

or recollection, but my impression is that some way or other the President or Carlucci and Powell had ascertained that Perot intended to go to Vietnam, and that in advance of that trip they wished to lay down these markers: If you go, you're going as a private citizen, you should not go unless they perform on what apparently they represented to be an offer to show him a live POW, and when you get there, support Vessey.

My impression is that it was initiated on the recommendation of the NSC to put those points in Mr. Perot's mind before he went. But I do not know what preceded that, I don't know what conversations there had been between Powell and Carlucci, I just don't know the details.

Senator McCAIN. Mr. Chairman, could I interrupt one second?

The CHAIRMAN. Yes, go right ahead.

Senator McCAIN. I understand, I see the light, but I suggest that you continue the line of questioning that you are pursuing for the purposes of continuity and disregard the time, if that is agreeable.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator. I will do that.

Now, did you at that time assign—let me just put this into context. The reason this is important, obviously, is we are trying to understand the context in which a number of allegations have been made to the committee. We are trying to understand what the dynamics were of the administration at the time on the issue. And obviously, we are trying to understand what, if anything, may have affected Vietnam's production of information and/or its policies with respect to our policies. And so that is the reason for the pursuit of this line of questioning.

In a memorandum which I am going to ask Mr. Cannon about in a little while, and this is a memorandum for the files which Vice President Bush personally typed based on a phone call from Ross Perot on March 21, 1987. In it—and I will just take one sentence of it for the moment, and it may be, Mr. Cannon, that you have a better recollection as to this because I believe you have already been questioned about it, but also you are familiar with it.

The Vice President, President now, said at the time: I reminded Ross that I had told him that his suggestion of a special negotiator had been approved. I told him the name of the negotiator. So I take it that Perot had actually suggested this approach but the President chose John Vessey, is that accurate?

Senator BAKER. I can't tell you, Senator. I'm not privy to that.

The CHAIRMAN. Do you recall, Mr. Cannon?

Mr. CANNON. I do not specifically, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Perot told me that he had been encouraged much earlier, long before Senator Baker and I came to the White House, he had been encouraged to look into the matter and report back to President Reagan. All I knew is what he had told me.

The CHAIRMAN. You are talking about his review of the files, I take it, at the time.

Mr. CANNON. I didn't know that much about the review of the files, just that the President asked him to look into it.

The CHAIRMAN. So at that point in time, it was your understanding that Ross Perot had his own connection to the President and to others on this issue, and you were presented with a situation where

you needed to deal with his current state of mind or interpretation with respect to the relationship with the White House.

Senator BAKER. You know, Senator, I don't mean to be evasive at all, and I'm sure you'll understand that I just didn't know anything at all except that I had been asked by Carlucci and Powell to make this phone call. And I thought enough of that and it was unusual enough so that I wanted to be very precise and careful about what I said. And it may be—I have some flickering memory—that I actually wrote down proposed notes while I was still in the Oval Office of what I was going to say. But I do remember clearly that I wanted to be very precise and that I discussed it at length with Carlucci and Powell.

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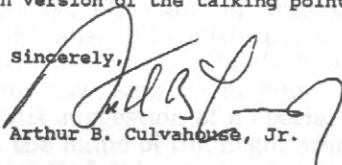
J. William Codinha, Esquire  
Chief Counsel  
Senate Select Committee for  
POW/MIA Affairs  
705 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Codinha:

During the August 5th deposition by the Senate Select Committee for POW/MIA Affairs of Senator Howard H. Baker, Jr., you requested a copy of the handwritten talking points which Senator Baker prepared and used in connection with his March 19th telephone call with Mr. H. Ross Perot. As we discussed at that time, Senator Baker felt that he required the authorization of the White House to provide copies of such talking points.

I was advised this afternoon by Mr. Mark Paoletta, Assistant Counsel to the President, that the White House does not object to Senator Baker's providing the attached copies of the handwritten talking points. Also enclosed for the convenience of the Committee is a typewritten version of the talking points prepared by the undersigned.

Sincerely,

  
Arthur B. Culvahouse, Jr.

Enclosures

cc: The Honorable Howard H. Baker, Jr.  
Mark R. A. Paoletta, Esquire

Typewritten Version of Howard H. Baker, Jr.  
March 19, 1987 Talking Points

Ross -

I've just come from a meeting with the Pres. & V.P. about the POW-MIA situation. The President feels that if you can go to Vietnam unofficially and as a private citizen on the condition outlined, that is to say that you will go only if they show you live POW then he certainly thinks you should go, and he will be eager to hear from you on the result. You should know that we are involved in efforts to arrange a trip by Gen. Vessey and they should not have the impression that your unofficial trip is a substitute for Vessey's [indecipherable] official trip.

Wishes you well, sends his prayers. On return turn everything over to Carlucci, Vessey.

