

REPORT OF THE CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION TRIP TO SOUTHEAST ASIA—AUGUST 3-11, 1991

FOREWORD

In March 1991, Congressman Pete Peterson and I began discussions which grew into a month-long fact-finding probe into the long-unresolved controversy over the fate of America's missing-in-action servicemen who are still unaccounted for more than 15 years after the Vietnam War. Our review and analysis led us to organize a Congressional delegation, unique in composition and mission.

We enlisted a bipartisan delegation marked not only by its members' common bond of military service in Vietnam, but by their open spirit of inquiry. As we began planning what was to be our first trip back to Vietnam since the war, each brought *longstanding* questions about the fate of fellow servicemen. Only weeks before our trip, the publication of a photograph of three individuals identified by family members as their long-missing loved ones provoked sharp reactions across the country.

Over the years, our country's views of the POW/MIA issue have been influenced by conflicting forces. The hopes of loved ones have been manipulated—by governments of the region, by profiteers, by sensationalists. Many have questioned our own government's role in resolving the POW/MIA dilemma. Was there a coverup, as some alleged? Has resolution of the issue been a real governmental priority? Was the failure to make more progress a symptom of mismanagement or incompetence? Was the secrecy which shrouded our government's efforts to gather information frustrating its aim of winning public understanding?

The announcement, in April 1991, that our Government would address the POW/MIA issue as part of a "roadmap" which would govern the pace and scope of any normalization of our relations with the government of Vietnam gave added focus to our agenda. Despite the State Department's apparent unwillingness to share the text of its roadmap with the CODEL, the Department and many government and nongovernment officials urged us to reinforce its message to those leaders we might meet in Vietnam and Cambodia.

Perhaps ironically, the roadmap fused two of the most haunting remnants of conflict in post World War II Southeast Asia—the genocidal devastation and civil war in Cambodia and the unresolved fate of America's missing in action.

We set out for Southeast Asia in August, therefore, to study all facets of the POW/MIA issue as well as the process of settlement of the civil war in Cambodia, both key elements of the roadmap. We did so on the premise that an "on-the-ground" analysis might be not only more telling, but that it might differ substantially from "findings" reached in Washington, D.C.

We framed our inquiry to focus on four subjects: (1) the intensity and effectiveness of our own government's efforts to resolve the POW/MIA issue; (2) the level of cooperation we are receiving from governments in Southeast Asia; (3) progress toward a comprehensive, lasting peace in Cambodia; and (4) the process for normalizing relations between our country and both Vietnam and Cambodia, and for moving toward full diplomatic relations with Laos.

This publication reflects our findings. It reflects the rich, diverse backgrounds of the members—experience in military service, foreign affairs, intelligence, international trade and economics, organization and management, and veterans' issues. Most importantly, it reflects the objectivity with which the CODEL members confronted the vexing questions they studied. Despite differences in their backgrounds, the members had a common commitment to conduct a studied, independent analysis of the issues. That open spirit of inquiry and the debt we owe to those who did not return from this war, as well as to the anguished families of the missing in action, have, in my view, forged a commitment far more compelling than party or philosophy of government. It is my hope, and that of the members of this delegation, that this report will help move us closer to the answers we all seek.

TOM CARPER.

INTRODUCTION

On August 3, 1991, a bipartisan group of members of the House of Representatives began an 8-day trip to Southeast Asia to complete an examination into the fate of servicemen unaccounted for in Southeast Asia; progress on the search for a satisfactory settlement of the civil war in Cambodia; and the process of improving and normalizing relations between the United States and Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, respectively. The delegation consisted of Representatives Carper, Peterson, Kolbe, Rhodes, Skaggs, and Gilchrest. The delegation met with officials of the Lao People's

Democratic Republic, the State of Cambodia, and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. The trip also included a series of en-route briefing and fact-finding sessions with Department of Defense officials at the Joint Casualty Resolution Center and the Central Identification Laboratory in Hawaii, and with State Department and Defense Intelligence Agency personnel at the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok, Thailand. (See attached schedule.)

This report incorporates current information furnished by officials of the countries we visited, as well as our own analysis and recommendations, based on extensive study, briefings, and observations. We hope this report will be helpful to the Congress as it is called upon to consider legislation or to review policies on the issues discussed. We take the liberty of directing this report as well to the Executive Branch in view of the paramount importance we, and, we believe, the American people, attach to these issues.

This delegation was privileged to travel to this region and study these issues at a critical point in time. We respectfully offer our views to those entrusted with responsibility to shape and execute national policy.

DISCUSSION

In sense, journey Southeast began before one our to Asia long we boarded our C-135 at Andrews Air Force Base. In some measure it began with our service in the Vietnam War more than 20 years ago, representing, as we do, the experience of Army and Marines on the ground, Navy in the air and inland waterways, and Air Force in the skies. This journey was a genuine quest for answers, and each of us had been seeking those answers long before this CODEL was conceived.

Our search had its roots in the Vietnam war, a conflict which shaped each of us as individuals, and from which each of us returned a stronger person.

Just as the war affected us as individuals, the conflict and its aftermath altered us as a nation. As a society, we have grown from that experience, and largely put the war behind us. We in the Congress have helped bring about that closure—through the establishment and funding of veterans' programs, the development of a framework for resolving claims based on "Agent Orange" exposure, and many other ways.

Vestiges of the war have continued to haunt us, however. None has had more troubling affect than the wrenching questions evoked by the letters "POW/MIA."

As veterans of the Vietnam War, we feel a special poignancy in the question—what happened to our missing in action? Grappling with that question as a group, though, has taken us in many directions. In this effort, we have re-walked paths a number of our colleagues in Congress had charted, reviewing their hearing records, reports, and studies. Over several weeks, we met with virtually every available expert—inside the U.S. government and out, from spokesmen for, to the most vigorous opponents of, Administration policy.

Pursuing questions methodically and analytically, we continued to confront voices of skepticism and distrust. Allegations of "government coverup" continue to find their way into a national debate which has come to be referred to as "the POW/MIA issue". Is there substance to the "conspiracy" theory? If not, how would one overcome such perceptions? "Travel to Southeast Asia, see things on the ground! You'll see all we're doing to get this issue behind us," we were told. However, we found the view on the ground in Southeast Asia almost as obscured as the view from Washington.

It is clear that resolving the POW/MIA issue is a matter of national policy. It is equally clear, however, that the policy has never had the "top" priority our chief executives have rhetorically assigned it.

We salute the many dedicated, talented professionals—linguists, anthropologists, forensic analysts, technicians, and others—who have devoted years, and often much of their professional working lives, to searching for hidden answers. We want to provide that acknowledgment because they seldom if ever win medals or public accolades for their painstaking work. Like so much of the work associated with this "highest national priority" it is a story that has never been fully told and thus not understood. Their work has helped to unravel the mystery for many families of missing servicemen, and ended years of doubt and uncertainty. They deserve the praise and admiration of all Americans for their selfless work under extraordinarily difficult conditions.

Policymaking

We have certainly seen considerable energy and a high level of U.S. Government concern devoted to POW/MIA matters in recent months. Over the years and up to the present, however, dedicated and focused central management, direction, and

consistent coordination of POW/MIA activities has seemed as much fortuitous as planned. This sweeping charge is not made lightly or without due regard to the complexity of the job.

Reluctantly, we have to question the leadership directing those efforts. We question whether, at the highest level, there has been the kind of ongoing, hands-on direction needed to carry out a compelling national priority.

It appears that policy on the POW/MIA issue is not set by any one single responsible official. Instead, policymaking regarding the POW/MIA issue is "coordinated" through an interagency body—the POW/MIA Interagency Group (IAG). That group's membership includes representatives of the Defense Department, the National Security Council staff, the State Department, the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) and the National League of POW/MIA Families. The IAG reportedly meets relatively infrequently.

We have not attempted to make any judgment regarding past decisions to use an interagency mechanism to carry out policymaking on this issue. But after evaluating existing arrangements, we believe a new direction is needed. In our view, more aggressive efforts must be taken to find any American servicemen who may still be alive in Southeast Asia, and to locate and identify remains of others. We do not believe an interagency coordinating group provides the best framework for carrying out this mission.

Such an effort requires more than simply "coordination." Indeed it may be that our government has been "coordinating" too long and not managing enough. In any event, we find no basis to believe that the IAG is—or could be—singlemindedly devoted to achieving the mission we believe must be established. By virtue of the composition, and the coordinating role it plays, the IAG's members necessarily owe their first loyalty to their parent organizations. As a result, it would appear that the MIA issue itself has become, or perhaps has always been, driven by competing interests, subordinate to and overshadowed by national security, diplomacy, protection of intelligence assets, and other government and private interests.

In examining the operation of the IAG as currently structured, we find no precedent for a representative of a nongovernmental organization, the National League of Families, participating as a member of a high-level governmental working group. It is of utmost importance that our government act with sensitivity to the families of those missing in action. That sensitivity should be balanced, however, with a sensitivity to distinctions between the grant of advisory authority and that of decision-making authority. It is not clear that such lines have been appropriately drawn here.

Priority

Our government has identified resolution of the POW/MIA issue as a high national priority. But it has not organized and managed that effort commensurate with its rhetoric. No administration has devoted to this issue the level of resources that would presumably attach to our "highest national priority." Even setting aside the rhetoric, our government has simply not done a good job of basic management.

We have not, it seems to us, identified with sufficient clarity and focus just what the POW/MIA mission is. Indeed there are different missions, and we question the assignment of priorities among them.

It remains our Government's view that it can not rule out the possibility that Americans missing in action remain alive in Southeast Asia. Our own visit, while providing no indication that any government is holding American prisoners of war, gave ample evidence of why the American public has come to doubt its own government's effort to resolve these questions. One must question the priority that has been given to finding these men.

Our Government's policy holds, in pertinent part, that "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." (Emphasis added.) It is noteworthy that the "cannot rule out the possibility" position was only adopted in 1987. From 1973 to 1987, the government position was that "no living MIA/POW's remained in Southeast Asia."

As to current policy, the precise meaning of the phrase "necessary priority" is not clear. Our own observations lead us to conclude, however, that our government's primary energies and resources—such as they are—are being devoted not to any aggressive effort to find the living, but instead to locating remains and accounting for the deceased. Since 1987, the method of search for live Americans has been essentially "reaction" rather than "action" oriented. More specifically, the search has been largely an exercise in *rejecting* evidence: disproving the validity of photographs and debunking reports of "live sightings", rather than aggressively trying to deter-

mine if they are *true*. The presumption seems to lie on the side of hoax and falsehood.

