on impact, then. Forget it.

Instead, we spent 90 days—this was while the war was going on. We put their feet to the fire. Theirs—the Vietnamese feet to the fire—in a brutal way about Jerry Singleton. And finally they got so sick of us they admitted they had him. And then they had to account for him. And he came home.

And when I finally got to visit with him after he came home, I said Jerry, there wasn't a beeper. And he said Perot, the dumbest thing I ever did in my life was not check the batteries before I flew the mission.

Thank you very much.

Senator SMITH. Mr. Chairman, could I just make a quick parliamentary inquiry—

Do you intend now to move into executive session for the last witness?

The CHAIRMAN. We are going to do that tomorrow morning at quarter of.

Senator SMITH. OK, tomorrow morning. And Mr. Perot will not be here tomorrow. Is that correct? I am not asking you to be. I am just asking if you are planning to be.

Mr. PEROT. Well, I will be here in spirit because I will be curious if the whole Gregson thing was a scam. I cannot believe it was because I have the highest regard for all the people of General Peroots and the Vice President. They must have better things to do than set up something that cost me several-hundred thousand dollars as a joke.

Senator SMITH. Because of the sensitivity of an executive session, which I understand the necessity of, it would seem to be appropriate that I may just make a request, or ask the advisement of the chair, on whether or not, if Mr. Perot is available, whether or not he would be allowed to sit in on that deposition or that hearing, if you will, executive hearing, (a) because he has the appropriate clearances; and (b) it is not an informational situation anyway. It is simply an identity situation and he has been directly involved. And it would help to clear the air regarding any charges of perhaps something not being put out in public that was said inside the private session.

I do not know if Mr. Perot intends to be here or if he is not. It does not matter.

Mr. PEROT. I need to go on home. And if something strange comes up, I could come back.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me just say to you, Mr. Perot, you do have the clearance, and I will make available to you, in short order, whatever record—I mean there will be a record of it. And we will make that available to you.

Mr. PEROT. This is General Peroots tomorrow?

The CHAIRMAN. No, we are talking about the private session with the station chief that you mentioned earlier this morning.

Mr. PEROT. Oh, no, the private session with the station chief—we had the meeting. Whether he can remember it or not is up to him.

The CHAIRMAN. We will make the body of his remarks available to you for your statements to the committee, so that you can respond. And there will not be anything that will be kept from you with respect to that.

Mr. PEROT. In all deference to him, it has been 20-something years.

The CHAIRMAN. So the committee will meet in this room with General Peroots, in open session, tomorrow morning at 9:30 a.m.

We stand adjourned until that time.

[Whereupon, at 6:45 p.m., the committee adjourned.]

Hanoi, June 15, 1990

LETTER OF INTENT

In anticipation of the normalization of relations between the United States and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, this letter is to formally invite Mr. Ross Perot and/or his designated companies to assist Viet Nam in its economic recovery and redevelopment efforts.

[In ~~order~~ consideration thereof and exchange for his assistance,]

The Socialist Republic of Viet Nam will appoint Mr. Ross Perot and/or his companies as an agent of Viet Nam in the procurement of capital investment and establishment of joint venture companies (within the laws on foreign investment in Viet Nam) in the following areas :

[details excluded]

Electronics, computer and communications hardware and software assembly and manufacture including parts and components ;

Oil and gas ; [with right of refusal option]

Metallurgy - rare earth and other known and unknown metal resources ;

Food/agriculture - processing and distribution of products and by products ;

Transportation - development and operation of air, land and sea systems ;

Real estate - development. [sale + lease]


Compensation to agent to be mutually agreed upon by both parties based on effort and investment.

[Duration of agreement: minimum of 20 yrs, plus 2-5 yrs option, subject to mutual agreement]

2.

Nothing in this letter of intent is to be construed or is intended to violate or circumvent the present laws of either country as the effective date of the proposed agreement is conditioned upon the official establishment of normal relations as declared by both countries and within the spirit and letter of the prevailing laws.

It is understood by both parties that this letter of intent is subject to the condition of normalization contained herein and formalization of the agency agreement in September 1990 or as agreed.



NGUYEN CO THACH
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

Proposed draft
8 June 1990.

In anticipation of the normalization of relations between the United States and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, this letter is to formally invite Mr Ross Perot and/or his designated companies to assist the Republic in its economic recovery and redevelopment efforts.

In consideration thereof and exchange for his assistance, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam will designate/appoint Mr Perot and/or his companies as agent (sole) of the Republic in the exploration, development, organization, provision of expertise, training, management, operation, marketing, distribution, export/import of related products and by products, procurement of capital investment and establishment of joint venture companies (within the laws on foreign investment in Vietnam) in the following areas:

Electronics, computer and communications hardware and software assembly and manufacture including parts and components.

Oil and gas - including a first right of refusal option to a designated 10 minimum block off-shore area.

Metallurgy - rare earth and other known and unknown metal resources.

Food/agriculture - processing and distribution of products and byproducts;

Transportation - development and operation of air land and sea systems.

Real estate - sale, lease and development.

Compensation to agent to be mutually agreed upon by both parties based on effort and investment.

Duration of the agreement to be a minimum of 20 years with 2 - 5 years options subject to mutual agreement.

Nothing in this letter of intent is to be construed or is intended to violate or circumvent the present laws of either country as the effective date of the proposed agreement is conditioned upon the official establishment of normal relations as declared by both countries and within the spirit and letter of the prevailing laws.

It is understood by both parties that this letter of intent is subject to the condition of normalization contained here and formalization of the agency agreement in September 1990 or as agreed.

Signed

92 SEP -3 PM 4:18

23 August 1992

The Honorable John F. Kerry
Chairman, Senate Select Committee on
POW/MIA Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510-6500

Dear Senator Kerry,

I have just had the opportunity to view a tape of the telecast hearings conducted by your Select Committee on 11 August 92. I am writing to express my unhappiness with the false statement made by Mr. H. Ross Perot to the effect that I am (or was) an employee of the Central Intelligence Agency. For the record, I would like to assure you that I am not now, and have never been, employed by the CIA.

It is terribly disappointing to see Mr. Perot, a man whom I admired for his work on behalf of the prisoners in the early 1970s, now dealing in innuendo and gossip as regards the role played by myself and others on the POW/MIA issue. Mr. Perot has had ample time to get his facts straight; he has chosen instead to believe what he wants to believe without regard to the truth.

I respectfully request that you assure the final record of your hearings reflects the truth regarding my non-employment by the CIA.

Sincerely,

Paul D. Mather
Paul D. Mather
LtCol, USAF (Ret.)

6) Any additional written comments or documents provided to you at or before the hearing.

No.

7) Any additional information concerning knowledge of a SEAL operation during which neither most were killed or all were killed, and . . . that a few were captured and were on display to some senior people who visited from other communist countries."

New York, August 10, 1992

Ambassador Lang's Message for Senator J. Kerry

1/ Ms. B. Crossette did not put in her article all what the Ambassador said at the August 8, 1992 interview. It is understandable that she wrote what she was only interested in. She can be asked for a full record of the interview if necessary.

2/ At the interview the ambassador asked Ms. Crossette to convey to Senator J. Kerry his message that Vietnam has made the maximum efforts in implementing the agreements reached between the two countries including those between Minister Nguyen Manh Cam and General J. Vessey and between Mr. Le Mai and Mr. Solomon. Vietnam will continue to do so in the future. It is regrettable that Ms. Crossette did not convey to the Senator this message nor put that message in her August 9 article.

3/ What the Ambassador said at the interview was a message for the U.S. side to understand the recent feelings and concerns of the Vietnamese people in their cooperation with the U.S. to resolve the complex MIA issue. That message is necessary for the better understanding and better cooperation between the two countries.

The suggestions made by the Vietnamese side at the latest technical meeting of MIA experts of the two countries are aimed at improving the effectiveness of the investigations on live-sighting reports. It is absolutely not "a change of the rules" as alleged by Col. Cole. Nevertheless, the Vietnamese side should point out that, in its view, short-notice investigation is not a good cooperative way because it is a manifestation of distrust of the U.S. side in the Vietnamese side and this has caused great irritation among the Vietnamese people and officials.

H. R. PEROT
1700 LAKESIDE SQUARE
12377 MERIT DRIVE
DALLAS, TEXAS 75261

92 OCT -7 PM 2:10

September 30, 1992

The Honorable John F. Kerry
Chairman
Senate Select Committee on
POW/MIA Affairs
Washington, DC 20510-6500

Dear Senator Kerry:

The following is in response to your letter of August 29, requesting additional information reference my testimony before the Committee:

1) Names of former POWs who had mentioned those men left behind after April 14, who were "called in, chewed out and told to cut it out."

The wife of one former POW came up to me the day of the hearing, and stated that this had happened to her husband. Unfortunately, I did not get her name. I do recall other POWs mentioning this shortly after they came home in 1973. I do not recall the names, but I will continue to try to locate people who had this experience.

2) Any additional written comments regarding documents provided to you at or immediately before the hearing.

No.

3) Any additional information concerning your knowledge of a SEAL operation during which "either most were killed or all were killed, and . . . that a few were captured and were on display to some senior people who visited from other Communist countries."

Senator John F. Kerry
September 30, 1992
Page Two

I read about the SEAL operation in news reports. It seems rational to me that the Senate Committee could check with the Navy and Navy SEALs to see if such an operation ever occurred.

4) Any additional information concerning any other covert operation(s) by the government or others to recover POW/MIAs or information ap-
pertaining to POW/MIAs.

No.

5) Any additional information regarding topics discussed during your testimony that you believe would be appropriate to include as part of the official record.

No. I mentioned a Marine pilot who was shot down whose alleged fingerprints were sent out in the mid-'80's. The Pentagon had no fingerprints. There is a possibility he was flying under the control of the CIA and the Agency might have his fingerprints. The name is Norman K. Billipp. I believe he was flying a mission toward Laos. Senator Robb expressed interest in having his name.