Ross -

I've just come from a meeting with the Pres. & VP about

the POW-MIA situation. The

President feels that if you

can go to visit Nam unofficially

and in a private capacity on the

conditions outlined, that is

to say that you will go only

if they show you this POW

then he certainly thinks

you should go, and he will

be eager to hear from you

on the result. You should know

that we are involved in efforts

to average a trip by the Navy

and they should not have the

impression that you are official

They is a substitute for

Navy's <sup>own</sup> official trip.

Maybe you will

send to him proper <sup>conclusion</sup>

on Return Team are anything to Navy

Senator BAKER. But I must tell you, I simply do not know the background. I do not know really what the Vice President knew before I got there, the President knew, what contacts had been made, what Perot said, and before that phone call I don't think I ever talked to Ross Perot in my life.

The CHAIRMAN. Now, did Mr. Cannon make any reports about Mr. Perot's activities to either Secretary Carlucci or to General Powell, to your knowledge?

Senator BAKER. Are you asking me that?

The CHAIRMAN. Yes, sir.

Senator BAKER. I would yield to Jim Cannon for that.

Mr. CANNON. In a general sense, Mr. Chairman, Senator Baker handed me the problem, and there was a lot—there were a lot of other problems at that point.

The CHAIRMAN. What was the problem? Define it to me. You have called it a problem.

Mr. CANNON. The problem to me was that, as I recall, Senator Baker said, and he did know that I knew Mr. Perot for some 15 years at that point, he asked me to take this problem and see what I could do with it, that Mr. Perot had some sense that he could help find prisoners of war in Vietnam, that he had been encouraged by the President and the Vice President to be involved in this, and that something had happened to make him unhappy about the situation, as though he were not either receiving recognition or authority and that I should look into it, talk to Mr. Perot, see what the problem was, and see if I could work it out.

Senator BAKER. I think I can shed a little light on that, Mr. Chairman. I think Jim will probably recall this, but we'll see.

Shortly after I made that phone call, maybe the next day, to Ross Perot, the Vice President stopped me, as I remember in the corridor between our offices, and said Perot had called him, that he didn't like the idea that I called him instead of the Vice President calling him. It was after that, I guess, that I talked to Cannon about it because I knew Jim knew Perot and I did not know Perot.

I think Cannon's words that I handed it to him, handed it off to him, is apt, because it was not a formal assignment. He was not an employee of the U.S. Government. I don't remember what I said, but my guess is that I said Jim, look into this, you know the man and I don't, and see what's going on. But I don't recall that and I do not offer that as testimony before this committee except as speculation.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, I would like to understand. Was there a sense at that point in time that Ross Perot's efforts were somehow interfering with the track that the White House perceived it was on?

Senator BAKER. Senator Kerry, I must tell you, I cannot answer that question for you. I supposed that's the implication of what I've already told you. It is perhaps the fair intendment of the request from Carlucci and Powell to me to make this phone call and make these points, and the President's concurrence in that recommendation. But my mind, my experience, my knowledge on this subject, is zero prior to the request to make it, as far as I recall.

The CHAIRMAN. OK. Ross Perot did go to Vietnam.

Senator BAKER. He did, but I didn't know that until later.

The CHAIRMAN. What time did you come to learn it?

Senator BAKER. Well, my memory's vague about that, too. After the March phone call, Cannon arranged a dinner at the Madison Hotel with me and with Ross Perot, and I do not remember that I was told at that meeting that he had already been to Vietnam, but it doesn't make sense unless I was because there was a lot of stuff discussed that clearly implied that he'd been there. So I assume that he did tell me that at the time.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Cannon, did you have a different or a similar recollection with respect to Mr. Perot's mission to Vietnam?

Mr. CANNON. Yes, Mr. Chairman, I did. I think it was only a day or two after I had entered the picture, I had a general sense of it from Mr. Perot's point of view because I had talked to him and he had told me in summary that he knew live prisoners were there and he believed that he could get them out, but that the bureaucracy was trying to impede him. And subsequent to that or the next day I talked to General Powell to get the administration's side of it, and General Powell gave me a summary briefing of all the efforts that had gone over, been going on over the years, to try to find prisoners, and if so, if they found them, get them out.

The CHAIRMAN. At that point in time, did you have an opinion yourself regarding the likelihood that people were alive in Vietnam?

Mr. CANNON. I did not have any information whatsoever about that.

The CHAIRMAN. When Ross Perot told you he thought he could bring live prisoners out, what was your reaction?

Mr. CANNON. My reaction was that I was skeptical, Mr. Chairman, but if there were a slight possibility that there was one prisoner alive in Vietnam, we ought to do our damndest to get him out.

The CHAIRMAN. Did you inquire of General Powell whether or not he believed or had any intelligence that suggested that someone was alive in Vietnam?

Mr. CANNON. I don't remember asking him that question specifically.

The CHAIRMAN. Did either of you engage in any analysis within the White House at that time of the Perot allegations about live people?

Senator BAKER. I did not, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CANNON. I did not, Mr. Chairman. Let me add also that since I was a volunteer I could not see classified information, so that was something that was out of my reach.

The CHAIRMAN. So, Mr. Cannon, did you then help make arrangements for Ross Perot to go?