It is simplistic, and bordering on the evasive, for our Government to declare that "[o]nly the communist governments of Indochina know the answer." (See DOD's POW-MIA Factbook, July 1991.) One could infer from that statement that our own government is under no real obligation to act, let alone take heroic measures. In any case, the facts belie the "only they know" proposition. This DOD rhetoric ignores the fact that Laos, for example, is a desperately poor country whose infrastructure is so fragile that its major cities are not linked by a highway network. Travel from point to point may take 2 weeks. If one of the more than 500 pilots downed over Laos (only nine of whom were among those released in 1973 in Operation Homecoming) survived and fell into the hands of forces other than the Pathet Lao, for example, might he be alive today in one of the many remote parts of Laos not subject to the control of the central government? In terms of what is known and knowable, we have to consider that possibility seriously. Indeed knowledgeable U.S. Government officials found reason to believe that recently released photos, one set initially thought by some to be of Navy Lt. Daniel Borah and another strongly resembling Army Capt. Donald Carr, were taken in Laos. (Our delegation urged the Lao to give all possible assistance and access to U.S. efforts to investigate those cases. The Lao did follow through aggressively. That effort, however, led to the finding in the first case that the photos thought to be of Lt. Borah, compelling as they appeared to be, were not of an American.)

Organizational Structure

Just as the POW/MIA mission on which our Government is embarked appears to suffer from a lack of focus and misdirection of purpose, its execution is hampered by what could be characterized as a byzantine organizational arrangement.

After reviewing our Government's POW/MIA operations, we found ourselves asking the question, "who's in charge here?" One finds no satisfactory answer to that question. Indeed the answer seems to be "everyone", and, thus, "no one". Why that is so becomes readily apparent: the organizational landscape is crowded with different offices. These include a POW/MIA office in the Defense Intelligence Agency, the Joint Casualty Resolution Center (JCRC), the U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii (CILHI), the Special Presidential Emissary for POW/MIA; and the POW/MIA Interagency Group.

Certain responsibilities among these offices overlap. Each reports to a different authority. Information-sharing among them is uneven. Coordination among them appears to be a matter of practice, but is not organizationally assured. Some are dedicated exclusively to POW/MIA issues; others are subject to being diverted from that effort to address entirely unrelated responsibilities. Finally, the authority of the entity dedicated to coordinating policy on POW/MIA matters, the Interagency Group, is simply undefined.

The missions of the various offices and agencies with responsibilities for POW/MIA matters vary widely in scope. For example, the able Special Presidential Emissary, General Vessey, has a very narrow formal mission: resolution of 119 "discrepancy cases." Nevertheless, the perception in America and abroad is that this official heads the entire POW/MIA investigative effort. We can only speculate as to whether this is due to his identification as a Presidential representative, the high esteem in which General Vessey is held, or some other reason.

An effort to pinpoint the various offices involved in the POW/MIA issue, their respective missions, and their reporting arrangements is, frankly, confusing. What then, do the families of those missing in action, or the foreign governments whom we are pressing, make of it?

While we have concluded that no one is really "in charge" of the government's POW/MIA effort, the command structure of the organizational components of that effort suggests too that it is not a high profile, high priority effort. For example, what the Defense Department reports to be "the only government organization which has as its sole mission resolving the status of U.S. military and civilian personnel who remain unaccounted for as a result of the Southeast Asian conflict" (i.e. JCRC) is headed by a *lieutenant colonel*.

The services have signalled the priority *they* assign to the issue both in the ranks at which these command positions are maintained and in the manner they have been filled. Instead of a regular rotation of command and the new vision and incentives for mission success that go with it, the services have permitted officers to remain in command slots for as much as a decade. These positions have become truly "dead end" slots, due, apparently, to the priority placed on the mission. As such, they have not attracted the best managers and commanders.

The services should not be singled out for blame. If we are correct in believing that the services have not assigned POW/MIA operations a high priority, we are saying no more than that they reflect an attitude which has been prevalent in other parts of our government. And yet the relatively low ebb at which these operations are carried out is at shocking variance from the expectations of the American public, let alone the families of the missing. At its most basic level, the relative lack of priority means the work of our people in the field is seriously hampered by poor support. JCRC personnel working in the field, for example, asked our assistance to acquire ordinary field equipment.

We were all impressed with, and touched by, the dedication and sacrifice of the men and women working in the field in such demanding work as investigation and excavation. We certainly don't want this report to impugn those who have given so much of themselves to the POW/MIA effort or to denigrate the fine work they're doing. Our call is for more focused leadership, and better organization and management. To call for a more aggressive effort is not to characterize ongoing activities as unimportant. To the contrary, we are sensitive to the commitment and efforts of those who labor to excavate remains, to interview refugees, to track down live-sighting reports, to find archival records, to catalog endless fragments of information, and to piece together bone and dental remains.

What is clearly missing is a single high-level office with responsibility to manage resolution of POW/MIA affairs, armed with the recognized priority, resources, and sense of urgency to accelerate and amplify ongoing efforts.

Allegations of "Coverup"

In view of the many-faceted effort involved in compiling a full accounting of the fate of the missing-in-action, it is profoundly disturbing that a number of Americans still cling to notions of government "cover-up". While it should go without saying, it is clear to us that *our Government is not engaged in any conspiracy or "cover-up" on the POW/MIA issue.* Unfortunately, the government's mishandling of the issue—the lack of priority assigned to it and the organizational problems in the command structure—has provided grist for the mills of the conspiracy theorists.

Significantly, an aura of clandestine secretiveness surrounds the entire POW/MIA operation. It is difficult to disassociate that secretiveness from the perception that a government operating in darkness must have something more to hide than its sources of information. The need to weigh carefully the value of maintaining the confidentiality of sensitive information against the public's right to know takes on extraordinary significance in the context of POW/MIA affairs especially with all the misinformation and perception of government wrongdoing.

When Americans question whether they can trust their own government, as many do regarding the POW/MIA issue, we should take notice. But the secrecy surrounding its POW/MIA operation compounds the credibility problem our government has in claiming "this is an issue of the highest national priority."

We believe it's time to bring the POW/MIA issue as fully as possible out into the open. To demystify it, it is imperative that we declassify much of it. Communicating completely, objectively, communication is an important part of what is needed to win public and accurately is never an easy task for government. But such confidence that everything possible is being done to render a full accounting of the missing in action.

In urging that our Government take steps to restore public confidence, we also emphasize the importance of continued sensitivity to the depth and volatility of feeling on the POW/MIA issue. Some groups and individuals continue to charge that governments in Indochina are holding large numbers of Americans against their will. We have found no evidence to corroborate such charges. However, it is important that U.S. public officials avoid actions that would fuel such speculation.

Ultimately, we call on the government to assure not only that its efforts are as open as possible, but that its focus be clear and unequivocal. That focus must, *as a first priority*, be on finding any Americans who may still be alive in Southeast Asia. A prescription for aggressive action is needed. It is clear that time is running out—and future efforts will be measured against that reality.

Foreign Cooperation on POW/MIA Issues

In reviewing with U.S. officials the cooperation we are receiving from the governments in the region, it became apparent—just as is the case with other aspects of the issue—that only part of the story is "getting out". Rather than "stonewalling", as many have believed to be the case, we found that cooperation by these governments, *particularly Vietnam*, is improving. Of course, only a few years ago we confronted a very different attitude in the region. Those working in the Departments of Defense, State, and other tasked agencies deserve credit for their collective efforts

which have helped to bring the Vietnamese, particularly, to the current level of cooperation.

This is not to say that we should be satisfied with the *levels* of current cooperation. In fact, we pressed that point consistently in high-level meetings throughout this trip. This is an important message, and one that should be raised repeatedly in all our contacts with those governments. In fact, Vietnamese officials gave promises of even more cooperation and allocation of resources; these assurances should be tested quickly.

At the same time, recognition should be given to the cooperation and assistance we are receiving. It is ironic that our government should have diplomatic relations with Laos, a country which, until recently, has provided relatively limited assistance in POW/MIA matters despite the widespread view that most of the unanswered questions concerning the missing-in-action lie in Laos, while maintaining a trade embargo against, and diplomatically isolating, Vietnam, a country which has substantially increased its cooperation on a range of POW/MIA issues. The question must be raised whether beginning the process of normalization of relations with Vietnam and lifting the economic embargo is likely to enhance or diminish Vietnam's cooperation on POW/MIA issues.

By contrast, Laos, while *saying* the right things, has done less than Vietnam. Laos has agreed to a "one-year plan" for investigating crash sites. The U.S. has made proposals to the Laotians aimed at increasing the resources—materiel and personnel—devoted to these efforts. Our delegation urged Lao officials to do so. We do find noteworthy the support the Lao furnished U.S. investigators this summer, which ultimately produced disappointing findings in the case of photographs family members had identified as being of Navy Lt. Daniel Borah.

Laos, which has diplomatic relations with us, seeks to elevate relations to the ambassadorial level, and to win most-favored nation trading status. But the Laotian government clearly understands that future relations with the U.S. depend on improved cooperation on MIA issues.

It is important, however, that we not focus too narrowly in our efforts to secure the fullest possible cooperation overseas on POW/MIA matters. The Vietnam War, we know, saw many East bloc countries, from nearby China to far-off Cuba, lend support to the North Vietnamese. That support ranged from materiel assistance to stationing military advisers in-country. The effort to resolve the POW/MIA issue is ultimately a search for information, and we must seek that out wherever it may be. Indeed the radically changed or changing geopolitical climate in many of North Vietnam's former wartime allies suggests that the opportunity to secure cooperation and information from such governments may be greater now than perhaps ever before. We appreciate that the Department of State has pursued such inquiry with the Soviet Union, China, and other governments. We do not question the aggressiveness of that pursuit. We simply urge the Department to continue to explore these channels, consistent with the priority this search demands.

Vietnam

It is clear that all the countries in the region want improved relations with the United States. They realize that the Soviet Union, their former patron, has more pressing domestic concerns, and they are anxious to avoid domination by Japan or China. Voices in this country have urged our Government to forge a lasting trading relationship with Vietnam, a country which seems to be seeking to put enmity behind it. In our view, both nations could potentially benefit in the long term from a closer political and economic relationship.