Sincerely,



Ross Perot

RP/sb

DEPARTMENT OF STATE		IS/FPC/CDR	Date: 7/2/92
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELEASE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DECLASSIFY	MR Cases Only:	
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PA Exemptions:			

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PAGE 01 VIEN TI 02503 01 OF 03 120825Z
ACTION EAP-01
INFO LOG-00 ADS-00 CIAE-00 HA-09 INRE-00 INR-01 NSAE-00
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DIA WASHDC//PW-MIA// IMMEDIATE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 VIENTIANE 02503
DEPT ALSO FOR EAP/VLC
FR 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: MOPS, LA
SUBJ: SOUTH PETHRASI: NO FIRSTHAND KNOWLEDGE OF U.S.
POW/MIAS IN LAOS
R-5: A. BOYLS/GADDURY TELCON OF 11/11/91
B. VIENTIANE 2484

Note on privacy considerations: this report mentions Lt. Peter Hessford, a POW/MIA, and AP newsman Dennis Nedd.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ unclassified

PAGE 02 VIEN TI 02503 01 OF 03 120825Z
1. SUMMARY: SOUTH PETHRASI DISCOUNTED ANY POSSIBILITY OF LIVE U.S. POW'S IN LAOS AND DENIED ANY FIRSTHAND KNOWLEDGE OF U.S. POW'S OR MIAS. DURING MEETING ON NOVEMBER 12, 1991 WITH CHARGE AND DCM, SOUTH SAID THAT HIS STATEMENTS DURING THE WAR YEARS OF NUMBERS OF AMERICAN PRISONERS BEING HELD IN LAOS WERE ONLY PROPAGANDA TO INCREASE THE MORALE OF THE PATHET LAO MOVEMENT. HE INSISTED ON GOL SINCERITY IN ACCOUNTING FOR ALL U.S. POW/MIAS AND URGED CHARGE TO CONVEY TO THE FAMILIES OF POW/MIAS THAT THERE ARE NONE LIVING IN LAOS. SOUTH, WHILE CLEARLY IN FRAIL HEALTH, APPEARED ALERT AND HIS MENTAL FACULTIES VERY ACUTE. END SUMMARY.
2. IN RESPONSE TO STRONG EMBASSY PRESSURE TO ARRANGE AN INTERVIEW WITH FORMER PATHET LAO SPOKESMAN, SOUTH PETHRASI, LAO MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (MFA) ARRANGED FOR CHARGE AND DCM TO MEET WITH SOUTH AT THE MFA ON NOVEMBER 12, 1991. THE LAO MADE A SPECIAL POINT OF HIGHLIGHTING THIS MEETING AS A FURTHER EXAMPLE, AND DEMONSTRATION, OF THEIR COMMITMENT TO COOPERATING WITH U.S. ON THE POW/MIA ISSUE.
3. CHARGE AND DCM COVERED THE FULL LIST OF QUESTIONS PROVIDED BY JCRC BANGKOK, PER REF A. THE LAO HAD STATED REPEATEDLY THAT SOUTH WAS IN VERY POOR HEALTH, THAT HE

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PAGE 1

91 VIENTIANE 2503

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 HAD DIFFICULTY FOCUSING HIS THOUGHTS, AND THAT HE HAD
 EVEN HAD A STROKE. CHARGE AND OCM FOUND SOIM IN ACTUAL
 FACT TO BE VERY ALERT AND FORTHCOMING. HE RESPONDED TO
 QUESTIONS VIGOROUSLY AND SPONTANEOUSLY. ALTHOUGH HE
 COULD NOT RECALL SPECIFIC STATEMENTS OR FIGURES QUOTED
 DECADES AGO, HIS FACILITIES APPEARED ACUTE AND HIS GRASP

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PAGE 03 VIENTI 02503 01 OF 03 120825Z
 OF PAST AS WELL AS CURRENT EVENTS WAS VERY GOOD. HIS
 PHYSICAL HEALTH IS APPARENTLY VERY FRAIL BUT THAT DID
 NOT SEEM TO AFFECT HIS OVERALL COMPOSURE. HE APPEARED
 TO CHARGE AND OCM AS IN GOOD SHAPE FOR A MAN IN
 SEVENTY-SIX YEARS.

4. SOIM RESPONDED TO SPECIFIC REF A QUESTIONS,
 SUMMARIZED AS FOLLOWS:
 BEGIN REF A QUESTIONS:

-Q. TO YOUR KNOWLEDGE DID ANY AMERICAN PRISONERS REMAIN
 IN LAOS AFTER 25 APRIL 1973?

-A. I REALLY HAD NO DIRECT KNOWLEDGE OF THE AMERICAN
 PRISONERS. THE ONLY INFORMATION I HAD I RECEIVED BY
 RADIO OR NEWS REPORT FROM SAM NEUA. I WAS THE SPOKESMAN
 IN VIENTIANE AND COULD NOT POSSIBLY GET OUT TO THE
 LIBERATED ZONES.

-Q. AFTER 25 APRIL 1973, DO YOU REMEMBER MAKING ANY
 STATEMENT THAT AMERICAN PRISONERS WERE STILL BEING HELD
 ANYWHERE IN LAOS, CAMBODIA, OR VIETNAM?

-A. THERE WAS NO WAY I COULD KNOW ABOUT ANY PRISONERS,
 WHETHER IN LAOS, CAMBODIA, OR VIETNAM. AS I SAID, I
 RECEIVED THE REPORTS FROM SAM NEUA AND MADE STATEMENTS
 BASED ON THESE REPORTS. FOR THE MOST PART, I THINK THAT
 EVEN THE AUTHORITIES IN SAM NEUA COULD NOT SAY WITH ANY
 ACCURACY HOW MANY AIRCRAFT HAD BEEN SHOT DOWN OR HOW
 MANY PILOTS KILLED. AS FOR THE NUMBERS CAPTURED, MUCH
 OF THAT WAS PROPAGANDA TO MORALIZE THE MASSES AND
 STRENGTHEN THE MORALE OF THE CADRE.

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-Q. I WOULD LIKE TO READ YOU FOUR STATEMENTS AND THEN
 ASK YOU A QUESTION ABOUT THEM.

-- ON 11 NOVEMBER 1969, YOU TOLD NEWSMEN THAT THERE WERE

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PAGE 01

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ACTION EAP-01

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HA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

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INFO SECDEF WASHDC//OASD-ISA/PW-MIA// IMMEDIATE

CDR USACILHI FT SHAFTER HI//TAPG-PED-H// IMMEDIATE

CDR JCRC BARSERS PT HI IMMEDIATE

USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI//J3/J51/J512/FPA// IMMEDIATE

JCS WASHDC//PW-MIA/JGT// IMMEDIATE

DIA WASHDC//PW-MIA// IMMEDIATE

JCRC LIAISON BANGKOK TH IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 03 VIENTIANE 02503

DEPT ALSO FOR FAP/VLC

EO 12356: DECL: OADR

TAGS: MOPB, LA

SUBJ: SOIM PETHRASI: NO FIRSTHAND KNOWLEDGE OF U.S.

PW/MIA'S IN LAOS

1. AMERICAN AIRMEN BEING HELD IN LAOS.

-- IN EARLY 1973, HANOI RELEASED 591 AMERICAN PRISONERS,

AMONG THIS NUMBER WERE 9 AMERICANS CAPTURED IN LAOS AND

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TRANSFERRED TO HANOI BY VIETNAMESE FORCES.

-- ON 25 APRIL 1973, YOU TOLD MR. DENNIS NEED, AN

ASSOCIATED PRESS NEWS CORRESPONDENT, THAT THERE WERE NO

AMERICAN POW'S IN LAOS.

-- BETWEEN THE 150 YOU MENTIONED IN 1969 AND THE NINE

RELEASED FROM HANOI THERE ARE AT LEAST 149 AMERICAN

PRISONERS WHICH HAVE NOT BEEN ACCOUNTED FOR, THE U.S.

GOVERNMENT CONSIDERS IT A MATTER OF THE HIGHEST PRIORITY

TO DETERMINE WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM AND OTHERS CAPTURED

AFTER 1969.

--DO YOU HAVE ANY INFORMATION WHICH COULD HELP EXPLAIN

THIS?

-A. AS I MENTIONED BEFORE, I HAD NO FIRSTHAND KNOWLEDGE

OF ANY PRISONERS AND THE ONLY INFORMATION I HAD WAS

BASED ON RADIO AND NEWS REPORTS ISSUED BY THE NLHS

AUTHORITIES IN SAM NEUA. YOU MUST UNDERSTAND THAT EVEN

OUR AUTHORITIES IN SAM NEUA COULD NOT ACCURATELY

ESTIMATE THE NUMBERS OF AIRCRAFT HIT OR PILOTS KILLED.

AS IT HAPPENED, THE AIRPLANES WOULD ATTACK AND DROP

THEIR BOMBS, AND THE SOLDIERS WOULD FIRE SMALL ARMS AND

ROCKETS AT THEM. IF THE AIRPLANE WERE HIT, IT WOULD

STILL CONTINUE ON AND CRASH AT SOME PLACE FAR AWAY.

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THAT AREA OF LAOS IS VERY DIFFICULT, WITH DENSE JUNGLE AND RUGGED MOUNTAINS. THERE WAS NO WAY TO KNOW IF THE PILOTS WERE KILLED OR MANAGED TO PARACHUTE OUT. EVEN IF THEY DID SURVIVE THE ATTACK, THEY COULD NEVER HAVE SURVIVED ALONE IN THE MOUNTAINS. AS FOR PRISONERS TAKEN, I DON'T KNOW MYSELF THE REAL NUMBERS BUT I UNDERSTAND THAT THEY WERE ALL RETURNED TO THE U.S. AFTER THE WAR. (COMMENT: BOTH APPEARED NOT TO REMEMBER THE NAME OF DENNIS NEUD. END COMMENT)

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-3. WE UNDERSTAND THAT MANY YEARS HAVE PASSED SINCE THE WAR, BUT DO YOU KNOW OF ANY OFFICE OR PERSON IN THE GOVERNMENT OF LAOS WHO MAY HAVE ANY RECORDS OF THESE AMERICAN PRISONERS?
-A. HE COULD NOT KEEP SUCH RECORDS IN THE LIBERATED ZONES. BECAUSE OF THE CONSTANT BOMBING ATTACKS, THE PEOPLE AND THE VILLAGES WERE SPREAD OUT OVER A GREAT AREA. OUR ONLY PREOCCUPATION WAS TO SURVIVE AND CONTINUE TO FIGHT FOR VILVIKY. THERE MAY HAVE BEEN REPORTS OF BATTLES BUT THERE WAS NO POSSIBILITY TO RECORD THE DETAILS. ALSO, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN IMPOSSIBLE TO MAINTAIN SUCH RECORDS UNDER THE CONDITIONS IN THE LIBERATED ZONES.