Mr. CANNON. No. No. Mr. Chairman, the sequence of events as I remember them is that on a Saturday morning, I believe it was the March 21, I was in the office that morning and either by phone or in person had a conversation with General Powell, who said in sum, the next time you talk to Mr. Perot, see if he will use his influence—he had told me that he was talking with Vietnamese representatives, I believe in New York, though he did not say their names. General Powell asked me to ask Mr. Perot if he would use

his influence to encourage the Vietnamese to accept General Vessey as the senior U.S. representative to go into Vietnam.

Later that afternoon, Mr. Perot called me, I believe at home, and we had I believe the most extended discussion of his concern in which he went into some length of his efforts over the years and his frustration at the bureaucracy not giving him more assistance.

An hour or so later, sometime that evening, he called me again, apparently, according to notes that I made at the time, and I then talked to him about General Vessey, the importance of getting General Vessey in, and at the end of the conversation he told me that he was going in on his own and in his private status.

The CHAIRMAN. Now, is this—referencing the documents here, I think you have provided us with a summary of your notes for your call, is that correct? For your call to Ross Perot on March 21, 1987?

Mr. CANNON. I did provide that document, Mr. Chairman, if I may have a minute to find it.

The CHAIRMAN. While you are looking, let me just read for a minute. The fifth paragraph, it says: It has not been going well with those in Hanoi and our emissaries have not been in contact with anyone who will commit to a visit by a high-level U.S. citizen.

Mr. CANNON. Excuse me, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Take your time. Take your time.

Mr. CANNON. How does the document begin? Does it have a date?

The CHAIRMAN. Yes. March 21, 1987. We should have had them numbered. I apologize. It is about half-way through the document packet. Talking points for call to Ross Perot. It is the final half-page.

Mr. CANNON. Oh, yes. Saturday, March 21, 1987, talking points for telephone call to Ross Perot.

The CHAIRMAN. Yes, sir.

Mr. CANNON. From Colin Powell. Yes, sir. I do have that document.

The CHAIRMAN. The fifth paragraph suggests that things were not going well with Hanoi. The reason, again, I ask this is that Perot has suggested that in fact his visit was helpful. And there is some question about where we were in our contacts with Hanoi and our ability to achieve anything then. In your summary, you say it has not been going well with those in Hanoi, and our emissaries have not been in contact with anyone who will commit to a visit by a high-level U.S. citizen.

Mr. CANNON. I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman. I must be looking at another document because I don't find that in my fifth paragraph.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me provide you here.

Was this simply an effort to dissuade him from going?

Mr. CANNON. Not on my part.

The CHAIRMAN. Were you instructed to try to dissuade him from going? I mean, this basically suggests that you folks did not want him to go.

Mr. CANNON. Was I—I'm sorry. Was I?

The CHAIRMAN. Instructed to try to dissuade him?

Mr. CANNON. Dissuade him? No, I had no instructions on that point, Mr. Chairman. It had never come up, and frankly, until he told me he was going, it never occurred to me, not seriously anyway, that he might go on his own.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, the second to last paragraph says: In fact, right now the best interests of the U.S. Government might be served if you were not to go to Hanoi at this time.

Mr. CANNON. Mr. Chairman, I am terribly sorry. I cannot find that in this page. I see mem con, Ross Perot, continued page 2.

The CHAIRMAN. No, this is a—the headline is talking points.

Mr. CANNON. I have talking points for a telephone call for Ross Perot, 3/21/87.

The CHAIRMAN. That is correct. And there are 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 bullets with little circles in front of them, it is a half-page. You do not have that?

Mr. CANNON. No, sir. I do not have that one.

The CHAIRMAN. I tell you what, we have a vote on right now. Why do not staff make sure you have each of these documents properly in front of you, we will just take a momentary recess while we vote and we will come back to order. Thank you very much for your patience, I appreciate it. I think we can move through this fairly rapidly. Now that we are situated in the documents here I think we can begin to pull this together a little bit, and I do not want to prolong something that does not have to be prolonged.

You now identify those notes as in fact being Craig Fuller's notes, is that correct?

Mr. CANNON. Correct.

The CHAIRMAN. Craig Fuller's recommendations to you.

Mr. CANNON. That is correct.

The CHAIRMAN. They are your notes taken on a call you had with Craig Fuller.

Mr. CANNON. They were points that Craig Fuller gave to me.

The CHAIRMAN. Gave you to talk to Perot on.

Mr. CANNON. Suggesting talking points for the next conversation I might have with Mr. Perot.

The CHAIRMAN. So does that now suggest to you that in fact Craig Fuller, on the part of the President and Vice President, wanted you to articulate that they did not think it was the best interests of the United States for Ross Perot to go to Hanoi?

Mr. CANNON. It does indicate that, Mr. Chairman. I should add that I—

The CHAIRMAN. Does that refresh your recollection at all as to any concerns the White House had expressed or that you all had talked about with respect to Mr. Perot's visit?