Vietnam is a country of roughly 70 million people. It is noteworthy that that population has climbed substantially since the war's end and the country's unification in 1975 when, according to United Nations census data, the combined population of North and South Vietnam totalled 48 million. Also, that population is relatively young, with a median age of 20.9 years, and its labor force is estimated to number 35 million. Domestically, Vietnam has instituted major economic reforms which have begun to improve the quality of its people's lives. Still Vietnam remains a desperately poor country with dramatic needs for infrastructure improvement and for economic development. The U.S. can play a major role in that nation's economic "blossoming" or we can cede those opportunities to international competitors.

Our State Department's formula for the process of normalization with Vietnam is set out in a "roadmap" which ties normalization of diplomatic and economic relations to continued progress on POW/MIA efforts and to Vietnam's carrying out our policy goals for achievement of a Cambodian peace settlement. The "roadmap" concept can be helpful, in our view. And our Government must be prepared to honor it.

stated commitment to "immediately" proceed on the path toward normalization as soon as the conditions stipulated in the first phase of that understanding are met.

A roadmap can provide more than a single route to the destination, however. In other words, the "roadmap" should not become a "roadblock." While we see merit in conditioning full normalization of diplomatic and economic ties to certain actions by the Government of Vietnam, we believe that that government has taken steps which warrant our giving consideration to review and possible relaxation of certain aspects of our trade embargo. The relatively rapid progress toward a peace settlement in Cambodia also suggests the need to reassess the precise formula reflected in the "roadmap."

Vietnam's recent 7th Party Congress suggests both a continuing emphasis on market-based economic reform and a "tilt" toward China. These developments also suggest the value of a positive signal from the United States. Vietnam faces deep financial problems with the elimination of Soviet aid, and with Japanese and European companies poised to reap opportunities there for trade, our Government's posture ultimately may place U.S. firms at a competitive disadvantage.

In our view, a first step at least is warranted—to grant an exception to our country's trade embargo to permit telecommunications links between our countries. If we can re-establish telecommunications links with Iraq as we have recently done, we should do no less in Vietnam. It would appear that the bar to such links takes its heaviest toll not on the Government of Vietnam, but on our own Vietnamese-Americans, who are denied the means to speak with loved ones who remained behind as well as on U.S. personnel operating in Vietnam. A second element could be to eliminate the 25-mile travel restriction on Vietnamese officials working at the United Nations. We have called repeatedly on the Vietnamese to ease travel restrictions on U.S. officials and citizens traveling in that country. Our calls would be more credible if we eliminated what appears to be simply a punitive restriction. In that connection, it would be helpful for our Government to allow American businessmen to travel to Vietnam to explore commercial possibilities. Such a step, well short of actually conducting business, would also enhance search efforts by placing more American feet in-country and fostering more spontaneous travel to isolated regions. In taking such initial steps vis-a-vis Vietnam, however, it is important to avoid creating the perception that they represent elements of a quid pro quo. To that end, these steps could well be taken without fanfare or pronouncements; the message would be easily understood by the Vietnamese.

This delegation witnessed the promising working relationship which has developed between members of our POW/MIA office in Hanoi and their Vietnamese counterparts. The opening of that office, the access our people are getting to pertinent military archive materials, the Government's willingness to permit American officials to begin visiting prison facilities, and other actions taken in response to recent requests in connection with the publication of the "Robertson/Lundy/Stevens" photo, for example, are not insignificant acts. This is particularly so in light of the more hesitant and limited cooperation we have enjoyed in some of our dealings with the Lao.

Vietnamese officials characterize their cooperation in accounting for the fate of our missing-in-action as "humanitarian." Surely, it is in our interest to respond in a similarly humanitarian manner by opening telecommunications links. Although this step is currently contemplated only in the second phase of the "roadmap", favorable action at this time, reflecting some flexibility, seems appropriate.

Still, there is very credible evidence that, although Vietnam has turned over remains in the past, it continues to hold the remains of additional Americans. In discussions with Government officials, the delegation emphasized the importance of "unilaterally" returning recovered remains, and suggested that such action would benefit both of our countries. As the roadmap itself makes clear, the repatriation of remains in Vietnam's possession is an issue which must be resolved before we consider full normalization. In that regard, the Vietnamese can take still further action to repatriate remains. In our discussions, we requested the Vietnamese to institute appropriate steps to waive or alter laws which bar or inhibit Vietnamese citizens from bringing forward or identifying the whereabouts of remains of U.S. servicemen. While we obtained no commitment on this point, it is an issue we would urge our Government to pursue further.

Cambodia

We cannot overstate the importance to the region of achieving real peace in Cambodia. The "roadmap" is right, in our view, in calling on Vietnam to use its influence to press for a comprehensive peace settlement. The Cambodians themselves

have taken important steps in that direction. Here, too, our Government can reach its objectives along more than one road.

In our discussions, we urged Cambodian officials as well as the Vietnamese—who can play an important role—to work toward a comprehensive, lasting settlement. We pressed them to follow the general framework, if not the blueprint, of the Cambodian peace plan endorsed by the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council. There are certainly limits to the leverage which the Vietnamese can exert, particularly given the well-founded Cambodian concern that the formula for a settlement not provide any opening for the Khmer Rouge to seize power. Nevertheless, there appear to be common interests within Cambodia and in the region in achieving a comprehensive, lasting settlement which ensures the right of the Cambodian people to elect their own government and which protects against the return of a genocidal regime in Phnom Penh. Resumption of relations between China and Vietnam points in this direction.

Differences remain on the nature and extent of a U.N. role in disarming and demobilizing the armed forces of the warring factions. These differences stem from an enormous and justified mistrust of the motives and plans of the Khmer Rouge. While we have encouraged adherence to the U.N. plan, one should not be surprised to see the nations most affected—Cambodia, Vietnam, China, and Thailand—reach their own understanding. As long as such an understanding is comprehensive in scope, and guarantees the Cambodian people self-determination, while checking foreign interference in Cambodian internal affairs, we do not believe such an accommodation should adversely affect the process of normalization of relations between the United States and Vietnam.

Stability in this region is clearly linked to stability in Cambodia. With that perspective, we note that Cambodian peace talks continue to progress at a pace which gives a real basis for optimism.

Laos

Like Vietnam and Cambodia, Laos is clearly a state in transition. It is progressing methodically, with substantial economic reforms, to develop something closer to a free-market economy. The country has only recently adopted a new constitution. It is a country with great needs. Understandably, Laos' concerns vis-a-vis the United States occupy a relatively lower priority than those of many other nations. In regional terms, however, it should not be overlooked. Its peasant farmers' production of opium-producing poppies, alone, demands that it not escape our attention. And certainly our Justice Department's Drug Enforcement Agency has real concerns. Laos may also hold answers to the MIA riddle, given its rugged terrain over which more than 500 pilots were lost, only a handful of whom were among those released by Hanoi in 1973. One must also acknowledge the vast humanitarian needs facing this country. U.S. Government-provided humanitarian assistance, frankly, is meager in scope.

Until recently, the Lao have appeared to move warily to meet our urgings. Some ascribe this to culture, others to limited resources—materiel and human, others to the question "why should they?"

One need not have confidently answered that question, however, to conclude that our Government can and should do more in Laos.

Regional Issues and the United States

We welcome the State Department's efforts to link improvements in cooperation on POW/MIA developments to easing in our relationships with these countries. Our extensive travel throughout Indochina provided graphic evidence, however, of the poverty of this region, of the toll of decades of war, and of the need for humanitarian and technical assistance. Each of these countries remain fascinated with America and looks to us with hope. Each wants to put war behind it.

A common pattern of commitment to economic reform holds some promise for improving the lives of the peoples of the region, as well as for cementing better relations between these nations and their neighbors and with the West. The question can be raised whether beginning the process of normalization with the countries of Southeast Asia, especially Vietnam, would encourage or discourage economic reform. From our study, the answer appears to be that economic reform would be encouraged by beginning the process of normalization.

In considering the question of improved relations with these countries in the future, it is important to appreciate that these are all states in transition. We can only speculate on where that transition will ultimately take them. At this point in time, though, one finds striking the contrast between the spirit of economic reform manifest in each of these countries, on the one hand, and their apparent ideological

rigidity, on the other. The degree to which real political reforms take root will, of course, ultimately color the depth and nature of future relations with us.

There are other important issues to be considered—issues regarding the plight of Cambodian refugees, political detainees in Vietnam, humanitarian and discrimination issues related to the treatment of those who served with us in the South Vietnamese armed forces, and narcotics control and interdiction. We pressed the respective governments on these and other issues, and urge the State Department to continue to do so.

There is much that can be done in this region, perhaps in part by our Government and certainly by nongovernmental organizations. Solely by way of example, one opportunity for important work lies in the humanitarian program for Amerasian youngsters and family members who pass through a transit center in Vietnam on their way to the United States. Thousands more will pass through its doors. While this center provides housing, often for many months, only very rudimentary English instruction and sewing and jewelry-making classes are available to the in-transit residents. The scene cries out for assistance to arm these people with the language and employment skills for the difficult transition ahead.