-4. ON 12 SEPTEMBER 1968, YOU INFORMED LIEUTENANT PETER HESSFORD'S RELATIVES THAT HE SURVIVED AND WAS CAPTURED.
-- WAS YOUR STATEMENT BASED ON EVIDENCE THAT HESSFORD SURVIVED?

-- IF SO, WHAT WAS THE EVIDENCE?
-- WHAT HAPPENED TO LT. HESSFORD?

-A. AS I NOTED BEFORE, I HAD NO INFORMATION MYSELF ON NAMES OR INDIVIDUALS CAPTURED BY OUR FORCES, BUT ONLY RECEIVED THE REPORTS FROM SAM NEUA. I DON'T REMEMBER THIS NAME, AND I WOULD HAVE HAD NO EVIDENCE THAT HE HAD SURVIVED OR ANY INFORMATION ON WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO HIM.

-Q. ON THE 20TH OF NOVEMBER 1968, YOU STATED THAT THE PATHET LAO HAD CAPTURED OVER 70 AIRMAN AND YOU SHOWED A LIST OF NAMES OF 69 AMERICANS CAPTURED.

-- WHO OR WHAT ORGANIZATION PROVIDED THAT LIST?

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-- WHO WERE THE 70 MEN ON THE LIST AND WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM?

-A. I DON'T RECALL ANY LIST OF PRISONERS. AS THE SPOKESMAN IN VIENTIANE, I WOULD NOT HAVE HAD SUCH

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PAGE 01

VIENTI

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ACTION EAP-01

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FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2800

INFO SECDEF WASHDC//OASD-ISA/PW-MIA// IMMEDIATE

CDR USACTHMT FT SHAFTER HI//TAPC-PCD-II// IMMEDIATE

CDR JCRC BARBERS PT HI IMMEDIATE

USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI//J3/J51/J512/FPA// IMMEDIATE

JCS WASHDC//PW-MIA/JGT// IMMEDIATE

DIA WASHDC//PW-MIA// IMMEDIATE

JCRC LIAISON BANGKOK TH IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 03 OF 03 VIENTIANE 02503

DEPT ALSO FOR EAP/VLC

EO 12356: DECL: OADR

TAGS: MOPB, LA

SUBJ: BOTH PETHRASI: WJ FIRSTHAND KNOWLEDGE OF U.S.

POW/MIA'S IN LAOS

INFORMATION. EXCEPT THROUGH RADIO AND NEWS REPORTS FROM SAM NEUA. I REALLY DON'T KNOW ABOUT THESE FIGURES OR WHAT MAY HAVE HAPPENED TO THESE MEN. YOU MUST

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UNDERSTAND THAT MUCH OF WHAT WAS ANNOUNCED WAS FOR THE PURPOSE OF MOBILIZING THE MASSES AND INSTILLING GREATER MORALE AMONG OUR FORCES.

END REF A QUESTIONS.

7. CHARGE ASKED BOTH IF HE HAD ANY GENERAL STATEMENT HE MIGHT WISH TO MAKE TO THE POW/MIA FAMILIES ON THE ISSUE OF POW/MIA'S IN LAOS. BOTH RESPONDED WITH SOME ELOQUENCE THAT HE HAD BEEN THE SPOKESMAN ON THIS ISSUE FOR MANY YEARS. HE SAID THAT WHENEVER THE FAMILIES WROTE HIM, HE ANSWERED. WHEN THEY CALLED BY PHONE, HE SPOKE DIRECTLY WITH THEM. WHEN THEY CAME TO LAOS, HE WELCOMED THEM AND TALKED PERSONALLY WITH THEM. HE FULLY UNDERSTOOD THEIR GRIEF AND LONGING FOR THEIR LOVED ONES. BOTH SAID, WITH SOME INTENSITY, THAT HE SPOKE WITH WHOLEHEARTED SINCERITY THAT THE LAO GOVERNMENT WAS COMMITTED TO COOPERATION WITH ALL COUNTRIES, AND IN PARTICULAR WITH THE U.S. ON THE POW/MIA ISSUE. THE WAR IS LONG OVER AND THE LAO DO NOT VIEW THE U.S. AS AN ENEMY. IN FACT, BOTH SAID THAT LAO-U.S. RELATIONS HAVE GREATLY IMPROVED AND ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY CLOSER. THE LAO WOULD NOT IN THE PAST HAVE HAD THE CAPABILITY OR THE INTENTION TO KEEP LIVE POW'S IN LAOS AND THEY DO NOT

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VIENTIANE 2503

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 NOW. SOTH EMPHASIZED THAT ALL THE POW'S HAD BEEN RETURNED AT THE END OF THE WAR AND THAT THERE ARE NO LIVE PRISONERS IN LAOS NOW. HE DISCOUNTED ANY POSSIBILITY THAT ANY FORMER PRISONER COULD HAVE SURVIVED ON HIS OWN IN THE REMOTE AREAS. SOTH URGED CHARGE TO 8. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH SOTH WAS CLEARLY IN FRAIL HEALTH,

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 HIS MIND AND MEMORY DID NOT APPEAR IMPAIRED. HE WAS VIGOROUS AND FORTHCOMING IN HIS RESPONSES AND SEEMED SINCERE IN HIS EFFORTS TO RECOUNT HIS ROLE IN THE NLHS AND HIS ACCESS TO INFORMATION. HE WAS PARTICULARLY EMPHATIC THAT HE HAD NO FIRSTHAND KNOWLEDGE OF PRISONERS AND ONLY RECEIVED THE INFORMATION FROM SAM NEUA. THAT MUCH OF THAT INFORMATION WAS PROPAGANDA FOR NLHS CONSUMPTION WAS CLEARLY EVIDENT, AND WAS SO STATED BY SOTH. HE ALSO EXPRESSED HIS UNDERSTANDING AND COMPASSION FOR THE POW/MIA FAMILIES AND HIS PROTESTATIONS THAT THERE ARE NO LIVING POW/MIA'S IN LAOS SEEMED INTENDED TO ASSUAGE THE FAMILIES' BEREAVEMENT AS MUCH AS TO ALLAY THE OFFICIAL CONCERNS OF THE USG.
 9. WE DO NOT KNOW WHETHER OR TO WHAT EXTENT THE MFA 4. IT HAVE PREPPED SOTH FOR THE MEETING. ONLY MFA'S SAYAKANE AND BOUNTHON (BOTH RELATIVELY JUNIOR) SAT IN ON MEETING AND SOTH SEEMED OBLIVIOUS TO THEIR PRESENCE. IF SOTH WAS REHEARSED, HE PERFORMED CONVINCINGLY. STILL WE HAD THE IMPRESSION WHAT HE WAS SAYING WAS SPONTANEOUS. SOTH MADE A POINT OF EMPHASIZING THAT HE WAS 76 AND VISITED THE HOSPITAL ALMOST DAILY IN CONNECTION WITH BACK AND STOMACH PROBLEMS. THE IMPLICATION SEEMED TO BE WHY SHOULD I LIE WHEN I AM ABOUT TO DIE. ONE MIGHT ARGUE THAT THIS WAS THE PATHET LAO FLACK'S LATEST PERFORMANCE FOR HIS REGIME. BUT THE SINCERITY AND SPONTANEITY OF HIS STATEMENTS DO NOT APPEAR TO SUPPORT THIS ARGUMENT.

10. DEPARTMENT PLEASE CONVEY GIST OF FOREGOING TO CONGRESSMAN FRANK MCCLOSKEY WHO MADE STRONG PITCH TO SEE

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 SOTH DURING HIS VISIT TO VIENTIANE AND WHOSE INTERVENTION WAS IMPORTANT IN PERSUADING THE LAO TO AGREE TO THE MEETING. SALMON

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HEARING ON THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT'S POSTWAR POW/MIA EFFORTS

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 12, 1992

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:55 a.m. in room SR-325, Russell Senate Office Building, Hon. John F. Kerry (chairman of the committee) presiding.

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

The CHAIRMAN. The hearing will come to order. I apologize to all for the delay. We were in Executive Session with the station chief from Laos and it took a little longer than we expected. And other Members are still, in fact, up there with him now, which is why we are only part of a committee here. But we are going to proceed so that we can get through today's schedule hopefully on time.

We welcome today General Leonard Perroots, who was DIA Director from 1985 to 1988, Richard Childress of the NSC staff during the Reagan administration, and Richard Armitage, who was in the Department of Defense during the course of the Reagan administration, all of whom had had responsibilities with respect to the POW/MIA issue.

Gentlemen, we welcome you today. I thank you for taking time. I know you have already spent time with the staff and we are appreciative to you for that.

If you would stand so that I could swear you in and then we will proceed.

Raise your right hands. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God.

General PERROOTS. I do.

Mr. CHILDRESS. I do.

Ambassador ARMITAGE. I do.

The CHAIRMAN. I understand, General, you will lead off with an opening statement and—

General PERROOTS. It is only appropriate.

The CHAIRMAN [continuing]. Others of you may have statements and then we will proceed. Thank you. Senator Smith, do you have opening?

Senator SMITH. I will defer for the moment.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Brown?

Senator BROWN. No.

The CHAIRMAN. General?

TESTIMONY OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL LEONARD H. PERROOTS,
USA (Retired), FORMER DIRECTOR, DIA

General PERROOTS. Mr. Chairman, if I look somewhat disheveled, I watched the hearings all night long. You're to be commended for the manner in which you conduct these investigations and the strength you have in continuing the effort so many long hours.

I'd like to begin by congratulating you and your committee for your efforts to shed more light on this critical and emotional POW/MIA issue, an issue that virtually dominated my thoughts and actions as Director of DIA for over 3 years.