Mr. CANNON. I don't believe that I had talked about it. In fact, except for that, I had not thought there was the prospect that Mr. Perot would go unless he went as the President's representative. Because that was the essence of his conversation to me that he thought he should be designated to go.

The CHAIRMAN. Is it fair to say that at that point in time the White House was giving a mixed message to Ross Perot, that he was getting a sense from the President that gee, it is OK, and the Vice President, to be involved, but on the other hand the NSC and others were very concerned about his potential visit?

Mr. CANNON. That's more than I know about it, Mr. Chairman. Internally, for myself, I was talking with several people. I had some contact with Craig Fuller. But my principal person I talked

with was General Powell. And I was listening to his articulation of the recommendations and at the same time trying to form my own judgment. Because it was essentially my view, Mr. Chairman, that there was no lack of interest on the part of either side, either Mr. Perot or certainly people in the White House as to the interest in the matter. My feeling was the question of which way do we go, who is going to have the responsibility, who is going to take it on as a prime assignment.

My feeling in the middle, so to speak, of this was that instead of working in competition we ought to work in parallel, that Mr. Perot could be helpful and that he might actually advance the Government's operation, the Government's effort to find people and get them out.

The CHAIRMAN. You presented us with some documents, among which is this personally typed Vice Presidential memorandum to files typed by Vice President Bush, in which he says, reading from it: A frustrated Ross Perot called me. He requested the name of the Vietnam politburo member that the U.S. Government was negotiating with in order to get the Vietnamese to accept the Vessey role as mediator. Ross detailed a litany of gripes. He never got the green light on his advance trip to Vietnam. Note, this is the first I have ever heard that he requested such a green light, closed paren, I sent the advance people in anyway, and so forth. Referring to Ross: He is upset because the Government's top two people got me into this, i.e., Ronald Reagan and George Bush. In fact, he has a little rr and gb in parenthesis there.

I believe he is sort of quoting Perot. I could never get an answer or anything. He says, I tried through Carlucci. Carlucci says will you get off Armitage's back if we appoint a negotiator. I reminded Ross that I had told him that his suggestion of a special negotiator had been approved. I told him the name of the negotiator, so forth. Ross, who heretofore repeatedly told me and Fuller that he would not go to Vietnam unless he was told that he would see live POW's, then stated that his people were now telling him it might take two or three trips to achieve this end.

Now, first of all, could I ask you how is it that you presented us with this document? Was this something you kept in your files or that you have been given recently?

Mr. CANNON. This was something that I found in my files, Mr. Chairman, after I was notified that I might be asked to contribute whatever I might know about these happenings at this time.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, there is some evidence to suggest, at least some evidence in front of the committee, to suggest that the National Security Council was in some disarray with respect to their communications with the Vietnamese and ability to move the process forward. You, in your talking points from Craig Fuller, allude to that where it says that our people are having trouble getting into Hanoi. Ross Perot alludes to that, in fact, saying that you could not get there and he was the one who got in. I am trying to determine whether in fact that is true, that the NSC at that time was kind of in gridlock or in dissension on this Ross Perot visit.

Mr. CANNON. I did not perceive that, Mr. Chairman. I do not believe that I talked to anyone in the NSC at that time but General

Powell. But in terms of his candor with me and mine with him, I saw no confusion in the ranks on what they should do.

The CHAIRMAN. So you personally saw no problem in Ross Perot going down this track?

Mr. CANNON. This track means?

The CHAIRMAN. Going to Vietnam.

Mr. CANNON. No, I simply did not know that, Mr. Chairman. I thought there was a serious possibility that Mr. Perot, through his Vietnamese contacts, might assist the Government's operation in getting General Vessey or someone, some other team, into Vietnam to move these proceedings along.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, Mr. Cannon, do you see my confusion here? On the one hand we have Craig Fuller telling you that you should advise Ross Perot not to go. Not in the best interests of the United States. But on the other hand you have Ross Perot saying the NSC could not get in there, and you had no way of getting the Vessey appointment confirmed with the Vietnamese because they were not talking to anybody. They were not receiving anybody.

Senator BAKER. Mr. Chairman, I can maybe say a word about that. Once again, may I say this is speculation on my part, but it is based on my impressions. I do not think there is any confusion there. I think that the long and short of it is that Ross was a dedicated patriotic American who really believed that there were POW's and MIA's over there and thought he ought to be the negotiator. And the NSC and the President thought that Vessey ought to be the negotiator.

They had a difference on approach. The approach was, as far as I understand it, that Perot thought that perhaps if you did a few symbolic things like let the piano player tour and General Giap lecture the War College that it might produce a result. And the NSC and the President's position was if we are going to negotiate at all they have got to first make an accounting of our POW's and MIA's. It's an honest difference of opinion between patriotic men and women. But I don't see any confusion.