The region has seen much suffering. And, its needs are great. But we also found reason for hope—in the domestic changes underway, in momentum for peace in Cambodia, in the search for a positive relationship with this country.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of our findings, discussed above, we believe that progress in both accounting for the fate of America's missing-in-action in the Vietnam War and moving toward a comprehensive peace settlement in Cambodia can be advanced by a number of actions on the part of our Government. Accordingly, and with due regard to the expertise in, and jurisdictional authority of, several committees of the Congress, we offer the following recommendations for appropriate executive and legislative consideration. We recommend that:

1. The U.S. Government clarify the priority it attaches to resolving the POW/MIA issue—which, we urge, reflect that it truly considers it a high priority—and that it allocate a commensurate level of resources to that effort;

2.(a) Responsibility for policy formulation, coordination, and operations be vested in the Secretary of Defense; and (b) that the POW/MIA Interagency Group be disbanded;

3. In carrying out such responsibility for POW/MIA affairs, the Secretary of Defense establish a single office—headed by a highly motivated and able officer of at least one star rank, such position to be rotated at appropriate intervals—to be in charge of all POW/MIA activities and to whom all elements carrying out those activities report;

4. The Secretary reorganize those elements carrying out POW/MIA activities, particularly JCRC and CILHI, to assure integration and uniform reporting within a single command structure; and immediately replace current incumbents in command/director positions who have served in that capacity for 5 or more years;

5. The Secretary take all possible steps, coordinating as necessary with other involved Departments, to accelerate efforts to achieve as full an accounting as possible of the fate of America's missing in action, to include such specific measures as:

(a) deploying in *Vietnam and Laos*, particularly, (rather than in Hawaii or Bangkok) such additional personnel as "are deemed to be needed to expand efforts currently carried out under the auspices of the JCRC and CILHI; pressing Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia for the right to assign such personnel for extended in-country stays of up to 6 months; and assigning certain of those personnel to work independently to clear landing zones near crash sites to reduce the time required by excavation teams to reach remote sites;

(b) strongly encouraging the governments of Vietnam and Laos to designate personnel for the United States to train to assist in our excavation efforts in those countries;

(c) pursuing aggressively an arrangement under which in-country teams can increase their access to excavation sites and the safety of such transportation (through negotiation to permit the use of U.S. helicopters and pilots, or in the alternative, arrangements for training Vietnamese, Lao, and Cambodian pilots to fly U.S. owned or leased helicopters which could be given to those governments upon completion of our Government's efforts;

(d) stimulating further cooperation from the governments of the region through increasing the school-building activities of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (through the Corps and possibly also through other Department assets such as Navy Seabee units) in Laos, and possibly replicating those efforts in Vietnam and Cambo-

dia, (consideration should also be given to such humanitarian assistance as construction of health clinics); and

(e) developing more reliable mechanisms for ground transportation of U.S. personnel in the field in Vietnam (to include consideration of deploying utility vehicles donated by the Japanese during the Persian Gulf crisis if they are readily available and could be serviced by dealers in Vietnam in lieu of the current practice of using vehicles which must be flown to Guam to be repaired);

6. The Secretary limit to an advisory role the involvement of nongovernment entities in the area of POW/MIA affairs, and that the Secretary consider establishing a Federal advisory committee through which such nongovernment entities might provide guidance;

7. The Secretary (a) review the classification procedures applicable to intelligence-gathering in POW/MIA affairs, and take all necessary measures to declassify information on, and gained through, such intelligence-gathering, to the maximum extent possible; and (b) strive to reduce the clandestine character of POW/MIA search activities (recognizing that that secretiveness may have more to do with the professional backgrounds of those assigned to such missions than to the requirements of the search itself);

8. The Secretary, after carrying out the above recommendations and any other actions to further efforts to provide as full an accounting as possible of the fate of those missing in action, *personally* communicate with the American people through electronic and print media, to the extent possible, to explain in full the means through which the Department is working to resolve the issue and the degree of success it has had, with the aim of enhancing public confidence in that process and minimizing the suspicions which have clouded that effort;

9. The Secretary, in coordination with the Secretary of State, develop a coordinated "master" plan for carrying out POW/MIA operations, which identifies the precise roles, responsibilities, and interaction of and among the respective Governments, agencies, and officials involved;

10. The Secretary prepare for the Special Presidential Emissary to Hanoi for POW/MIA Affairs (General Vessey) a follow-up list of additional compelling cases for resolution to be taken up upon completion of the original list of 119 "discrepancy cases" (with an eye to dispelling concerns that still more compelling cases were not included among the original 119);

11.* The Secretary of State consider—in light of both the progress already made toward realizing a comprehensive, lasting settlement of the civil war in Cambodia and actions taken by Vietnam—recommending to the President taking a first step or steps (consistent with the Secretary's assessment of the progress achieved) toward normalization of relations with Vietnam (to include our Government's carrying out the steps outlined in Phase I of the "roadmap"), and particularly toward recommending (a) the grant of an exception to the trade embargo to permit telecommunications links between the two countries, taking into account how that step is in our own country's best interest, its humanitarian significance, as well as Vietnam's substantial progress toward development of a market economy; and, (b) lifting the 25-mile travel ban on diplomats representing the Socialist Republic of Vietnam at the United Nations and easing the travel restrictions on officials of Vietnam and Cambodia who seek to visit the United States;

12. In light of the steps already taken by Vietnam, the Secretary—upon the signing of a Paris Conference/United Nations agreement on a Cambodian political settlement—begin immediately the process of normalizing relations with Vietnam as set forth in the April 1991 "roadmap", to include speedy action to facilitate telecommunication links as described in recommendation number 11, above; and

13. The Secretary of State consider any other steps within that official's control which might further U.S. Government efforts to hasten the process of obtaining as full an accounting as possible of the fate of America's missing in action as well as public confidence in that accounting, to include:

(a) determining whether provisions of Vietnamese law may deter or inhibit some Vietnamese citizens from relinquishing or identifying the whereabouts of remains of U.S. MIA's, and, if so, exploring with the Government of Vietnam legal remedies to encourage such citizens to return such remains to include consideration of our Government's instituting a policy of providing modest financial rewards in instances where the remains were subsequently identified as Americans; and

*The delegation recognizes that progress toward, and potentially imminent signing of, an agreement on a Cambodian political settlement may make this recommendation moot.

(b) coordinating with officials of the governments of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia to request their assistance in enabling family members of U.S. MIA's/POW's to move freely about those countries, and to encourage and facilitate the efforts of family members so interested to do so.

ITINERARY

Saturday, August 3

6:30 pm—7:30 pm: Briefing for members and staff by Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Ken Quinn at Andrews Air Force Base.

7:30 pm—7:45 pm: Press Conference at Andrews Air Force Base.

11pm: Depart Washington, DC for Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii.

Sunday, August 4

2 am: Arrive Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii.

Sleep

11 am—12 pm: Brunch with CINCPAC Rear Admiral Larry Vogt.

12 pm—1 pm: Briefing for members and staff by the Joint Casualty Resolution Center (JCRC) staff: Lt. Col. Joe Harvey (Commander, JCRC); Lt. Col. Roger Gaebel (Negotiations officer); Major Jim Moye (Operations Officer); LCDR Sharon Armour (Executive officer); Mr. Ray Spock (Casualty Data Division Officer); Captain Chad Pohlers (Senior Analyst) at JCRC, Barbers Point—Hawaii.

1 pm—2 pm: Briefing for members and staff by the U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory (CILHI) staff: Lt. Col. Johnnie Webb (Commander, CILHI); First Sergeant Richard Huston (First Sergeant); Captain William Hudson (operations Officer); Chief Warrant officer Michael Gosnell (Adjutant); Major Jimmie Schmidt (Odontologist); Mr. H. Thorne Helgesen (Lab Administrator); Dr. Kim Schneider (Anthropologist) at CILHI.

2:30 pm: Depart Hawaii for Bangkok, Thailand.

Tuesday, August 6

1 am: Arrive Bangkok, Thailand.

Sleep

8 am—9 am: Coffee for members and staff with the American Chamber of Commerce in Thailand at the Imperial Hotel: David Hendrix (County Corp. officer, Citibank N. SA.); Harold Vickery (Director of Vickery, Prapone, Pramuan & Worachai, ROP); Toby Marion (General Manager, Caltex Oil Thailand T,T'D); David Lyman (Partner of Tilleke & Gibbins ROP); Thomas Seale (Executive Director of the American Chamber of Commerce in Thailand); Kenneth Lambert (Chairman, KLPL Asia); Raymond Eaton (Chairman, Export Development Trading); Beth Krasna (Director, Krasna & Associates); Jerry Loupee (Managing Director, Himont Asia Pacific); Richard Blue (Representative, The Asia Foundation); David Copeland (Managing Director, Black & Veatch International); Douglas Gardner (Chief of Finance & Admin., Maekong Committee); Tom Olson (Country Manager, American President Lines); Jack Phillips (Resident Manager, Premier oil Pacific LTD); William Reinsch (Managing Director, Transpo International LTD); Annick Hemsin (Director, Tilleke & Gibbins Consultants LTD).

8 am—10:30 am: Working breakfast for members and staff with Deputy Chief of Mission Victor Tomaseth (US Embassy—Bangkok) and Special Assistant to the Ambassador Andre Sauvageot at the Imperial Hotel.

11 am—2 pm: Briefing and working lunch for members and staff with Major Frye and Colonel Kohl of JCRC and CILHI at the US Embassy—Bangkok (includes briefing for members only).

2 pm—3 pm: Briefing for members and staff by Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) staff: Glen Cooper and Don Stern at the US Embassy—Bangkok.

3:30 pm: Depart Bangkok, Thailand for Vientiane, Laos.

4:30 pm: Arrive Vientiane, Laos.

4:30 pm—6:30 pm: Briefing for members and staff by Charge D'Affaires Charlie Salmon at the US Embassy—Vientiane (including several embassy staff).

6:30 pm—10:30 pm: Reception and Dinner for members and staff with Charlie Salmon, US Embassy staff, and Lao officials (See attached list) at Charlie Salmon's Residence.

Wednesday, August 7

7:45 am—8:45 am: Working breakfast for members and staff with US experts assisting the government of Laos on economic reforms and UN representatives at Charlie Salmon's Residence.

9 am—10 am: Meeting for members and staff with Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Soubahn Srithirath of Laos.

10 am—11 am: Meeting for members and staff with Vice President of the National Assembly Thongsing Thamoavong of Laos.

11 am—12 pm: Meeting for members and staff with Foreign Minister Phoun Si-praseuth of Laos.

12 pm—1 pm: Meeting for members and staff with Minister of Foreign Economic Relations Phao Bounnaphonh of Laos.

1 pm: Depart Vientiane, Laos for Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

3:30 pm: Arrive Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

4:30 pm—6 pm: Meeting for members and staff with Foreign Minister Hor Nam Hong of Cambodia.

7 pm—10 pm: Meeting and Dinner for members and staff with Deputy Prime Minister Kong Som 01, Deputy Foreign Minister Long Visalo, Member of Parliament Dr. Abdul Xoyome, Member of Parliament Ms. Som Kim Suol, Deputy Director of the Department of Foreign Affairs Sim Suong, and Director of the Department of the America's Theam Chuny.

10 pm—11 pm: Press interviews.

Thursday, August 8

7 am: Depart Phnom Penh, Cambodia for Hanoi, Vietnam.

10:30 am: Arrive Hanoi.

12 pm—2 pm: Working Lunch and Briefing for members and staff with Bob Desattee, Researcher at US MIA office in Hanoi, at Boss Hotel.