I have earlier provided deposition to the committee as requested. However, in view of the subsequent recent developments resulting from your hearings on July 24, Mr. Chairman, I not only welcome the opportunity to appear here in open testimony, but contacted Senator McCain and requested that I be given an opportunity to address this committee to respond to certain allegations that were made during that session.

I felt I needed to do this to set the record straight. In this prepared statement, I will directly respond, point by point, to the questions that your committee staff provided. I am struck by the fact that by far most of the questions relate to my association with Mr. Ross Perot. After watching 6 hours of the testimony, I have a better understanding of why those questions appeared.

While I can understand the interest, indeed in some cases the relevancy of Mr. Perot's involvement as it applies to me and DIA under my tenure, I find it interesting that there were no questions regarding the multitude of significant initiatives which we undertook from 1986 to 1989 to improve our ability to support the POW/MIA effort.

I assure you, Mr. Chairman, that my comments here are not motivated by any desire for any agency or self-aggrandizement. However, it seems to me that as a result of so much notoriety regarding the negative aspects of this issue, especially as relates to Government support, there has been a growing sense out there in the hinterland of America that very little good work has been done to resolve this issue and that frankly, we just don't care.

It seems to me that in this climate of mistrust that it is appropriate, on occasion, to call attention to those very positive steps that were taken, steps that I continue to be very proud of. I believe that it is important that the American people know that there were and are dedicated, tireless and committed people in the Defense Intelligence Agency who have made and I'm sure continue to make magnificent contributions in supporting the POW/MIA effort.

I believe that they need to know that in view of the constant drum beat of criticism in the agency from the media and a variety of other sources including at times, some Members of this committee. Mr. Chairman, I'm not suggesting that there were not problems in DIA. There were problems. Many related to resource and organizational limitations from the late 1970's to the early 1980's.

But while I cannot speak for what transpired before 1985, I can categorically and proudly say we made a sincere effort to identify and scope those problems and to fix them.

So, Mr. Chairman, with the committee's indulgence, I'll briefly chronicle those achievements publicly for the American people as I respond to your prepared questions.

Question. What interaction did you have with Mr. Ross Perot?

Answer. My interaction began with my inviting Mr. Perot to join my DIA/POW advisory board. As I entered the office of Director, I wanted a group of talented and respected people from outside DOD to look over my shoulder, to have full access to our files and to provide me with an objective assessment of how I was doing my job and how I could do my job better.

Ross Perot already had a long-standing recognized sincere interest in the POW/MIA issue and he was one of my first candidates. Unfortunately, Mr. Perot said his duties precluded him from being a full-time member of the advisory board. He recommended his good friend, Brigadier General Robbie Risner for membership and of course I concurred.

However, Ross offered his assistance to me in support of my efforts whenever he had time and whenever he was in Washington. The White House had acknowledged Mr. Perot's efforts in support of the POW/MIA issue and commended him for his efforts.

In view of his past activities, I made a decision to provide him access and to keep him personally involved for our mutual benefit.

Question. What access to POW/MIA intelligence was Ross Perot given and for what period of time?

Answer. He had full and unrestricted access to all POW/MIA reports, regardless of classification and he had that access for the entire period I was Director.

What was the purpose of this access? Well, the purpose was multifaceted. First, he needed to observe what we were doing and how we were doing our job if he was going to be helpful. Second, I wanted to breathe fresh air into the process to attempt to allay once more the allegations that there continue to be some sort of a sinister cover up of data.

Third, I knew that Ross Perot had a network which provided him directly with information on the issue and frankly, I wanted to tap that source. Access to the files offered him an opportunity to cross-check information and solicit assistance from our analysts.

Fourth, Ross Perot had credibility. He had credibility. Particularly among family members who knew that he would objectively and vigorously pursue this issue. But simply, I wanted to exploit this reservoir of talent and support and I wanted him on our side.

Had Vice President Bush or the NSC authorized Perot's access? Soliciting Mr. Perot's support as a member of my advisory board and authorizing him access was my idea. I kept the Vice President apprised of all of our activity, including Mr. Perot's involvement, either through members of the NSC staff or personally.

Also, the Secretary of Defense, Mr. Weinburger, was aware and approved.

What impact that Mr. Perot's private negotiating forays into Vietnam have on the effectiveness of the U.S. Government's efforts to resolve the POW/MIA issue with Vietnam?

Well, I can't speak for the U.S. Government. My charter was to collect, evaluate and to report. I was not involved with policy matters. Mr. Perot's activities during my tenure had no adverse affect on my mission.

What was your involvement with Ross Perot in attempting to obtain a purported videotape of American POW's in 1986?

Well, we were both committed to obtaining the tape whatever it required. I believed it was necessary—I believe now it is necessary to chronicle developments related to the tape in order to understand our respective involvement.

On January 27, 1986, then Congressman Billy Hendon, hand carried to the White House a letter addressed to the President from Major (Retired) Mark Smith and his attorney, Mr. Mark Waple, in which they revealed the existence of a videotape which allegedly showed 39 American prisoners in captivity in Laos as recent as October 1985.

Mark Smith claimed that he had visited the mideast and viewed a copy of the tape in the presence of a mideast intelligence personnel. Now, the next day, on February 28, Mark Smith, in testimony before the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, talked about the letter to the President and he promised to gain access to the videotape for the congressional committee Members within 1 week.

Now what followed was a period of frustration, as we never obtained a copy of the tape. I had pledged to Congressman Billy Hendon, who was working with Mark Smith, any support necessary, either personally from me or from my agency, to assist in the acquisition of that tape.

We contacted the mideast intelligence service which Smith had claimed has access to a copy. We were advised that they knew of no such videotape and stated that the meeting described by Smith could not have taken place. Nevertheless, nevertheless, I insisted that we continue to pursue acquisition of the tape aggressively.

On February 20, Congressman Hendon telephoned me at 2300 hours in my quarters and reported that Mark Smith was in Cyprus trying to obtain the videotape and needed some assistance to clear away some obstacles. I responded to his request and provided the support asked.

On February 28, another letter was delivered to the White House stating that Mark Smith had returned from a trip overseas with an offer which would have Congressman Hendon, then Congressman Bob Smith, now Vice Chairman, Mark Smith and Senator DeConcini travel to Southeast Asia to view the tape, after which they would be required to pay \$4.2 million in cash to take the original of the tape and other evidence.

On March 3, Congressman Hendon, Congressman Bob Smith, Mark Smith, along with attorney Mark Waple, met with representatives of DIA. The proposal as outlined in the letter of the President was presented to DIA by Congressman Hendon and Mark Smith. Hendon and Mark Smith were asked by DIA if they had any further information about the tape and both replied that they had names associated with the POW's shown on the tape.

However, when asked, both Hendon and Mark Smith refused to provide any of the names. I've always been at a loss to understand why Senator Smith was not able to exert sufficient influence on

Hendon and Mark Smith to convince them to turn over this potentially vital information to the governmental agency responsible for accounting for POW's.

As for my involvement with Mr. Perot in this effort, my recollection is that I discussed this tape with Mr. Perot as related to Government policy, a policy which precluded us from paying for information. I also recall Mr. Perot saying that he had talked with Vice President Bush and they had discussed the tape. I recall Mr. Perot informing me that he realized that this could be a scam, but stated that he agreed with me that we needed to pursue it. He indicated he would pledge the \$4.2 million in a safeway, payable only after full verification of its authenticity.

I considered his efforts to be a reflection of his patriotism and sincere concern over the issue and that still applies. He made no mention of any remuneration nor any offer by the Government for any payback.

I recall a memo which indicated that the Vice President has telephoned Congressman Hendon to inform him that Ross Perot had been asked to look into the latest reports of POW's in Southeast Asia and asked Mr. Hendon to cooperate with Mr. Perot to determine whether or not recent reporting was valid.

I know that Mr. Hendon was in touch with Mr. Perot during this period. I have recollection of Mr. Perot mentioning the possible allegation of funds for either transportation or to assist in the release of Mr. Obassy, alias Mr. Gregson who was in a Singapore jail for fraud charges. Now, this was the fellow who allegedly had the film, and as the committee knows, the tape was never made available by Mr. Obassy.

What was your role in the organization of the Tighe Commission in 1986 and what influence did you have on its conclusions and recommendations?

The answer to these questions, Mr. Chairman, are provided in General Tighe's own words from the forward of the Tighe Report. And I quote directly, General Perroots called me into the DIA for a lengthy discussion of this issue soon as he assumed his position as Director as DIA. He was determined to assure a thoroughly professional DIA effort.

I agreed to conduct an investigation at General Perroots' request, unquote. Now I use this direct quote to correct a misconception by some lately that the Tighe Task Force was somehow forced upon me.

Again, for emphasis. No one ever approached me to take on General Tighe. It was solely and exclusively my idea for good and honorable reasons. I made my case to General Tighe and he graciously accepted the offer. I might add that I took him on despite some trepidation by some outside the intelligence community that he might use this as an opportunity to foster his own views, regardless of the evidence.

For my part, as can be confirmed by the public record and by my good friend, General Tighe himself, I never questioned the honesty, integrity or motives of General Tighe and was pleased at his acceptance of my offer.

Now, as to what influence I had over its conclusions and recommendations. Well, the answer is absolutely none. General Tighe

and his people, as well as the review board, had total access to all of the files with no strings attached and the conclusions and recommendations were theirs.

Again, I quote from his own words in the report itself to illustrate that I offered absolutely no constraints. And I quote, the Director of DIA further insisted that my investigation go anywhere my findings took it. The charter emphasized that they were to look for any indication of any impropriety or cover up, end quote.

Now there was some discussion among the task force members over the wording of one important conclusion. The ultimate wording was and I quote, DIA holds information that establishes the strong possibility of American prisoners of war being held in Laos and Vietnam.

There were discussions over the word possibility versus probability and the addition of the words, of war vice the word simply prisoners. General Tighe ultimately agreed on the conclusion as currently written, that is, DIA holds information that establishes the strong possibility of American prisoners of war being held in Laos and in Vietnam.

Mr. Chairman, here's where I must publicly take issue with several of my dear friend General Tighe's remarks as your recent public hearing. This is difficult for me. First, concerning the dramatic announcement that was prompted by Senator Smith that he believed that his room was bugged and that it was the unanimous conclusion of task force members.