I think the difficulty that some of us saw was that perhaps that the Vietnamese might be confused, not that we'd be confused, and that if you had Perot and Vessey both working on it they might play them off against each other and wait for the highest bid. Now, that's my overall impression, and honestly, the impression is formed as much after the fact as it was before the fact. But I was there a long time and I know the people involved, and that is my general impression.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, I might add that the self-typed mem con of the Vice President with his conversation with Ross Perot seems to support the notion that Perot might have anticipated being the negotiator. Because it says, quote, in the Friday meeting at the UN my guys brought up Vessey as negotiator. This is the conversation with Perot. The Vice President quoting Perot as saying: I am glad to have Vessey substitute for me. I am very high on Vessey, as I have told you.

He is then quoted as saying: I suppose Craig told you that I am severing all ties with the Reagan administration. Did he mention the Reagan Library? The Vice President goes on to say I assured Ross that indeed Craig had filled me in.

Ross again repeated his concern about going as a private citizen. They would like to grab me as the ultimate hostage, quote. With no Government sponsorship he felt he would be fair game for kidnaping. Quote: All I ask is the name of the guy in the politburo. Howard Baker told me someone was over there right now negotiation. Parenthesis, some speculation it might be Childress.

So I take it that Ross Perot, apparently in the same conversation as discussing Vessey substituting for him, is discussing severing all ties with the Reagan administration and something about the Reagan Library. Are you familiar with that?

Senator BAKER. It certainly sounds that way. I am familiar with another development in that respect, but not about that. If you want me to go into that now, I'll be happy to do that.

The CHAIRMAN. Be delighted.

Senator BAKER. Later on, there was a request, I think through the NSC by Perot, to see the President and to bring Judge Clark, Bill Clark, with him, and maybe the First Lady, Nancy Reagan. And that came across my desk and I said no, we're not going to do that. Clark is chairman of the Reagan Library Foundation, and we're not going to mix that up in anything. I put the kibosh on that. I told them they could not do that. And I called Bill Clark and told him that I had denied the request for him and the First Lady to meet with Perot, if and when we set up a meeting with the President.

The President never, ever, intended this or anything else to mix fundraising for the Reagan Library with policy, by direction or implication. And it was in furtherance of that policy that I told Clark he could not come.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Cannon, can you help me understand, turning to two documents—this is a 3/21/87 memo at 3:40 p.m., tel con with Colin Powell.

Mr. CANNON. Yes, sir. I have it.

The CHAIRMAN. The first sentence, he has heard that Ross is making calls again. Are you with me? Same document?

Mr. CANNON. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. OK. Turning down to the third from the last bullet, this is a bullet that greatly concerns me. Is this your memo?

Mr. CANNON. No, sir. This is not my memo. This is Craig Fuller's memo.

The CHAIRMAN. You are familiar with it, though?

Mr. CANNON. I am.

The CHAIRMAN. In what context are you familiar with it?

Mr. CANNON. I am familiar with it because it was given me at the time, and it was one of several pieces of guidance that I was given as how I might deal with Mr. Perot and what I might say to him.

The CHAIRMAN. Did you have occasion to talk with Craig Fuller about these talking points?

Mr. CANNON. I do not remember that I did, and the cover note suggests that he sent them over to me and said he would be home that night if he could be of any help. I do not recall talking with him.

The CHAIRMAN. So this is Craig Fuller's tel con with Colin Powell.

Mr. CANNON. Right. Right.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, we should probably talk to Craig Fuller about it, but maybe you can help us understand. Let me quote the paragraph: We still believe that it is not wise for Ross to go. After 14 years, they have denied live Americans. If they were to produce live people, can you imagine what will be asked for?

Now, that is to me a remarkable reason not to have Ross Perot go.

Mr. CANNON. I simply don't know the answer to that, Mr. Chairman, because this was a conversation between Mr. Fuller and Mr. Powell.

The CHAIRMAN. But you would agree with me that it reads almost as if you do not want to find live people because of the consequence of what might go with it.

Mr. CANNON. I can see your point, Mr. Chairman, but I did not read it that way.

The CHAIRMAN. You have no understanding, then of what—the reason I asked you about this is this is in the packet that you gave us.

Mr. CANNON. I understand.

The CHAIRMAN. So I wanted to understand if you had any further understanding of this or any other contact with it, any other communication with either of the participants in it?

Senator BAKER. Mr. Chairman, could I say a word on that?

The CHAIRMAN. Absolutely, Senator Baker.

Senator BAKER. I have no personal knowledge of the mem con. But I know first hand that President Reagan was dedicated, painfully dedicated, to pursuing any lead that he could find on POW's and MIA's in Vietnam. I know that Frank Carlucci and Colin Powell spent a great deal of time on this subject and that I came to have great confidence in their judgment. I cannot imagine that there is any reluctance to find POW's and MIA's in Vietnam for any purpose that would be consistent with what I've just said.

The CHAIRMAN. It would be my absolute assumption, and I would not want to think otherwise, obviously, when a sentence like that appears in a memo it feeds the notions of people's worst suspicions about this issue, is all I am suggesting. And I think I would like—I am sure there is a clarification of it. I was just hoping we could try to get it now.

Senator McCAIN. Could I say I agree with the chairman's point. But I also think that Senator Baker's point is reinforced by the fact that the President approved of a military operation into Laos in 1981, which I think is certainly significant evidence of his commitment to trying to resolve the issue.