2 pm—3 pm: Meeting for members and staff with Director of the Americas Department Mr. Dang Nghiem Bai at the Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (old French Governor's Palace), including Vietnamese Foreign ministry Officials.

3 pm—4 pm: Meeting for members and staff with Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach at the Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including Vietnamese Foreign Ministry officials.

Delegation split into two groups.

Group A: Reps. Carper, Kolbe, and Skaggs.

4 pm—6 pm: Visit to Prosthetics Center (AFMA Center) hosted by Director Dang Hanh Loc and Le Duc Loi (engineer).

Group B: Reps. Peterson and Gilchrest.

4 pm—6 pm: Visit former POW prison compound. Reps. Peterson and Gilchrest attended.

Delegation regroups

7 pm—10 pm: Dinner for members and staff at the Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs hosted by Mr. Dang Nghiem Bai and staff of the Americas Department.

Friday, August 9

8 am: Depart Hanoi for Ho Chi Minh City.

10:30 am: Arrive Ho Chi Minh City.

2 pm—3 pm: Visit to the Amerasian Transit Center for members and staff with ATC Director Mr. Le Van Thien and ATC Deputy Director Mr. Tuan.

3 pm—4 pm: Visit to the Orderly Departure Program for members and staff with Alison Krupnick (consul).

5 pm—6 pm: Meeting for members and staff with Vice Chairman of the People's Committee Pham Chanh Truc, Deputy Director of the Foreign Affairs office of HCPL City Huynh Ngoc An, Economic Advisor Nguyen Hau, at the residential palace.

Saturday, August 10

7 am: Depart Ho Chi Minh City for Da Hang.

9 am: Arrive Da Hang.

Delegation split into two groups.

Group A: Reps. Carper, Peterson, and Kolbe.

9 am—10 am: Visit with Vietnamese members of the 14th Joint U.S.-Vietnamese Excavation Team: Director Nguyen Dinh An, Ngo Van Tran, Doan Ngoc Dau, and Mai Quy Trung.

10 am—11 am: Visit with US and Vietnamese members of the 14th Joint US-Vietnamese Excavation Team: Investigation & Recovery Team Commander Bill Bell, Investigation Team Chief James Webb, Team Medic Garry Bolduc, Team Analyst Keith Flanagan, Team Analyst Stephen Thompson, Grave Recovery Specialist Randall Nash, and Grave Recovery Specialist Tommy Taylor.

Group B: Reps. Skaggs, Rhodes, and Gilchrest.

9 am—11 am: Tour of Da Hang.

Delegation regroups

11 am: Depart Da Hang for Hanoi.

1 pm: Arrive Hanoi.

2:30 pm: Meeting for members and staff with General Secretary, Vietnamese Communist Party, Do Muoi, including Foreign Ministry officials.

4:30 pm Depart Hanoi for Hawaii.

Cross international date line

Saturday, August 10

2 pm: Arrive Hawaii. Press Conference.

3 pm—5 pm: Discussion with CINCPAC General Fields and Major General Christmas.

Sunday, August 11

6 am: Depart Hawaii for Colorado (initial disembarkation) and for Washington, DC

BRIEFINGS RECEIVED IN PREPARATION FOR TRIP TO SOUTHEAST ASIA

The following meetings and briefings were held prior to departure for Southeast Asia, August 3, 1991:

July 22

Khenthong Nouanthasing, Second Secretary, Embassy of Laos

July 23

Jim Webb, former Secretary of the Navy

July 24

Bill Herod, Editor Indochina Digest, trade journal Robert Muller, -Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation

July 25

Rep. Lane Evans, who recently traveled to Vietnam General Vessey, -President's Special Emissary to Vietnam Marie Huhtala Acting Director, -Office of Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia affairs; Scot Marciel, Laotian Desk --Officer; Frank Light, Vietnamese Desk Officer; Department of State

July 29

Ann Mills Griffiths, National League of Families
Kien Pham, Special Assistant to Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs

Bob Sheets, Chief, Special Office for POW/MIA, Defense Intelligence Agency
Lionel Rosenblatt, President, Refugee International
Senator John McCain, who recently traveled to Southeast Asia
Gerritt Gong, Resident Scholar on Southeast Asia, Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS)

July 31 Allen Pell Crawford, Investigative Journalist, Washington Post

Bill Franke & Steve Hayes, 'Operation Smile', private humanitarian relief operation in Vietnam

Paul Mather, former Commander, Joint Casualty Resolution Center
Senator John Kerry, who recently traveled to Southeast Asia

Aug 1

Chris Lamb, Former Australian Ambassador to Burma and Thailand, now based in Washington

Jay Winik, National Defense University
Carl Ford, Assistant Secretary of Defense for East Asian & Pacific Affairs

Aug 1

Dick Cheney, Secretary of Defense

Captain Red McDaniel, Col. Mike Peck

Aug 3

Ken Quinn, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, who recently returned from Southeast Asia

The CHAIRMAN. Now there are obviously some instances of fraud here. They have been proven. It is clear that there is fraud.

Have you got any sense from the policy perspective of what, if anything, people are seeking to gain from a policy point of view by perpetrating fraudulent POW/MIA claims?

Mr. QUINN. I am really not familiar with the details of fraudulent POW/MIA claims.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, photographs were circulated which were asserted to represent POW's. And the photographs have been proven to be fraudulent.

So someone saw fit to offer up a photograph knowing full well that it came out of a Soviet magazine, for instance.

It is a hoax, right? What is the purpose of that hoax? Is the purpose to keep America angry at Vietnam? Is the purpose to stir up the water so that we will not normalize? Is the purpose, I mean, what is the purpose? What are they trying to do, make money?

Mr. QUINN. I think there are a lot of people who want to make money. I think it is hard to put, impute motives to what people are doing. But I think that there is no end as to what people will go to try and sell something if they think there is a buyer.

The CHAIRMAN. Have we ever bought any? I do not think anybody has paid for them, have we?

Mr. QUINN. Not that I know of.

The CHAIRMAN. So where is the money?

Mr. QUINN. I think the impression has been around, there have been stories that there have been rewards. There are stories about that in Vietnam and Cambodia and Laos that if you would provide POW/MIA materials or remains you might be able to get a visa. Certainly there are people, boat people, who have left with the mistaken belief that this could somehow help them get accepted for resettlement in the United States of America.

I think these kinds of rumors and myths have floated about in Vietnam and Cambodia. And it is like, you know, during the war there was always people trying to sell you bad intelligence, made up information. Some people are looking to ingratiate themselves. Some want to go the United States. Some may do it for motives that I could not understand. And others do it because they think there is money.

And if you are a middle man in Vietnam and you can convince somebody who is going to take off as a refugee or somebody in Cambodia who is heading for the Thai border that, look, you will be better off if you have something that looks like it POW/MIA information, they can probably sell that.

So I think there is no doubt that there is that type of activity that goes on.

The CHAIRMAN. Any other questions? Senator Smith.

Senator SMITH. There was an article about, I do not know, 3 months or 4 months ago, June, I think, in the Washington Times, as I recall, about a story that a former Pathet Lao general, General

Singaphou had allegedly had a discussion with two Americans from the embassy, is what the article said.

And that he had stated to them that Americans had survived and been captured in 1968 at the so-called Lima Site-85, which as far as I know from all of the briefings that I have had on it as far as we know that everybody died there. Did that come to your attention at all?

Mr. QUINN. Yes, sir, it did, Senator. And during my visit to Vientiane in July when I raised the Borah, Carr, Robertson, Stevens, and Lundy photos, I also brought up the subject of access to this general.

And at that time I obtained from the Lao government their agreement that they would provide us access to him.

Senator SMITH. And have we gotten that access?

Mr. QUINN. Yes, sir.

Senator SMITH. We have? We have spoken to General Singaphou? And if you can say it in open session, what was his response?

Mr. QUINN. I believe his response was that he was remote and distant from that operation at that time and that he did not have the specific information about it.

Senator SMITH. So he denied then that the had such a conversation?

Mr. QUINN. I am not sure if he denied having said that, but I think he denied that he had that kind of information that he knew to be true.

Senator SMITH. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator McCain.

Senator McCAIN. No more questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Are you aware of any rescue missions that were made to go into Vietnam to try to pull people out?

Mr. QUINN. By the U.S. Government?

The CHAIRMAN. Yes.

Mr. QUINN. Do you mean beyond the Songte raids?

The CHAIRMAN. Beyond the Songte raid.

Mr. QUINN. No, sir, not unilateral American. I do not think so. You are talking about, certainly, during the war I remember the stories.

The CHAIRMAN. No, since the war, during the 1980's.

Mr. QUINN. No, sir.

Senator McCAIN. U.S.-sponsored, he means.

The CHAIRMAN. U.S. Government or U.S.-sponsored rescue missions.

Mr. QUINN. I am not aware of any rescue missions.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Secretary, thank you.

We will leave the record open with respect to your testimony. There will be some questions that we will submit in writing and we would appreciate your answers thereto. And thank you very, very much for taking the time.

If I could ask Secretary Ford and Major Generals Ryan and Christmas if they would come forward please. Thank you, gentlemen, for your patience.

Senator SMITH. Mr. Chairman, I wonder if I could take a moment to clarify the record on the point that I made regarding the reason.

Staff indicates to me the reason why the document that we were referring to as the Gaines report was not provided here was because it was a classified document and should not have been provided. So that is the reason why the document was not here. And that is appropriate.

And as far as I know that document was turned over to staff and is in the room. Just because it is classified, I have not gone up to see it.

The CHAIRMAN. Gentlemen, could I ask you to rise? And if we could just go through the formalities.

[Witnesses sworn.]

The CHAIRMAN. We very much appreciate your patience. It has been a long day here and I think you are testifying again tomorrow. And I know you have a lot to do other than testify.

On the other hand, I think the testimony of each of you is terribly important for this process. And we are very appreciative of the time you have taken to be here.

Mr. Secretary, particularly I want to express appreciation to you. I think certainly since I have been front and center on this as Chairman of the committee and prior to that I have had nothing but cooperation from you. And I have appreciated it enormously. I think you have been forthcoming. You have been available to us. And you have indicated, and I think helped change significantly the relationship and the attitude with respect to this.

The committee appreciates that. And I think nothing will serve all of us better than to continue that and to have that kind of relationship here.