By the way, Mr. Chairman, since Senator Smith knew he was going to follow that line of questioning, it seems to me that it might have been more effective and enlightening if I would have been invited to appear with General Tighe during that public hearing. Perhaps that's not appropriate, but the thought occurred to me.

Mr. Chairman, I've been personal friends and continue to be personal friends with General Tighe for many years. He has consistently been complimentary toward my efforts in supporting the POW/MIA issue and I'm grateful for it. But I simply cannot let this bugging claim go unchallenged.

It is inconceivable to me, as it must be to you, that now, over 5 years later, the first mention of bugging is uttered. I have been in contact with General Tighe frequently over the years. He continues to be a member of the DIA Advisory Board at my recommendation. Never, never did he or any task force member mention that they had even a suspicion of any bugging of their facility.

Just 3 weeks ago, 3 weeks ago at Dulles Airport, the next morning after the hearing, I asked General Tighe why he had made this charge. He quickly responded that he knew that I had nothing to do with any bugging, that he was prepared to say that to anyone. I told him that wasn't the point. The point was that if there ever was even the suspicion that the room was bugged, no matter who bugged it, surely he would have told me and I firmly believe he would have.

It is inappropriate that I hear it over 5 years later in a public hearing. Also the statement by General Tighe that it was unanimous conclusion of all the task force members that the room was bugged is false. As Mr. Arthur Klos, a member of the task force

stated 2 days ago on August 10, 1992, quote, I cannot imagine who would want to bug the room or for what purpose, unquote.

Mr. Chairman, I can't imagine who or why that room would have been bugged. I asked for General Tighe to do the report. I asked for the review board to support the effort. None of these people are shrinking violets. None of them would hesitate telling me or anyone else their views. There's no need to collect their views via a bug.

Mr. Chairman, the thing that adds to this growing lack of confidence that the American people have about our public servants is this way this charge almost appeared to be staged and reacted to. Even the committee's response to the allegation, if you please, seem to imply acceptance of the charge before sufficient investigation was conducted.

Your reaction, as I recall, was something like, now things begin to make sense. Senator Grassley stated and I quote from the transcription, that is why people do not trust the Government and suspicions are created on efforts to resolve the issue, unquote.

Senator Smith stated and I quote, I was shocked to learn that the task force was being bugged, not allegedly bugged, was being bugged. I intend to ask for the identification of the individual who authorized the bugging of General Tighe's office, not the alleged bugging, but the bugging of General Tighe's office. All of the comments implicitly accept the allegation that there was a bugging.

Gentlemen, I do not believe there was. There is no evidence there was. And yet the American people again were left with a picture of a sinister operation by the Defense Intelligence Agency. And this is unfair. I don't have to tell you the responsibility to be fair and objective. And for the most part, you've demonstrated that capacity. I watched you for 8 hours and I command you for it.

Further, Senator Smith, I'm told, in DIA that they're waiting for that investigation that you were going to demand. I'm waiting for it too, because I'm demanding an investigation of that bugging.

Other comments made by General Tighe at that hearing need to be addressed. Again, Senator Smith prompted General Tighe with a question, where you denied information? Surprisingly, his response was, yes, I knew I did not have access to all intelligence information. Again, that's simply not true. I directed that all files or any other information that the task force or review board requested or needed be provided.

In that regard, it's interesting to note that General Tighe called for only 43 case history files for that entire period, files that he was most familiar with. The point is, the point is, I repeatedly asked General Tighe and the review group if they were getting the support they needed and never received anything but a positive answer.

Now gentlemen, again I remind you that the people involved are not timid. If there was any problem in getting necessary information, would they not have called attention to it and made it even a matter of record in the report? I'm sure they would have, because these are all men of integrity.

Again, I hear of this alleged problem for the first time over 5 years later. I cannot accept that. There were other references by General Tighe at the hearing that bothered me. He suggested that

he was surprised that I had what he described as my people on board the review group.

Let's review the makeup of the review group: General Russ Dougherty, a distinguished aviator and lawyer; General Robert Kinston, distinguished combat veteran and commander, and the first commanding officer of the JCRC—he also accompanied General Vessey on several trips to Hanoi; Lieutenant General Peter Flynn, distinguished aviator and ex-Vietnam POW; Lyman Kirkpatrick, a giant in the intelligence world; Brigadier General Robbie Risner, fighter pilot, ex-POW and a close confidante of Ross Perot; Major General Murray, a Vietnam veteran with special knowledge of Vietnam logistics.

These distinguished men belong to no one. They're in nobody's pocket. They are patriots with a strong commitment to this issue. Two of them spent years in north Vietnamese camps. They served with no strings attached and they knew it. I wanted the very best people I could find to provide an honest and objective review of our efforts and to characterize them as my men does a great disservice to them.

Final question. Where you satisfied with the attention and resources the POW/MIA issue was receiving during your tenure?

The answer to that question is yes, because I demanded attention and resources once I identified the problems in the agency. Early in my statement, I mentioned the many significant initiatives we accomplished in 3 short years. Let me briefly elaborate.

Early we concluded the range of investigations designed to identify for me the problem areas. You're familiar with the Gaines Report, you're familiar with the Tighe Report. We raised the national collection priority to priority one. Never before had that been done. It had been a five in the late 1970's under Gene Tighe. It was never above three.

We increased the number of people dedicated to the effort by over 300 percent. We brought on new fresh blood, both at the working and management level. There would be no tired analysts. We automated the entire data base for the first time. This greatly facilitated the analysis process.

At my request, my request, Mr. Casey, the DCI, authorized for the first time the creation of an intelligence community working group which I chaired. The purpose of this group was to ensure unified intelligence efforts and to constantly discuss ways to improve collection and analysis by the intelligence community.

We used to sit around and say, what can we do better to support this effort? Organizationally, we moved the POW/MIA division in DIA from under a directorate and elevated it to be directly under the command element for my personal scrutiny and support.

In response to criticism of debunking and by tired analysts, we established a procedure that required a review board to look at every case to determine the disposition and action. Thereby, no single analyst could ever made that determination again.

We implemented an aggressive analytical effort designed to identify the most probable areas of potential activity. All reports were considered valid in this review. My motive for this geographical clustering—I see you have one—as to identify the most likely areas

for any on the ground human collection effort, even if we had no hard specific evidence.

I introduced the new level involvement into the effort across the agency. Virtually all the Defense Intelligence Agency SES's or senior executive service people were asked to review and comment on the effort. We created and financed collection teams for increased on the ground interviews of refugees and other classified operations.

Now this capability remains in effect today. It's a significant accomplishment. We implemented an open door policy whereby any family member could talk to me personally, and day or day time of the day concerning our efforts or their concerns, and believe me, they exercised this policy frequently.

We energized a very special collection effort at NSA to accommodate one of General Tighe's chief concerns about our ability to get into a particular area.

We instituted an active program of briefing for the Congress to keep them apprised of our efforts and finally, we gave the POW/MIA effort full budgeting support out of the GDIP, the General Defense Intelligence Program, for any initiative. It was my number one priority for funding in the agency.

Now there are more. These are all self-imposed initiatives. They're not directed by anybody. They were made as a result of a sensitive, caring agency determined to do its very best to improve our support to this vital issue.

From a personal vantage point, few can truly appreciate the sense of commitment and responsibility I felt at this effort. I had to look those family members in the eye and pledge our best effort.

One needs to wear the mantle of responsibility to fully understand the impact of that responsibility. I spent hours lying awake at night trying to think of new ways I might improve the effort. I was haunted by the thoughts of some of my comrades in arms possibly being over there and by their suffering families who deserved every ounce of our energy and our commitment.

I still ask myself the question. What more could we possibly have done? But Senators, I can honestly say in retrospect, we gave it one hell of an effort and I'm so very proud of the men and women of DIA that responded tirelessly to my constant and often relentless demands and I feel certain that the same responsiveness prevails in the agency today.

Thank you for your kind attention.

[The prepared statement of General Perroots follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT

TESTIMONY OF

Lt Gen (Ret) Leonard H. Perroots
Former Director, Defense Intelligence Agency
1985 -- 1988

GIVEN TO THE

SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE

ON POW/MIA AFFAIRS

12 AUGUST 1992

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to begin by congratulating you and your Committee for your efforts to shed more light on this critical and emotional POW/MIA issue; an issue that virtually dominated my thoughts and actions as the Director of DIA for over three years. I have earlier provided a deposition to the Committee, as requested. However, in view of subsequent recent developments resulting from your hearings on 24 July, I not only welcome the opportunity to appear here in open testimony but I contacted Senator McCain and requested that I be given an opportunity to address this Committee to respond to certain allegations that were made during that session. I felt I needed to do this to set the record straight.

In this prepared statement I will directly respond point by point to the questions your Committee Staff provided. I am struck by fact that by far, most of the questions relate to my association with Mr. Ross Perot. While I can understand the interest and indeed in some cases the relevancy of Mr. Perot's involvement as it applies to me and DIA under my tenure, I find it interesting that there were no questions regarding the multitude of significant initiatives which we undertook from 1986-1989 to improve our ability to support the POW/MIA effort. I assure you Mr. Chairman, that my comments are not motivated by any desire for any agency or self-aggrandizement. However, it seems to me that as a result of so much notoriety regarding the negative aspects of this issue, especially as relates to government support, there has been a growing sense out there in the hinterland of America that very little good work has been done to resolve this issue, and that we just didn't care -- it seems to me that in this climate of mistrust that it is appropriate on occasion to call attention to those very positive steps that were taken. Steps that I continue to be so very proud of.

I believe that it is important that the American people know that there were and are dedicated, tireless and committed people in the Defense Intelligence Agency who have made, and I am sure continue to make, magnificent contributions in supporting the POW/MIA effort. I believe that they need to know that, in view of the constant drumbeat of criticism of the Agency from the media and a variety of other sources including, at times, ^{some members of} this Committee. Mr. Chairman, I am not suggesting that there were not problems in DIA. There were problems, many related to resource and organizational limitations from the late 70's through the early 80's. But while I cannot speak for what transpired before 1985, I can categorically and proudly say we made a sincere effort to identify and scope those problems -- and to fix them. So Mr. Chairman, with the Committee's indulgence, I will briefly chronicle those achievements publicly for the American people as I respond to your prepared questions.