The CHAIRMAN. I can understand that. It may well be that this is said in the context only of Ross Perot visiting, that if Ross Perot turned something up what would they ask of Ross Perot. I mean there are a number of contexts, so I do not want to leave it hanging out there in a wrong context. But I was just wondering if you could help us understand that context.

Mr. CANNON. I had not focused to that extent on it until you mentioned it, Mr. Chairman, but it was then, there was no question in my mind, the strongest feeling that everyone in the White House—I had not talked to the President about it but I had heard

from Senator Baker and I knew from Craig Fuller and I may have talked with the Vice President, I am not sure, but I had seen his memos and I felt strongly that Colin Powell, that all involved in the White House would do anything and everything prudent and reasonable to find out if there were prisoners of war in Vietnam, and if so, do whatever we could to get them out.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me ask you, this will be a sort of last question for me, but I want to try to—one of the principal reasons for asking both of you gentlemen to be here today is to try understand the dynamics that were in the White House then and what the realities were of the Perot trip versus the realities of the administration policy. Perot alleges there was no policy. On the contrary, yesterday he agreed that the policy was not to give them anything, so the policy was not his policy but it was a policy.

Now, it appears, through the testimony of General Powell in his deposition, that there was, in fact, confusion, and that ultimately that had to be cleared up, which is why Ross Perot met with the President. The President basically said to Ross Perot, you have been terrific, we appreciate your participation, but we are going to handle it from here, thank you. And what led to that, and I want the record to try to be clear on that and need your help to understand it, is that as General Powell said, and this is a question from his deposition that was asked of him, once the officials in the administration began being concerned that Mr. Perot's policies and the administration policies were different, which officials were concerned about that. How high up did it go?

General Powell's answer: We became concerned in the NSC that we had a situation that was becoming difficult, if not intolerable. We could not keep this thing going, and particularly when he has on his own volition gone to Vietnam and how he represented himself once he got there. I am sure he probably gave the impression to the Vietnamese that he was acting in some official capacity. And so he then returns and he has a report that he wishes to give to the President and he wishes to see the President on this matter and is persistent in his desire to see the President.

This all comes together to suggest that we have got to clean this up once and for all, and we cannot allow this dual-track confusion to exist any longer.

Senator BAKER. Mr. Chairman, it is clear from your reading General Powell's deposition and from your summary on yesterday of the situation which I read in the newspaper, that indeed there was confusion but it was confusion by the Vietnamese. There was no confusion that I'm aware of within the White House administration. But it is obvious, I think, that if Perot had one set of ideas about how to settle the issue and the administration had another that the Vietnamese are going to go to the highest bidder. It might prolong the negotiations or, in fact, defeat them.

But once again, I think Ross Perot is a patriotic man who was really dedicated to trying to get them back and that he did more than the private citizen would be expected ever to do. He is a man of great resources, great intellect, and great patriotism. But the fact of the matter is he and the President had two different views of how best to get these people back, and the President is the President and finally you have to decide that. And that is what hap-

pened in the meeting that we arranged for the President to see Perot.

The CHAIRMAN. I might add that that is confirmed in the last question I asked of General Powell. The question was: The rationale for that was so the Vietnamese—i.e., the rationale for the meeting with Perot to tell him thank you was so the Vietnamese would not get a mixed signal and they could not pick and choose between the administration. And the answer of General Powell was everybody had a mixed signal. I mean, the whole thing was mixed up at that point. I assume everybody in Washington was curious as to who was doing what to whom, and it was also necessary that the President's emissary go without any other emissaries, Presidential or real or apparent or otherwise being around.

If you do that to somebody you are in negotiations with, you are giving them an opportunity to play people off. It was time to bring these proceedings to a close and let it be clear to the Vietnamese that General Vessey is our emissary, our emissary, he is speaking in the name of the administration, and the President is carrying that charter and Mr. Perot is not.

Do you concur with that?

Senator BAKER. It's a gratuitous remark for me to make, but I can't resist making it when I say that uncertainty about who was doing what to whom was not just in the foreign policy field. And when I got to the White House in March 1987, the first thing that I tasked the staff to do was to write a plan, a detailed plan, every day of the President's activities for 60 days and I asked the President to sign off. Because there was an impression abroad that things were loose from their moorings, and we had to change that. And obviously, that was an impression as well in the field of foreign policy that had to be brought to a head, as well, and that's exactly what Powell and Carlucci were recommending.

By the way, I have never known two greater public servants than Carlucci and Powell, and I think both of them are great. I think Colin Powell is a real national treasure. Frank Carlucci was a great Secretary of Defense, as well, but I have served with both of them and I confess to prejudice, but I think they were both extraordinary public servants.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, I think the committee will agree to that one, no question about it.