And so we begin, I think; on a very good footing. And I want to express the gratitude of the committee for that.

We welcome your opening statements and then we will proceed to ask questions.

STATEMENT OF CARL W. FORD, JR., PRINCIPAL DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

Mr. FORD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would, if you would allow me, just submit my written testimony for the record and make a few informal comments.

The CHAIRMAN. Without objection, your full statement will be placed in the record.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Ford follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CARL W. FORD, JR.

Mr. Chairman, Senator Smith, and other members of the Committee, I am pleased to appear before you today as a witness. Yours is an important task: to educate the American people about the POW/MIA issue; to provide legislative oversight for Executive Branch policy; and to review the process by which the POW/MIA issue is pursued and, hopefully, resolved. I welcome this opportunity to address the Committee, and provide you with an overview of Defense's efforts to resolve the POW/MIA issue. Our first commitment is to the families. We seek as a priority to end the uncertainty for thousands of families whose loved ones are still unaccounted for from all our nation's wars.

Let me first reaffirm the importance attached to the POW/MIA issue by the Department of Defense. Simply stated, resolution of the POW/MIA issue is one of highest national priority. This priority is fully supported by President Bush, Secretary Cheney, and General Powell. We have acted to implement this policy by press-

ing the governments of Indochina to expand POW/MIA operations. Until recently, the results have been meager. Over the past year, new promises of cooperation by the Indochina states have allowed us to increase the numbers of personnel dedicated to our effort. Our augmentation is now largely complete, having added 88 new people to the some 150 world-wide, who already work on the POW/MIA issue full-time.

Secretary Cheney has also recently created the position of Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for POW/MIA Affairs. This individual will provide a single point of leadership within the Pentagon for the POW/MIA issue. In addition to the DASD, Secretary Cheney has increased the staff from 3 to 14. This expansion was dictated largely by the increased scope of our operations in Southeast Asia. I would like to briefly describe our expanded operations, and then respond to your questions.

Live Sightings

Our most urgent priority is investigating whether or not live Americans are held against their will in Southeast Asia. The *live prisoner* issue has been at the forefront of our investigations. While the governments of Indochina have consistently denied that they are still holding American prisoners, their denials have not deterred us from pursuing the *live prisoner* issue directly on each and every occasion, and at all levels, with them for several years. We intend to keep the pressure on.

Although we have thus far been unable to prove that Americans are still detained against their will, information available to us precludes ruling out that possibility. Our assumption is that at least some Americans are still held captive. Should any report prove true, we will, as President Bush has pledged, take *decisive* action to return them home. We have a live-sighting investigator on the staff of our Hanoi Office, that I will discuss later, and we are hopeful that he will be granted free access by the Vietnamese to carry out his duties. To date, we have not reached complete agreement with the Vietnamese on the modalities of investigating live-sightings in Vietnam, but we are continuing to negotiate this important issue at every opportunity.

Investigating live-sightings reports will continue to be our first priority. We will dedicate all resources necessary to support this vital requirement just as we have with the photographs that have appeared prominently in the media this past summer. Unfortunately, during our investigations of the photographs, we have uncovered a number of fabricators. Although the time spent tracking down these low-lives is necessary, it detracts from the time we can spend investigating the many compelling cases in which there is the greatest likelihood that the serviceman may still be alive.

We are also plagued by a number of well intentioned, and not so well intentioned, part-time private investigators. The worst of this group traffic in reports obtained from unnamed sources in Southeast Asia, invite publicity to their claims of live Americans, promise great results, and often seek to raise money to keep their efforts going. It is also common practice for them to claim that their information is proof positive of government ineptitude and cover-up. In the process, they raise the expectations of the families desperate for any sign that a loved one is still alive. Unfortunately, when we investigate their we find no Americans, only unsubstantiated hearsay accounts, and too often signs of deceit and fabrication. Individuals who repeatedly provide false information, well intentioned or not, should be called to account for their actions. The families have suffered enough.

Vietnam

Over the past year, the Vietnamese have demonstrated increasing levels of cooperation in resolving the fates of Americans missing in Indochina. Increased access to Vietnam and Vietnamese wartime records is largely due to the personal efforts of the President's Special Emissary to Hanoi for POW/MIA Affairs, Gen. John Vessey, USA (Ret.). His persistence has allowed us to forge ahead at an accelerated pace. In April, he led an interagency delegation to meet with Foreign Minister Thach in Hanoi. At that meeting, General Vessey and Foreign Minister Thach agreed to establish a POW/MIA Office in Hanoi that would: conduct in-country investigations of reported first hand live-sightings; research historical records; conduct forensic review of jointly or unilaterally recovered remains; and conduct advance planning and execute joint field operations. On July 8, the U.S. POW/MIA Office opened in Hanoi with an initial staff of five. So far, the Office has been a success, providing a ready point of contact with the Vietnamese, and increasing communication between their officials and American POW/MIA specialists.

In September we completed the 14th Joint U.S.-Vietnam Field Investigation. This joint investigation was our most ambitious effort to date, and Vietnam's preparations and cooperation were improvements over past field investigations. Of signifi-

cance, the Vietnamese allowed our resident researcher access to contemporaneous wartime documents that addressed the specific incidents of several previously unaccounted for Americans. As a result of these efforts, we believe that we may be able to confirm the death of an additional five individuals. We are hopeful that the Vietnamese will provide access to similar records for other wartime military regions.

Despite these improvements, we are still not satisfied with Vietnam's performance. Vietnamese officials could do much more to assist our efforts. Too often our office finds that public pronouncements of increased cooperation by Hanoi do not produce satisfactory arrangements on the ground. Promises to cooperate on live-sightings, improved helicopter transportation, and complete access to historical records remain only partially fulfilled. Vietnam's foot dragging on the unilateral repatriation of remains is especially frustrating.

Laos

During early 1991, we conducted the first joint investigations of discrepancy cases involving Americans last known to be in Pathet Lao hands. Shortly thereafter, in May of this year, the U.S. and Lao agreed to an expanded plan for increased joint cooperation on POW/MIA and other humanitarian issues for the rest of 1991. Activities agreed upon include further joint investigations of discrepancy cases, small scale joint surveys and recoveries and joint crash site excavations. So far, we have conducted the first three activities under the expanded program. Actual Lao cooperation on the ground has not yet fully succeeded in implementing the promised schedule. For example, we have had to delay a field activity scheduled to start late this week until the Lao repair the helicopter that they had planned to dedicate to the mission. We believe that these shortcomings are more a function of limited resources and capabilities than a lack of commitment. In fact, they have been very cooperative on urgent investigations such as the purported Borah photograph. We have two major field operations planned before the end of this year, and I am hopeful that implementation will continue to improve rapidly and enable both countries to get back on track.

Border Cases

Approximately 85 percent of the losses in Laos occurred in areas under the control of Vietnamese forces during the war. Accounting for Americans lost in such areas must be a trilateral effort between the Lao, Vietnamese, and U.S. While field operations inside Laos will necessarily be bilateral U.S.-Lao activities, the success of such efforts will largely depend upon U.S.-Vietnam cooperation. The historic records and documents required must come from the Vietnamese. We have developed a plan to work on these difficult border cases and are planning to request a meeting with the Lao and Vietnamese in Hawaii this December to explain our proposals.

Cambodia

Phnom Penh has recently begun to cooperate with us in accounting for Americans missing in Cambodia. Since July, three investigative teams have traveled to Cambodia to follow-up on the photographs alleged to be of live American POW's. Their cooperation assisted our specialists in tracking down a number of what proved to be fraudulent photographs. Since July, we have also conducted two technical meetings with the Cambodians, the first such activity since Phnom Penh fell in 1975. Phnom Penh officials have also unilaterally returned remains that we hope will prove to be an American unaccounted for from the 1975 Mayaguez incident. We are hopeful that their cooperation will continue to improve.

Korea and the Cold War

In addition to our efforts in Indochina, we recognize that there are 8,177 Americans unaccounted for from the Korean War, and perhaps as many as several hundred missing as a result of Cold War incidents. Accounting for these men is also of concern. We will continue to press the appropriate Governments for the fullest possible accounting.

The North Koreans hold the answers to these 8,177 Americans, including 389 initially classified by their Services as prisoners of war. Negotiations with the North Koreans on this subject have been conducted by the United Nations Command Military Armistice Commission (UNCMAC). The UNCMAC acts on behalf of all 16 nations, as well as the Republic of Korea, whose men fought and died in defense of freedom in Korea. The North Koreans have proved unwilling to cooperate fully with the UNCMAC, preferring instead to have occasional discussions with our embassy officials in Beijing, and to use Congressional delegations to return a small number of American remains to U.S. control. With the help of Senator Smith, we are pursuing an alternative approach that we hope will be more successful.

In the past year, we have made several approaches to the Soviets to investigate whether they possess information on Americans lost in Cold War aircraft incidents. In some of these cases, our information suggests that crewmembers survived their incidents of loss. The Soviets, however, have repeatedly denied any knowledge of the fates of these individuals. In April, the Department of State sent a demarche to the Soviets regarding this issue. More recently, Secretary of State Baker raised the issue with his Soviet counterpart during the Moscow Summit. The Soviets pledged at that time to make relevant KGB records available to our specialists. We have sent a second demarche requesting access to the promised records. We have also raised the issue of Cold War losses with a delegation of Soviet and Russian veterans' groups when it visited my office last month. With their help, we hope to raise the consciousness of other veterans, and convince them that this issue is one of signal importance to the American people.

Recent Photographs

As the Committee is aware, there have been a number of photographs that have surfaced in the media, and which have been identified by family members as MIA's from the Vietnam war. We take each identification seriously, and will use our full resources to answer the questions raised by these photos. I would like to briefly give you a status report.

Colonel Robertson, Lieutenant Commander Stevens, and Major Lundy

The first photograph to appear in the media this summer—identified by family members as depicting Colonel Robertson, Lieutenant Commander Stevens, and Major Lundy has proven difficult to investigate. No one has claimed to have seen any of the individuals pictured. The associated reporting, except for limited biographic data widely circulated by POW/MIA activists in Southeast Asia, has also proven false. In addition, our photographic experts indicate that the photograph has been altered. The alteration is similar to changes made to five other purported POW photos that we have proven to be hoaxes. The identifications by the families are the only positive information we possess. We are continuing our investigation, however, the information available to us strongly suggests that two of the individuals allegedly pictured perished at the time of their loss incidents. In the absence of additional reporting, we may not be able to resolve this case.