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1. What interaction did you have with Ross Perot?

My interaction began with my inviting Mr. Perot to join my DIA/POW Advisory Board. As I entered the office of Director I wanted a group of talented and respected people from outside (DoI) to look over *our* shoulders, to have full access to our files and to provide me with an objective assessment of how I was doing my job and how I could do my job better. Ross Perot already had a long-standing, recognized sincere interest in the POW/MIA issue, and was one of my first candidates.

Unfortunately, Mr. Perot said his duties precluded him from being a full time member of the advisory board. He recommended his good friend, Brigadier General Robbie Risner, for membership. However, Ross offered his assistance to me in support of my efforts whenever he had time and was in Washington. The White House had acknowledged Mr. Perot's efforts in support of the POW/MIA issue and commended him for his efforts. In view of his past activities, I made a decision to provide him access, and to keep him personally involved for our mutual benefit.

2. What access to POW/MIA intelligence was Ross Perot given, and what period of time?

He had full, unrestricted access to all reports, regardless of classification. He had that access for the entire period I was Director.

3. What was the purpose of his access?

The purpose was multifaceted. First he needed to observe what we were doing and how we were doing our job. Secondly, I wanted to breathe fresh air into the process, to allay once and for all the allegation that there continued to be some sort of a sinister cover-up of data. Third, I knew that Ross Perot had a network which provided him directly with information on the issue, and I wanted to tap that source. Access to the files offered him an opportunity to cross-check information and solicit assistance from our analysts. Fourth, Ross Perot had credibility, particularly among ^{some} family members who knew that he would objectively and vigorously pursue this issue. Put simply, I wanted to exploit this reservoir of talent and support.

4. Had Vice President Bush or the NSC authorized Perot's access?

Soliciting Mr. Perot's support as a member of my Advisory Group was my idea. I kept the Vice President apprised of all of our activity including Mr. Perot's

involvement, either through members of the NSC staff or personally. Also, the Secretary of Defense, Mr. Weinberger, was aware and approved.

5. What impact did Mr. Perot's private negotiating forays into Vietnam have on the effectiveness of the USG's efforts to resolve the POW/MIA issue with Vietnam?

My charter was to collect, evaluate and report. I was not involved with policy matters. Mr. Perot's activities during my tenure had no adverse effect on my mission.

6. What was your involvement with Ross Perot in attempting to obtain a purported video tape of American POWs in late 1986?

We were both committed to obtaining the tape, whatever it required. I believe it is necessary to chronicle developments related to the tape in order to understand our respective involvement.

On 27 January 1986, then Congressman Billy Hendon hand-carried to the White House a letter addressed to the President from Major (Retired) Mark Smith and his attorney Mr. Mark Waple, in which they revealed the existence of a video tape which allegedly showed 39 American prisoners in captivity in Laos as recent as October 1985. Smith claimed that he had visited the Mid-East and viewed a copy of the tape in the presence of Mid-East Intelligence personnel.

The next day, 28 January, Mark Smith, in testimony before the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, talked about the letter to the President and promised to gain access to the video tape for the congressional committee members within a week.

What followed was a period of frustration as we never obtained a copy of the tape. I had pledged to Congressman Billy Hendon, who was working with Mark Smith, any support necessary either personally from me or from my agency to assist in the acquisition of the tape. We contacted the ^{Mid-East} intelligence service which Smith had claimed had access to a copy. We were advised that they knew of no such video tape and stated that the meeting described by Smith could not have taken place. Nevertheless, I insisted that we continue to pursue acquisition of the tape aggressively.

On 20 February, Congressman Hendon telephoned me at 2300 in my quarters and reported that Mark Smith was in Cypress trying to obtain the video tape and needed some assistance to clear away some obstacles -- I again pledged my full support.

On 28 February, another letter was delivered to the White House stating that Mark Smith had returned from a trip overseas with an offer which would have Congressman Hendon, then Congressman Bob Smith, Mark Smith and Senator DeConcini travel to South East Asia to view the tape after which they would be required to pay 4.2 million dollars in cash to take the original of the tape and other evidence.

On 3 March, Congressman Hendon, Congressman Bob Smith and Mark Smith, along with attorney Mark Waple met with representatives of DIA. The proposal as outlined in the letter to the President was presented to DIA by Congressman Hendon and Mark Smith. Hendon and Mark Smith were asked by DIA if they had further information about the tape and both replied that they had names associated with the PW's shown in the tape, however when asked, both Hendon and Mark Smith refused to provide any of the names. I have always been at a loss to understand why Senator Smith was not able to exert sufficient influence on Hendon and Smith to convince them to turn over this potentially vital information to the governmental agency responsible for accounting for PW's.

As for my involvement with Mr. Perot in this effort - my recollection is that I discussed this tape with Mr. Perot as related to government policy, a policy which precluded us from paying for information.

I also recall Mr. Perot saying that he had talked with Vice President Bush, and that they had discussed the tape. I recall Mr. Perot informing me that he realized that this could be a scam but stated he agreed with me that we needed to pursue it. He indicated he would pledge the 4.2 million in a safe way, payable only after full verification of its authenticity. I considered his efforts to be a reflection of his patriotism and sincere concern over the issue. He made no mention of any remuneration nor any offer by the Government for any pay back.

I recall a memo which indicated that the Vice President had telephoned Congressman Hendon to inform him that Ross Perot had been asked to look into the latest reports of POW's in South East Asia and asked Mr. Hendon to cooperate with Mr. Perot to determine whether or not recent reporting was valid. I know that Mr. Hendon was in touch with Mr. Perot during this period. I have a vague recollection of Mr. Perot mentioning the possible allocation of funds for either transportation or to assist in the release of Mr. Obassy, alias Mr. Gregson; who was in a Singapore jail for fraud charges. This was the fellow who allegedly had the film. As the Committee knows, the tape was never made available by Mr. Obassy.

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7. What was your role in the organization of the Tighe Commission in 1986 and what influence did you have on its conclusions and recommendations?

The answer to these questions are provided in General Tighe's own words from the forward of the Tighe Report - "General Perroots called me in to the DIA for a lengthy discussion of this issue soon after he assumed his position as Director DIA. He was determined to assure a thoroughly professional DIA effort...I agreed to conduct an investigation at General Perroots' request." I used this direct quote to correct a misconception by some that the Tighe Task Force was somehow forced upon me. Again for emphasis -- no one ever approached me to take on General Tighe. It was solely and exclusively my idea for good and honorable reasons. I made my case to General Tighe and he graciously accepted the offer. I might add that I took him on despite some trepidation by some outside the intelligence community, that he might use this opportunity to foster his own views, regardless of the evidence. For my part, as can be confirmed by the public record and by General Tighe himself, I never questioned the honesty, integrity or motives of General Tighe, and was pleased at his acceptance of my offer.

As to what influence I had over its conclusions and recommendations -- the answer is absolutely none. General Tighe and his people, as well as the review board, had total access to all of the files with no strings attached and the conclusions and recommendations were theirs. Again I quote from his own words in the report itself to illustrate that I offered absolutely no constraints; "The Director DIA further insisted that my investigation go anywhere my findings take it." The charter emphasized that they were to look for any indication of impropriety or "cover-up."

There was some discussion among the Task Force members over the wording of one important conclusion. The ultimate wording was: "DIA holds information that established the strong possibility of American prisoners of war being held in Laos and Vietnam." There were discussions over the word possibility vs. probability, and the addition of the words, "of war" vice simply the word "prisoners." General Tighe ultimately agreed on the conclusion as currently written.

Mr. Chairman, here is where I must publicly take issue with several of my dear friend General Tighe's remarks at your recent public hearing.

First, concerning the dramatic announcement that was prompted by Senator Smith that he believed that his room was bugged -- and that it was the unanimous conclusion of the task force members. By the way Mr. Chairman, since Senator Smith knew he was going to follow that line of questioning, it seems to me that it would have been much more effective

and enlightening if I would have been invited to appear with General Tighe during the public hearing.

Mr. Chairman, I have been personal friends and continue to be personal friends with General Tighe for many years. He has consistently been complimentary towards my efforts in supporting the POW/MIA issue. But, I simply cannot let this bugging claim go unchallenged. It is inconceivable to me, as it must be to you that now, over five years later, the first mention of bugging is uttered. I have been in contact with General Tighe frequently over the years. Never, never did he or task force members mention that they had even a suspicion of bugging of their facility. Just three weeks ago at Dulles airport, one day after the hearing, I asked General Tighe why he had made this charge. He quickly responded that he knew that I had nothing to do with any bugging and that he was prepared to say that to anyone. I told him that was not the point. The point was that if there ever was even the suspicion that the room was bugged -- no matter who bugged it -- surely he would have told me, and I firmly believe he would have. It is inappropriate that I hear about it over five years later in a public hearing. Also, the statement by General Tighe that it was unanimous conclusion of all the task force members that the room was bugged is false. As Mr. Arthur Klos, a member of the task force stated on 10 August 1992, "I cannot imagine who would want to bug the room or for what purpose."

Mr. Chairman, I can't imagine who or why that room would have been bugged. I asked for General Tighe to do the report. I asked for the Review Board to support the effort. None of these people are shrinking violets. -- None of them would hesitate telling me or anyone else their views. There was no need to collect their views via a bug.

Mr. Chairman, the thing that adds to this growing lack of confidence that the American people have about their public servants is the way this charge was staged and reacted to. Even the Committee's response to the allegations seemed to imply acceptance of the charge before sufficient investigation was conducted. Your reaction as I recall was something like, "Now things begin to make more sense." Senator Grassley stated, "That is why people do not trust the government and suspicions are created on efforts to resolve the issue." Senator Smith stated, and I quote, "I was shocked to learn that the task force was being bugged. I intend to ask for the identification of the individual who authorized the bugging of General Tighe's office." All of the comments implicitly accept the allegation that there was a bugging. Gentlemen, I do not believe there was. There is no evidence there was -- and yet the American people were again left with a picture of a sinister operation by the Defense Intelligence Agency. This is unfair -- you have a responsibility to be fair and objective and for the most part you have demonstrated that capacity. Further, Senator

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Smith, I am told in DIA that they are waiting for some word from you either demanding an investigation or demanding the identification of the individual who ordered it. What is the delay? I, for one, am now publicly demanding an investigation to clear-up this allegation.