Just a final question if I can, Mr. Cannon, because I want the record to be fair and clear also with respect to Mr. Perot. While the White House felt that Mr. Perot was getting in the way, in terms of sending a mixed signal, it is fair, is it not, to say that he accomplished something in his visit that did allow the process to go forward, and I specifically refer to your memorandum to Senator Baker of April 12, 1987, in which you suggest some of the confusion in the first paragraph, but then say the following:

What is most important now is the broader issue, at this point in the broader issue, is that NSC or Defense concluded that General Vessey should go to Hanoi as senior negotiator. Perot has cleared the way for General Vessey's acceptance by the Vietnamese. So I recommend the following: You issue a press release, acknowledge that Perot has studied the issue and made a recommendation for the appointment of a senior negotiator, you have accepted the

Perot recommendation. And then you say to do so may cost something in personal sensitivities, acknowledging in an honest way, I think, what was happening here, but then suggesting it is the most expeditious way to get going.

So I think it helps us to sort of understand and bring this thing full circle, that there is an appropriate acknowledgement that notwithstanding the reluctance to have Perot go, he did wind up getting Vessey accepted, and subsequent to that Vessey and the process got going, is that fair?

Mr. CANNON. I think it is fair.

The CHAIRMAN. OK. Do you have anything to add to that, Senator Baker?

Senator BAKER. I don't think so, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Smith?

Senator SMITH. Senator Baker, I have reviewed your deposition, as well as that of Mr. Cannon, and I think you have been very candid in sharing what you have in terms of knowledge on this, which we are very grateful for, and I really do not have any questions for either of you. In the interests of time, I will be more than happy to yield to Senator McCain or back to the chair or whoever may have another question. But I do what to thank you for your candor and I share what you said regarding Carlucci and Powell, as well. I will put that on the record. They are two great men.

Senator MCCAIN. Senator Baker, I certainly welcome you and Mr. Cannon, and I express again my dismay at having to see sworn testimony, men of your character and integrity, and I understand why the committee has taken that policy. It is just unpleasant for me to have to see it. I say that personally, understanding committee's policy.

Senator Baker, I would suggest that if anybody knows about conspiracies, that it is you, sir. And I would just wonder if you had any personal views about the possibility of a conspiracy that I think would have had to have led if not to your level as the Chief of Staff, but certainly to the next level down in order to be successful. I think there is a possibility that that kind of thing could have been orchestrated concerning the POW/MIA issue.

Senator BAKER. Senator McCain, I think it would be utterly impossible for that to have occurred during the time I was there, not because I was there but because I daily saw the President and talked to him at length, saw first hand his concern about this issue. I talked daily to Carlucci, I talked to Powell every day, I talked to Schultz, I talked to Weinberger regularly, that was the top layer of the Government at the time. And you could not have had a conspiracy without involving these people, and if I have any ability to judge human nature at all, it's that these people are gravely concerned about this issue and they were trying to rationalize a policy to maximize our chance of discovering the truth, of getting people home if there were people there.

I cannot think of a single thing that suggests to me that there was a conspiracy of silence or an active conspiracy or any other kind of conspiracy. Now, I can only speak on the time I was there, but I say that with great conviction for the time I was there.

Senator MCCAIN. And also, Senator Baker, in your capacity as the Majority Leader in your very early involvement dating back to

the late sixties and involvement with the POW/MIA issue and your knowledge of, although not, certainly, intimate workings with the foreign policies of this country and that of other Governments, I think again it is well to point out, and if you would agree or disagree, the reality is until basically the Cold War began to end and the Soviet empire began to unravel, there was not a willingness on the part of the Vietnamese Government to be forthcoming and assist us in resolving this issue.

We hear, time after time, about our Government did not do this and our Government did not do that and our Government may have conspired, some of which may be true. There was a lack of attention to the issue, they would debunk live sightings, et cetera. The fact is during all those years, the Vietnamese Government could have resolved the issue that quickly because they had the information. They know whether Americans are alive or dead, and if so, if they are alive, which I continue to assume, where they are and how to get them back to the United States.

Senator BAKER. Senator, let me say that I've thought about that, both prior to the White House experience and later. I have a hunch, and it is just that, maybe the Vietnamese don't know either. Maybe they have confusion in their government. But, you know, the long and short of it is the war is over. And the Vietnamese need to understand that. It took us a long time in this country to realize the war was over, but I think we have done that and I think our scars are mostly healed. But I would not be surprised if theirs are still sort of open. And it may be they don't have total cooperation from their own officials or their own people.

So I really think that our end result ought to be to try to end the war, normalize a relationship between this country and Vietnam, but I don't think that we dare do that till we have exhausted every possibility of finding out if there are still live American prisoners or, for that matter, retrieving their remains if they are dead. We just can't do that. And it disserves the people of Vietnam and it disserves this country for them to hold out, as you say. And if they do have division within their own ranks in Vietnam, I sure hope that they will cure that and give us a chance to get on with the business at hand.

But in addition to the ultimate importance of finding out about our missing people, there is another importance, and that is trying to end the war and normalize relations between the United States and that country. So I don't know any reason why the Vietnamese don't cooperate fully. I don't know any reason why we don't continue to hold out every opportunity for them to do that, but I would not put the cart before the horse. I would not give them the goodie before I got the reward, before I found out what they know.