LT Daniel V. Borah

A photograph taken in Laos surfaced earlier this year that was identified by family members as LT Borah. In addition, a forensic anthropologist positively identified the person in the photo as LT Borah. With the help of Laotian officials our investigators were able to locate the individual who turned out to be a 77-year old Lao highland tribesman. The man was interviewed, photographed, and fingerprinted. He identified himself in the photo, as did a second individual who also appeared in the picture. Family members who want to see the tribesman for themselves will leave in a few days for Southeast Asia. They will be accompanied by our investigator who first interviewed and photographed the man in Laos.

CPT Donald G. Carr

The case of CPT Carr is quite compelling because of the remarkable likeness between the 1989-1990 photograph we obtained from Colonel Jack Bailey, USAF (Ret.), and CPT Carr's wedding picture. Secretary Cheney met with Colonel Bailey on 8 October. During the meeting Colonel Bailey promised that he would give our investigators access to his subsources, and introduce us to the individual who took the photograph. Accordingly, I dispatched a Department of Defense team to accompany Colonel Bailey to Southeast Asia. Unfortunately, after a week in Bangkok, Colonel Bailey was unable to provide the access or information he had promised. He also disclosed that the photograph—instead of having been taken in Laos as he previously indicated—may actually be taken in Burma or Thailand. Despite this setback, we continue to apply all our available resources to locating the individual pictured in the photograph.

USG Commitment

The Department of Defense is firmly committed to achieving the fullest possible accounting for missing Americans from all our nation's wars. You would be hard pressed to find a group of individuals more dedicated to the task of resolving the fates of our POW/MIA's than those who currently work on this issue. They work long and hard, often in primitive field conditions, to learn the facts about our missing in action. It is thankless work, but work that our teams enthusiastically undertake. You will have an opportunity to talk to three of these individuals later in the

hearing. I am sure you will discover first hand why we are so proud of the people that work this issue.

In a few minutes General Christmas will outline one of the newest signs of our commitment to this issue—the establishment of a Joint Task Force in our Pacific Command, to focus and expand our field investigations. Given the opportunities provided by the Indochinese governments, the task force will bring a new intensity to our operations. We now have the staff and expertise available to move forward as quickly as the Indochinese governments will allow. The ball is in their court.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. FORD. You have been very patient while my colleagues from the administration read their statements. It has been a long day and I think that I will not do that to you or to any of those who may be listening.

I would like to comment about the issue of manpower. And why all of a sudden have we increased the size and character of our effort? And at least try to put some perspective on it from where I sit since I was one of those who was recommending some of the changes, both organizationally and in manpower.

I think that it is important for you to understand and recognize how difficult it's been all these years for my predecessors to get cooperation from the Vietnamese, the Lao, and the Cambodians. General Vessey and others have done an outstanding service for our country, but one which has been frustrating and difficult to say the least.

Because of the lack of cooperation and because of the, the best way I can describe it, the political manipulation of this issue by Vietnam, and to a certain extent Laos, there was a limit to what we could do beyond looking at the intelligence and, when they would allow us, sending a few people in, our specialists, to operate on the ground.

In the last year and a half things have begun to change. A good part of the credit has to go to General Vessey and his persistence in pushing the Vietnamese. Others of us have also been pushing equally hard, we hope, on the Lao. So that is has begun to pay off a little bit. It also is quite clear to the Vietnamese and the Lao that they want something from us. So it has been in their interest to be more cooperative.

But the first instance that I know of in which the issue of manpower, for example, came up was in the period of February-March of this year. It was in a discussion and the Secretary agreed in principle, that yes, we did need to reorganize; yes we do need to increase our capabilities in anticipation of opening an office in Hanoi and to take advantage of what appeared to be real cooperative efforts on the part of the Vietnamese.

So I just point out it happened before Colonel Peck was reassigned. The Secretary was aware of Colonel Peck's concerns and his charges. And it was certainly well before all of the attention that was paid this past summer to the photographs. And, in fact, the outline of those proposals back in February-March, and I don't remember the exact date, really haven't changed all that much.

So the other question that was asked was: Is this a new issue? That's why the Secretary, for example, was asked, is it something that he did after many of these issues were becoming more public. The fact is that he authorized an aircraft and a team to go into

Vietnam in the fall of 1990, again long before these issues were as public as they've become.

So his charter to me has always been err on the side of if there's any chance at all that there might be an American alive, don't spare any resources, don't hesitate, let's go do it. So this is not something that is new or different about his approach.

And every time I've asked him for resources or asked him for his personal intervention, he has always said yes. So I just wanted to indicate that these issues have been something that are not just new views of his or views of the Defense Department.

I would also like to just briefly comment on the composition of this panel. Clearly there is a past to this issue, but there is also a future. And I am more representing the past, but hopefully transitioning into the future.

And my colleagues from the JCS, General Ryan, and from CINCPAC, General Christmas, are the future, at least in terms of the implementation of this issue. And one that I think that if you put together with the point man in the Pentagon, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for POW/MIA Affairs that the Secretary has agreed to, and if you then consider the military aspect of this and implementing it out in the field, representing by General Ryan and General Christmas and tomorrow some of our most important assets, the people who actually work out in the field, I think that you will see, we hope to be able to tell you not just about all the things that we've done wrong, and clearly as the Secretary said, as you noted, for anybody from the administration, this one or any past administration, to get up and say that we've done everything right on POW/MIA over this almost 19 years, one is just flat wrong and there is absolutely no way we can walk away from the problems that we've had.

We've done a lot of good things. We've had a lot of dedicated people working this issue from the beginning, but we have made errors. We have not always done it the way we wanted to. And I can't speak for my predecessors, but I can speak for myself and my tenure of the past 2-1/2 years, we haven't always done everything like we would want to. But we're trying to improve.

And I have hopes that, one, we didn't lose our credibility with you, with the families, with the American people overnight. And we're not going to gain that credibility back overnight. And I can sit here and I can tell you about what we're going to do and I can talk about it. The only thing that is going to persuade people is our actions and our results. And to prove over time that we are serious, that we do mean what we say. And that despite occasional setbacks, despite occasional human errors, we are going to demonstrate over the next months, weeks, years that we can do it better than we have done it in the past. And that's our only commitment, to try. And if there are problems that this committee uncovers, we'll try to fix them.

I hope that you also when you find good things, particularly about the people in the field who, far from the limelight, far from the excitement of Washington, are on a daily basis out there slugging it out, oftentimes in very primitive conditions. And you've got three representatives of that large group and I think three good representatives. And I hope that your visits to the region, your dis-

cussions with these people, you can also say some good things about them.

It's hard to keep doing your job day after day when you hear nothing but coverup and how badly you do it. Despite all of that, every personal experience I've had with them makes me very proud that, one, they work for DOD, and two, that they're working on this problem.

Let me stop there and turn to my colleague, General Christmas, who does have some testimony that'll be an expansion of what the Secretary said about what CINCPAC will be doing in the future.

The CHAIRMAN. General, before you pick up, I would just like to say that I think your impromptu remarks are as forceful as any prepared or other remarks that I have heard, and my only regret is that more of the writing media who were here this morning for the Secretary are not also picking up on the essence of what you have just said, because I think it is terribly important, and the committee accepts the statement.

I think to be able to say, look, we have made some mistakes, there have been some problems, and to sit there and say, we have got a credibility problem is almost half the battle. The other half is obviously to resolve the question of how we got there and we are going to try to do that.

The second thing I want to say is, I could not agree with you more about the people in the field, and I have personally insisted that we bring some of them back. I know it is a pain in the rear end for them to come that distance and to leave what they are doing, but I happen to believe that they are heroes in the best sense of the word. I think that Americans need to know how many years people have been out there in the field in some mighty dangerous, sweaty circumstances, jumping on helicopters that most of us would hold our breath going near, and going out into the jungle and doing this.

I think it is an extraordinary story and that is why we are going to lead off with it tomorrow morning, because I want people to get the essence of this effort over the years. While there have been faults, while there were problems, while there may be information that should have been forthcoming that has not been and we do not know all the whys and wherefores of that, the fact remains that there have been some awfully good people out in the field working to get answers. I think people need to have a balanced view of this, so I appreciate that and your comments, and I think the committee accepts them as stated. General.

STATEMENT OF MAJ. GEN. GEORGE R. CHRISTMAS, DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS (J-3), U.S. PACIFIC COMMAND

General CHRISTMAS. Senator Kerry, Senator Smith, Senator McCain, I welcome this opportunity to appear before your committee today. Like you, those of us on active duty today are deeply committed to finding the answers to the questions surrounding Americans unaccounted-for in Southeast Asia. We have a solemn obligation to our fallen comrades and to their families to resolve this vexing issue once and for all.

Having served as a commander in combat, and later as a project officer for the designation and entombment of the Vietnam unknown soldier, I have a particularly strong sense of obligation in this regard. Moreover, as the director of operations for the U.S. Pacific Command, I am responsible for directing the activities of the POW/MIA search teams. I would like to present to you the Pacific Command's views on the state of the POW/MIA issue.

Specifically, I will discuss the recent developments in the region and the initiatives the Command has undertaken to respond to them. Perhaps at no other time have the opportunities to dramatically expand and accelerate casualty resolution operations in the region been so great. We have established the POW/MIA Affairs Office in Hanoi, and the Vietnamese are affording the staff and our search teams good cooperation. The mission of the Hanoi office is to conduct in-country investigations of reported first-hand live sightings, to research historical and archival records, to conduct forensic review of remains jointly recovered or unilaterally made available by the Vietnamese, and to conduct advance planning and prepare and execute joint field operations.

During the most recent round of investigative activities, our teams were given increased access to Hanoi's wartime archives—an action which we have long urged the Vietnamese to undertake. We think the Vietnamese, however, can do more, particularly with regard to the disclosure of all relevant wartime documents, access to former cadre who were involved in the capture and detention of American prisoners, and turnover of remains recovered unilaterally.

Naturally, we will continue to pursue greater disclosure, access, and their unilateral efforts through the Hanoi office each time we conduct the technical meeting, similar to the one we conducted this past week.