Other comments made by General Tighe at that hearing need to be addressed. Again, Senator Smith prompted General Tighe with the question, "Were you denied information?" Surprisingly his response was, "Yes, I knew I did not have access to all intelligence information." Again, that simply is not true. I directed that all files or any other information the Task Force and Review Board requested or needed be provided. In that regard, it is interesting to note that General Tighe called for only 43 case history files -- files that he was most familiar with. The point is, I repeatedly asked General Tighe and the Review Group if they were getting the support they needed and never received anything but a positive answer. Now Gentlemen, again I remind you that the people involved are not timid. If there was any problem in getting necessary information, would they not have called attention to it and made it a matter of record in the report? I'm sure they would have, because these are all men of integrity. Again, I hear of this alleged problem for the first time over five years later. I cannot accept that.

There were other references by General Tighe at that hearing that bothered me. He suggested that he was surprised that I had what he described as my people on board the Review Group. Let's review the make-up of the Review Group.

General Dougherty, A distinguished aviator and lawyer.
 General Robert Kinston, A distinguished combat veteran and commander
 and the first Commanding Officer of the JCRC.
 He also accompanied General Vessey on several
 trips to Hanoi;
 Lt. General Peter Flynn, An ex-Vietnam POW;
 Lyman Kirkpatrick, A giant in the intelligence world;
 Brigadier General Robinson Risner, ... An ex-POW and a close confidant of Ross Perot;
 Major General Murray, A Vietnam veteran with special knowledge on
 Vietnam logistics.

These distinguished men belong to no one. They are patriots with a strong commitment to this issue. Two of them spent years in North Vietnamese camps. They served with no strings attached and they knew it. I wanted the very best people I could find to provide an honest and objective review of our efforts. To categorize them as "my men" does a great disservice to them.

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8. Final question: Were you satisfied with the attention and resources the POW/MIA issue was receiving during your tenure?

The answer to that question is yes because I demanded attention and resources once I identified the problems in the Agency. Early in my statement, I mentioned the many significant initiatives we accomplished in three short years. Let me briefly elaborate.

- a. Early on we conducted a range of investigations designed to identify for me the problem areas -- Gaines Report, Tighe Report, etc.
- b. We raised the national collection priority to Priority #1 -- never before had that been done. It had been a 5 in the late 70's under General Tighe and was never above a #3.
- c. We increased the number of people dedicated to this effort by over 300%. We brought on new fresh blood at both the working and management level.
- d. We automated the entire data base for the first time. This greatly facilitated the analysis process.
- e. At my request, Mr. Casey, the DCI, authorized for the first time the creation of an intelligence community working group which I chaired. The purpose of this group was to insure a unified intelligence effort and to constantly discuss ways to improve collection and analysis by the intelligence community.
- f. Organizationally, we moved the POW/MIA Division from under a Directorate and elevated it to be directly under the command element for my personal scrutiny and support.
- g. In response to criticism of de-bunking by "dread analysts," we established a procedure that required a review board to look at every case to determine the disposition and action. Thereby, no single analyst could make that determination.
- h. We implemented an aggressive analytical effort designed to identify the most probable areas of potential activity. All reports were considered valid in this review. My motive for this geographical clustering was to identify the most likely areas for on-the-ground HUMINT collection effort, even if we had no hard specific evidence.

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- i. I introduced senior level involvement into the effort across the Agency. Virtually all DIA SES's were asked to review and comment on the effort.
- j. We created and financed collection teams for increased on-the-ground interviews of refugees and other classified HUMINT operations -- this capability remains in effect today.
- k. We implemented an "open door policy" whereby any family members could talk to me personally - any day or any time of day - concerning our efforts or their concerns. Believe me, they exercised this policy frequently.
- l. We energized a special collection effort at NSA to accommodate one of General Tighe's concerns.
- m. We instituted an active program of briefings for the Congress to keep them apprised of our efforts.
- n. We gave the POW/MIA effort full budgeting support out of the GDIP for any initiative -- #1 Priority of my Agency.

These were all self-imposed initiatives. They were not directed by anyone. They were made as a result of a sensitive, caring agency determined to do its very best to improve our support to this vital issue.

From a personal vantage point, few can truly appreciate the sense of commitment and responsibility I felt to this effort. I had to look those family members in the eye and pledge our best effort. One must wear the mantle of responsibility to fully understand the impact of that responsibility. I spent hours lying awake at night trying to think of new ways I might improve the effort. I was haunted by the thought of some of my comrades-in-arms possibly being over there and by their suffering families who deserve every ounce of our energy and our commitment. I still ask myself the question, "What more could we possibly have done?"

But Senators, I can honestly say in retrospect, we gave it one hell of an effort, and I am so very proud of the men and women of DIA that responded tirelessly to my constant, and often relentless demands. I feel certain that that same responsiveness prevails at the Agency today.

Thank you for your kind attention.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, General Perroots. I appreciate that forceful testimony. Let me just service notice again. I was called on to do this yesterday and I am doing it today.

I do not do this with pleasure, but I am going to tell you, whoever in this audience chooses to respond in any way, positively or negatively to any testimony, we will ask you to be removed. The committee is going to do its work in dignified fashion and we will not have demonstrations in support or antipathy, one way or the other. The Sergeant at Arms is so noticed.

Mr. Childress, if you would give your opening statement, please.

TESTIMONY OF RICHARD T. CHILDRESS, FORMER STAFF MEMBER, NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

Mr. CHILDRESS. Senator Kerry, Senator Smith, distinguished Members of the Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA's, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you to discuss the efforts of the executive branch from 1981 to 1989 to achieve the fullest possible accounting of American servicemen and civilians that remain unaccounted for as a result of the Vietnam War.

I recognize the tremendous responsibility this committee has undertaken on the POW/MIA issue. Your recommendations and conclusions will be significant, as will unintended consequences on American public opinion and decision making in Hanoi.

The focus of your questions to me concerned the involvement of Mr. Ross Perot. I took the liberty of providing a more omnibus statement to aid you from my perspective in understanding the context of his involvement as well as attempting to provide you with an overview where the Reagan/Bush administration began, what we went through, what we accomplished, some impressions on Vietnamese negotiating phases, the live prisoner issue and comments on the bureaucracy. I have attempted to answer your specific questions as best as I can recall, but the paper record would be the most accurate.

I do want to express issue concerns as well. The media has portrayed the committee's work as resolving the issue. Statements have been represented that it is time to get the issue behind us once and for all. I have a sense of *deja vu*, for I felt the issue could be resolved on my watch as well and that involved over 7 years of intense negotiating efforts.

As you know, current media sentiments ignore Vietnamese knowledgeability and assume the answers are all in Washington. In the end, we're still left with the same hard facts. Vietnam can easily account for hundreds of Americans that have not yet exercised the requisite will to do so.

In spite of a lot of publicity about Vietnamese cooperation lately, from the measure of resolving cases, it is clearly meager. In my larger testimony, I outlined why this is not a new pattern. President Reagan assumed office with a personal commitment to resolving the issue and made public statements concerning it in the 1970's.

Under this commitment, the administration was determined to pursue the issue as a matter of highest national priority during his term in office. Frankly, a mess was inherited. No policy level nego-

tiations were ongoing, intelligence priorities were at an all-time low, the previous administration had adopted a position endorsed by a House select committee and Presidential commission that there was no credible evidence that anyone remained alive in Southeast Asia and remains recovery was problematic at best.

The JCRC in Bangkok was staffed with two personnel with no direct administrative support or even a vehicle. The central identification lab was undermanned, thousands of refugees had not been and were not being debriefed. The DIA had a small core of analysts who felt the office was going to be closed completely in the 1970's. The National League of Families had been demonstrating in front of the White House as well as foreign missions, did not trust the Government, and although a member of the Inter-Agency Group, they did not consider it effective.

Government-provided transportation for the families to come to Washington for briefings had been halted in the 1970's. The only organized congressional interest being shown was by the House subcommittee on Asian-Pacific affairs and the House POW/MIA task force.

Private Americans were attempting to organize Rambo-like raids. Live sighting reports were randomly classified, if at all, and there was little general public interest even among many veterans' groups. I could go on but the challenges were immense.

How we tackled and met the above challenges is in my testimony. The committee asked several questions concerning Mr. Ross Perot and the larger testimony was provided so the committee could put his involvement in the overall context of the issue and our negotiations.

I had contact with Mr. Perot briefly on three occasions, two phone conversations, one in 1984 and another in, I believe, 1985 and an almost 2-hour briefing with Mr. Perot in the Pentagon. I believe I was called over by General Shufelt at DIA at the time. Mr. Perot wanted to talk to me about our policy and strategy.

I have no first-hand knowledge of precisely how long Mr. Perot had access to POW/MIA intelligence or what access. General Perroots, I think, has answered that question. I understood from DIA that Mr. Perot was invited to participate as a member of the Tighe review group, but declined and nominated, or accepted, then declined and nominated Brigadier General Risner to take his place.

The policy community was generally proud of the progress we had made up to this point in comparison to 1981, when we believed Mr. Perot had left the issue. There was a general feeling that given his public posture, providing Mr. Perot access to see how far we had progressed would be positive in building greater public support for the priority.

I have no first-hand knowledge of any direct taskings to Mr. Perot by the President or the Vice President. It's my clear impression, however, that Mr. Perot was discouraged from going to Vietnam in the spring of 1987 and that if he insisted on going, it was to be as a private citizen, since we had already selected General Vessey months prior as the President's emissary to Hanoi. General Vessey had accepted the mission, was already in the research phase prior to his projected travel.

Upon Mr. Perot's return from Vietnam, as I recall, he was debriefed in early April concerning his trip. He also asked to meet with the President which was scheduled, I believe, in May. I was tasked to prepare the meeting documents for the President from the National Security Advisor, which included suggested talking points.