So I hope the Vietnamese, and you know, maybe CNN runs in Vietnam, but I would hope somebody in Vietnam would say, look, we're—there's an old Tennessee expression, you're cutting your nose off to spite your face. And what I mean by that and what that saying says is that they are doing things that hurt them a lot more than it hurts us. And I would hope that they would buckle down and convince us that there aren't any or tell us if there are or give us the assurance that we know all there is to know.

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

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator McCain. Senator Baker, I will just wrap up very quickly here. The letter that was written to you from Michael Deaver on 3/18/87, do you have that in front of you? Are you familiar with the letter?

Senator BAKER. I don't have it.

The CHAIRMAN. Have you had a chance to review it?

Senator BAKER. I am familiar with it, yes.

The CHAIRMAN. In that letter, Michael Deaver suggests in his last paragraph on the first page, he says that the heart of the problem according to my visitors—he was writing in response to people who came to visit him—is a standoff between our Nation and the Laotians and the Vietnamese. We refuse to negotiate with them until all missing Americans are accounted for, a policy that pervasively prevents negotiations concerning the release of Americans held prisoner.

He goes on to suggest a prominent American to be appointed to carry on the task of helping resolve this issue. And this is on March 18, 3 days before all the negotiations with Ross Perot and so forth. The logical candidate was former President Richard Nixon, and so forth. Was General Vessey meant to sort of fill the role that is defined in that letter in his appointment, or was it decided that there would be sort of a first tier effort at a slightly lower level and then see where things go. I mean, I just wondered what the evolution was.

Senator BAKER. I really can't tell you, Mr. Chairman. I remember the letter. I remember being surprised that it came to me instead of to the NSC. But then I remember that Mike Deaver and I have been friends for a long time, even before President Reagan was elected.

I don't remember that I turned it over to Powell or Carlucci, but almost certainly I would. Anything that came across my desk that involved them, invariably, I sent it to them.

Whether Vessey was the fulfillment of the Deaver recommendation in lieu of Nixon, I cannot tell you. I really just don't know. I'm sorry.

The CHAIRMAN. You have no recollection that you could share with the committee then about—well, let me strike that and ask it this way: Looking at this issue as you have, both as a member of this institution and also in the White House and just reading about it as a citizen and so forth, could you share with us any thoughts about where we find ourselves today, where the committee finds itself, where the country finds itself, and how you might measure our current policy against the need to try to resolve this quickly? Is there advice you would give us? Is there a sense that you might have of ways in which this might be tackled that we have not thought of?

Senator BAKER. You're right. I have been a lucky man in a lot of ways, Senator. I really have been all my life. But one of the great pieces of good luck was that I had a chance to see this Government up close and intimate from both a congressional standpoint and the White House. And believe me, it looks very different from each end

of Pennsylvania Avenue. But I don't have any particular advice for you.

I want to fully support what you are doing. The Congress has just two real constitutional duties. There are others but they're collateral. There are only two, really. One is to legislate and the other is to oversee the faithful performance of policy by the executive department. Sometimes, there is a tendency, I think, I observe, maybe even I am guilty of, when you are in Congress, try to want to substitute your judgment for the President's judgment, sort of be President. And when you are President, I can promise you, there is a tendency to believe that those folks don't know what they are doing and if they would just let us have our way everything would be great. Maybe it's the genius of the system that those two mind sets exist and you have to work them out.

But in the final analysis you have two duties here on the Hill. One is to legislate according to your best judgment, to set policy, and the other is to require diligently, regularly, and persistently, the faithful performance of that policy by the executive department. So when you asked me to testify I was not at all reluctant to do so. I appreciate what my friend John McCain said about taking the oath, but I have no reservation about that. You are in the fulfillment of a fundamental responsibility of this branch. And I have done a lot of things in my life, but the highest position I have ever attained, the greatest public reward I ever attained, was to be a Senator. So I am happy to be here to cooperate.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, thank you very much.

Additional questions?

[No response.]

The CHAIRMAN. I really want to thank you on behalf of the committee. I hope that it will not be necessary to come back to you with any followup questions. As I said to you, we would try to keep this as tight and truncated as possible. I think we really got to the heart of what we needed to understand with respect to the policy of Mr. Perot. It may be that on a couple of details we may need to get back to both of you. And obviously, we would appreciate your cooperation further in that regard.

You mentioned both General Powell and Secretary Carlucci as great public servants. I think we all feel that way about you, and a lot of us grew up watching your example here and appreciate enormously your continued cooperation and friendship to the effort here. So thank you for being with us today. You have also shared that tradition of public service.

We will adjourn these hearings until September, at which time we will continue with the Paris Peace talks. And subsequently, we will be looking at further intelligence data and fraud, as well as I think one or two other areas. But we are beginning the winddown, if you will, and I think the committee has a lot of background work to do over the course of the next 2 weeks.

So until September, we will adjourn the public hearings, and I thank you very much for being with us today.

We stand adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 2:07 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]