As I understand the purpose of the meeting, it was to allow Mr. Perot to directly brief the President on his trip to Hanoi. I did not attend this meeting. I did see his written report after the meeting. I was told that in addition to receiving Mr. Perot's briefing, it was emphasized again that General Vessey was our emissary to Hanoi.

It is my opinion, in response to your question, that Mr. Perot's trip was counterproductive to U.S. efforts. The Vietnamese at the time had not been informed an emissary had been appointed by the President, as that was to be the task of the advance delegation after assurance that Hanoi was prepared to receive General Vessey on a humanitarian basis.

The Vietnamese were undoubtedly aware of Mr. Perot's public posture in the press and his access, thus his trip could have been interpreted as official. More importantly, he reportedly told the Vietnamese of General Vessey's appointment and held broad ranging discussions on Vietnamese economic and political goals which implied direct linkage.

In addition, when he returned, derisive press reports about the Department of State and previous U.S. negotiating team members were published. Confusion reigned for a while. We answered questions in White House and State press conferences to clarify Mr. Perot's private status. We also had to answer Vietnamese concerns who appeared confused as well.

In my written testimony I described the hostile reception accorded Vessey's advance delegation after Mr. Perot's trip.

Concerning the question of resources and attention, the answer is evident in my testimony; few resources and less attention were being brought to bear on the issue when the Reagan/Bush administration assumed office. We went from ground zero to a national priority program in less than 3 years.

It was gratifying to me during this period that I had complete and total support from both President Reagan and Vice President Bush. They were personally interested, committed and supportive. In addition, each of the National Security advisors provided encouragement, resources and commitment to the issue.

Due to the functional nature of the POW/MIA issue, it cut across departmental and agency lines. The Secretaries of State and Defense were all behind the effort and supported the upgrades in personnel, intelligence priorities, public awareness, outreach to families and diplomatic initiatives.

Importantly, on the IAG, where policy initiatives were hammered out, we had staunch advocates on the issue. It was a coherent team that could disagree, coordinate—

The CHAIRMAN. Let me just ask, Mr. Childress, I notice that you have a long statement and I notice that you are going line for line at this point. Is this a summary?

Mr. CHILDRESS. No. I've got about that much left (indicating).

The CHAIRMAN. Well, that is terrific.

Mr. CHILDRESS. I was not going to do 13 single-spaced pages. Senator SMITH. Long statements come from Senators around here.

Mr. CHILDRESS. Importantly, on the IAG where policy initiatives were hammered out, we had staunch advocates of the issue. It was a coherent team that could disagree, coordinate and re-agree without rancor because we had the same objective.

In the middle of all of this was Ann Mills Griffiths prodding, suggesting, criticizing and pitching in to help. In terms of resources, we've more than tripled manpower during this period. Money, not budgeted, was found by the departments for all the initiatives. We were able to pursue the issue without compromising other national objectives.

Additional resources were contemplated or planned, depending on Vietnamese agreements. The results of our efforts brought final answers to approximately 175 families. We negotiated the return of a private American who many believed was dead and made the POW issue one of priority. This is a legacy in which we feel pride.

I welcome your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Childress follows:]

Testimony of Richard T. Childress
Former Staff Member,
National Security Council (1981-89), for the
Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs
12 August 1992

Senator Kerry, Senator Smith, distinguished members of the Senate Select Committee on POW/MIAs, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you to discuss the efforts of the executive branch from 1981-1989 to achieve the fullest possible accounting of American servicemen and civilians who remain unaccounted for as a result of the Vietnam War.

I believe my biography is with the Committee. I was assigned to the National Security Council in the fall of 1981. Although the purpose of my assignment was to work in Asian Affairs at the NSC, my initial task (approximately three months) was to aid the administration's task force on the sale of AWACs to Saudi Arabia. I assumed responsibility for POW/MIA Affairs in January 1982. At the time I served at the Deputy Director level. I was subsequently designated as Director, Political-Military Affairs (November 1984) and my title was changed to Director, Asian Affairs, in March 1986. Despite the title changes, my responsibilities included POW/MIA from January 1982 onward until my departure and retirement from active military service and the NSC at the end of February 1989.

To aid you in your important work, I believe it important to describe the environment surrounding this issue which the Reagan/Bush administration inherited, what we did to correct it, and our experience in implementing our program through the period. I have attempted to answer your questions best as I can recall, but obviously paper records provide a specificity that memory does not.

President Reagan assumed office with a personal commitment to resolving the issue and had made public statements concerning it in the 1970s. Under his commitment, the administration was determined to pursue the issue as a matter of national priority during his term in office. Frankly, a mess was inherited. No policy-level negotiations were ongoing, getting information on POW/MIA was an all-time low intelligence priority, the previous administration had adopted a position endorsed by a House Select Committee and a Presidential Commission that there was no credible evidence that anyone remained alive in Southeast Asia and remains recovery was problematic at best, the JCRC in Bangkok was staffed with 2 personnel with no direct administrative support or a vehicle, the Central Identification Laboratory was undermanned,

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thousands of refugees had not been and were not being debriefed, the DIA had a small core of dedicated analysts who felt the office was going to be closed completely in the 1970s.

The National League of Families had been demonstrating in front of the White House as well as foreign missions, did not trust the government, and although a member of the IAG, they did not consider it an effective policy body. Government-provided transportation for the families to come to Washington for briefings had been halted in the 1970s.

The only organized Congressional interest being shown was by the House Subcommittee on Asia/Pacific Affairs and the House POW/MIA Task Force while private Americans were attempting to organize Rambo-like raids, live-sighting reports were randomly classified, if at all, and there was little general public interest even among many veterans groups.

I could go on, but the challenges were immense.

1981-1983

During this period, a concentrated effort was made to begin addressing the myriad of hurdles we faced. Before I assumed my duties, the Interagency Group adopted policy proposals in 1981 that would form the basis of further development of a national strategy that was implemented by 1982 and can be summarized in the following basic points:

- High-level public policy statements were needed that would signal the Indochinese governments and others that things had changed and the issue was back on the U.S. agenda.
- Policy-level negotiations had to be opened with Vietnam and Laos.
- A bipartisan approach was needed so the strategy would be sustainable from administration to administration.
- A public awareness campaign was needed and was to be implemented through speeches, written materials and public commemorations.
- The issue had to be defined as humanitarian to minimize attempts by Hanoi to link the issue to other political issues and allow direct negotiations without alarming our allies facing over 250,000 Vietnamese occupation troops in Cambodia.
- Intelligence priorities had to be upgraded.

- Diplomatic approaches towards other countries requesting their help to urge cooperation from Vietnam and Laos were required.
- Integration of the National League of Families into our strategy and better communications with the families was needed in order to rebuild trust of those who had the most to gain or lose.
- Private irresponsible activities, such as cross-border forays, had to be actively discouraged while accepting information from any source.

By the end of 1983, President Reagan had made two major public addresses on the issue, as had the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of State, the National Security Advisor and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs.

Richard Armitage led the first policy-level delegation in years to Hanoi in 1982, a four-member delegation of the National League of Families visited Vietnam and Laos in September of 1982 in coordination with the administration. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State O'Donohue traveled to Laos following the League trip and presented the Lao with a roadmap to improved relations and flagged the need for concrete POW/MIA cooperation. The Vietnamese agreed to increase the number of technical meetings and with the aid of the League Executive Director, Ann Mills Griffiths, I met for an extended informal dinner with Foreign Minister Thach in October 1983, the highest level meeting since the end of the war. The purpose was to urge mutual Vietnamese cooperation to resolve the issue, establish direct and open dialogue on U.S. expectations and set the stage for sustained high-level policy negotiations in the future.

Contact was increased with the Congress to brief them on our program and solicit full bipartisan support. The public awareness campaign was launched through the aforementioned speeches, supplemented by visits to veterans groups, holding of POW/MIA Recognition Day Ceremonies, the adoption of a national POW/MIA poster, the publication of a DOD Fact Book, media briefings, the flying of the League POW/MIA flag over the White House, Pentagon, State Department and Vietnam Veterans Memorial on POW/MIA Recognition Day.

Importantly, during this period, we raised the intelligence priorities, rewrote the intelligence collection plans to include POW/MIA, reinvigorated the refugee interviewing process and flagged the issue as a priority in national-level intelligence taskings. In addition, based upon the discrepancy cases at the end of the war, unresolved live-sighting reports and the history of Vietnamese manipulation of the issue, we changed the Carter administration live prisoner position from "no credible evidence" to the current position:

"Although we have thus far been unable to prove that Americans are still detained against their will, the information available to us precludes ruling out that possibility. Actions to investigate live-sighting reports receive and will continue to receive necessary priority and resources based on the assumption that at least some Americans are still held captive. Should any report prove true, we will take appropriate action to ensure the return of those involved."

In the ASEAN meetings and bilaterally with other countries, to include the USSR and the PRC, the issue was raised and briefed with requests for support and information.

We reached out to the National League of Families and briefed them on our plans and priority. We acknowledged the errors of the 1970s and pledged our support to them. We told the families at meetings of the covert nature of the war in Laos and Cambodia and added the Lima Site 85 numbers to the official list of those missing and unaccounted for in SEA. I personally visited the League Executive Director and her staff early in 1982 to ask they provide recommendations, many of which went into our national strategy. The Deputy National Security Advisor met with the League Board and received further recommendations which were tasked to the administration by the National Security Advisor in 1982. We pledged to include the League as well in our negotiations and make them a fully equal party in our IAG policy formulation. We dispatched casualty officers and other briefers to League regional meetings and reinstated COIN-Assist transportation for the families to come to Washington for government briefings.

We felt the most effective way to discourage private irresponsible efforts was to demonstrate government seriousness on the one hand, while signaling various organizations or individuals that we would accept information from them and cooperate with them as long as they did not break the law and would turn over any information they received.

1983-1985

During this period, our strategy deepened and we began to get accelerated concrete results from our efforts. On the technical level, frequency of meetings increased, unilateral repatriation of remains from Vietnam were the highest since the end of the war. Intelligence information increased. We entered into sustained policy-level negotiations on a plan with Hanoi to resolve the issue within two years. Sensitive dialogue on the need to resolve the live prisoner issue as a first priority was fully developed and the administration communicated this to the Vietnamese from the Cabinet level as well.