In Cambodia, the Phnom Penh authorities last month permitted for the first time an American survey team to investigate the circumstances of loss involving missing American servicemen and news correspondents. This followed closely their assistance to our investigators who traveled to Cambodia to follow up widely publicized photographs identified by family members as Americans unaccounted-for in Southeast Asia. While it is too early to tell whether the Cambodians will sustain a cooperative relationship on POW/MIA's, we were satisfied with these initial efforts and are prepared to follow up on their future breakthroughs.

In Laos, we are hopeful the authorities there will follow through on their agreement to engage in a year-round effort to investigate cases of Americans who were known to have been held captive by Pathet Lao forces and to recover the remains of those killed in action. We were pleased to learn last month that the Lao Government has made additional people available to work with our joint teams. The Lao had previously cited a lack of personnel as a reason for the modest level of field activities which they had permitted over the last several months.

The Pacific Command, in conjunction with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Department of Defense, has moved quickly to capitalize on the favorable climate of cooperation in Vietnam. We plan to execute a comprehensive casualty resolution campaign on a scale

which the Department of Defense has wanted to carry out since the signing of the Paris Accords in 1973, but could not because of Vietnam's intransigence. To execute this plan, we are fielding additional search teams and putting in place other necessary resources.

Our plan is focused on investigative activities to determine whether unaccounted-for Americans are alive. Using the staff of our Hanoi POW/MIA Office, soon to be a detachment of the joint task force organization I will describe shortly, and mobile field teams, we will follow up aggressively on reports of Americans alleged to be alive in Vietnam and investigate discrepancy cases, those compelling loss incidents which suggest a missing American was captured, but the Vietnamese have returned neither the person nor his remains.

We have singled out these cases for priority investigation because if there are Americans alive, they are most likely associated with these losses. To execute this priority investigative activity, we will expand the staff of our Hanoi office and task the staff to carry out full-time investigation of these cases. If we can resolve these cases, we will have done much to shed light on the live prisoner issue.

We see opportunities to recover concurrently the remains of the known war dead. For example, as our search teams investigate the cases of MIA's who were last known alive, they will attempt to resolve other losses in geographic proximity to these cases. In general though, we view the recovery effort as a long-term process which would begin only after we have resolved the live prisoner issue.

Now that the Cambodians are cooperating, and in anticipation that the Lao will increase their cooperation, our staff is developing plans for POW/MIA operations for those countries as well. As with Vietnam, we will give priority to those activities which will shed light on the issue of living Americans. As part of this effort, we hope to soon establish POW/MIA detachments in both Phnom Penh and Vientiane.

The Pacific Command will execute the operations specified in these plans by employing a two-tiered concept. First, a joint task force, or a JTF, will be established which will integrate POW/MIA operations and support functions under a single commander, a brigadier general. This officer will have responsibility for the entire mission of searching for MIA's and recovering the remains of war dead in Southeast Asia, a mission for which heretofore a number of agencies have shared responsibility.

Second, the Joint Task Force Commander will report directly to the Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific Command who, in turn, will respond to taskings from the Secretary of Defense through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

I would like to elaborate for a minute on how this two-tiered concept with its unity of command will work. As POW/MIA policy is formulated here in Washington, the Joint Chiefs of Staff will communicate guidance and operational taskings to the Joint Task Force commander via the Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific Command. The theater commander and the theater command will then make available to the Joint Task Force the necessary resources and expertise available within the Pacific Command headquarters and the theater's service components to execute these operations.

For example, if the Joint Task Force commander needs helicopters to ferry his search teams to remote locations, aviation units will be tasked to provide this support. Now, Senators, in this particular example I must point out that the Southeast Asian governments will have to agree to the employment of these assets in their countries. In planning and executing the operations, the Joint Task Force commander will direct the activities of the POW/MIA detachment based in Hanoi, as well as the other detachments when approved.

So as you can see, by establishing the Joint Task Force and employing our command and control concept, we will have forged a direct line of authority which will run from Washington all the way down to detachment commanders in the field, giving them the necessary assets that they need to accomplish their mission. The Pacific Command headquarters staff and the subordinate service components are currently looking at additional ways to improve logistics and communications support to the search teams and the Hanoi detachment. These were areas over which congressional observers recently expressed concern and, I might say, rightfully so.

We have procured or are in the process of procuring equipment ranging from ponchos to sophisticated radio communications gear. We have looked at ways to provide sustained, cost-effective vehicle operations and maintenance for the search teams and will soon initiate procurement actions, which will alleviate shortfalls in this area. Meanwhile, the staff of the U.S. Army Pacific Command has prepared a concept of operations for providing helicopter support to the JTF teams, should the Southeast Asian governments allow their use.

The JTF will not be a paper organization. On July 30, the Secretary of Defense authorized a substantial increase in personnel who will come under the Joint Task Force. The Joint Casualty Resolution Center, whose personnel will form the operations nucleus, will double to 76. These increases are earmarked for the actual search effort on the ground. Highly-skilled linguists and analysts are being assigned so that we can put more teams on the ground for longer periods of time. We will ensure the work of these teams is made known to the families and to the American public. To the extent possible, we will give the media every opportunity to cover our activities, and in keeping with our longstanding practice, we will notify expeditiously the families on the results of our investigations and recovery operations through the established Service Casualty Affairs channel.

We have nothing to hide. To the contrary, we are most anxious to tell the American public of the dedication of our people in the hard, often dangerous work that they perform, and that you have alluded to, sir. The Pacific Command is moving quickly to put the right organization, people and resources in place to expand and accelerate POW/MIA operations in Southeast Asia. Our outline plan has been approved by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. We are currently developing a detailed operations plan which will be submitted through the Chairman to the Secretary of Defense for final approval. Once approved, the Chairman will direct that we execute the plan.

Given the favorable climate of cooperation in Southeast Asia, I am confident we will make substantial progress in the weeks and months ahead. I look forward to the committee's visit to our field locations so that you, again, can see first-hand the results of our efforts to illuminate the live prisoner issue and move deliberately toward achieving the fullest possible accounting of all missing Americans. Thank you, sir.

[The prepared statement of Major General Christmas follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MAJ. GEN. GEORGE R. CHRISTMAS

Senator Kerry, Senator Smith, and distinguished members, I welcome this opportunity to appear before your committee. Like you, those of us on active duty today are deeply committed to finding the answers to the questions surrounding Americans unaccounted for in Southeast Asia. We have a solemn obligation to our fallen comrades and their families to resolve this vexing issue once and for all.

Having served as a commander in combat and later as the project officer for the designation and entombment of the Vietnam unknown soldier, I have a particularly strong sense of obligation in this regard. Moreover, as the director of operations for the U.S. Pacific Command, I am responsible for directing the activities of the Command's POW/MIA search teams.

I would like to present to you the Pacific Command's views on the state of the POW/MIA issue. Specifically, I'll discuss the recent developments in the region and the initiatives which the Command has undertaken in response to them.

Perhaps at no other time have the opportunities to dramatically expand and accelerate casualty resolution operations in the region been so great. We have established a POW/MIA Affairs Office in Hanoi and the Vietnamese are affording its staff and our search teams good cooperation. The mission of the Hanoi office is to conduct in-country investigations of reported first-hand live sightings, to research historical and archival records, conduct forensic review of remains jointly recovered or unilaterally made available by the Vietnamese, and to conduct advance planning and prepare and execute joint field operations. During the most recent round of investigative activities, our teams were given increased access to Hanoi's wartime archives—an action which we have long urged the Vietnamese to undertake.

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Naturally we will continue to pursue greater disclosure, access, and their unilateral efforts through the Hanoi office and each time we conduct a technical meeting similar to the one held last week. (30 Oct.-1 Nov.)

In Cambodia, the Phnom Penh authorities last month permitted, for the first time, an American survey team to investigate the circumstances of loss involving missing American servicemen and news correspondents. This followed closely their assistance to our investigators who traveled to Cambodia to follow-up widely publicized photographs identified by family members as Americans unaccounted for in Southeast Asia. While it is too early to tell whether the Cambodians will sustain a cooperative relationship on POW/MIA, we were satisfied with these initial efforts and are prepared to follow-up on future breakthroughs.

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The Pacific Command, in conjunction with the Joint Staff and the Department of Defense, has moved quickly to capitalize on this favorable climate of cooperation, in Vietnam. We plan to execute a comprehensive casualty resolution campaign on a scale which the Department of Defense has wanted to carry out since the signing of the Paris Accords in 1973, but couldn't because of Vietnam's intransigence. To execute this plan, we are fielding additional search teams and putting in place other necessary resources.

Our plan is focused on investigative activities to determine whether unaccounted for Americans are alive. Using the staff of our Hanoi POW/MIA office, soon to be a

detachment of the joint task force organization I will describe shortly, and mobile field teams, we will follow-up aggressively on reports of Americans alleged to be alive in Vietnam and investigate discrepancy cases those compelling loss incidents which suggest a missing American was captured but the Vietnamese have returned neither the person nor his remains. We have singled out these cases for priority investigation because if there are Americans alive, they are most likely associated with these losses. To execute this priority investigative activity, we will expand the staff of our Hanoi office and task the staff to carry out full-time investigation of these cases. If we can resolve these cases, we will have done much to shed light on the live prisoner issue.

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Second, the JTF commander will report directly to the commander in chief of the Pacific Command who, in turn, will respond to tasking from the Secretary of Defense through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

I'd like to elaborate for a moment on how this two-tiered concept with its unity of command will work. As POW/MIA policy is formulated here in Washington, the joint staff will communicate guidance and operational tasking to the JTF commander, via the commander-in-chief of the Pacific Command. The theater command will make available to the JTF the necessary resources and expertise available within the Pacific Command headquarters and the theater service components to execute these operations.

For example, if the JTF commander needs helicopters to ferry his search teams to remote locations, aviation units will be tasked to provide this support. In this particular example, however, I must point out that the Southeast Asian governments will have to agree to the employment of these assets in their countries.

In planning and executing the operations, the JTF commander will direct the activities of the POW/MIA detachment based in Hanoi as well as the other detachments when approved. So, as you can see, by establishing the JTF and employing our command and control concept, we will have forged a direct line of authority which will run from Washington all the way down to the detachment commanders in the field.

The Pacific Command headquarters staff and the subordinate service components are currently looking at additional ways to improve logistics and communications support to the search teams and the Hanoi detachment. These were areas over which congressional observers recently expressed concern. We have procured or are in the process of procuring equipment ranging from ponchos to sophisticated radio communications gear. We have looked at ways to provide sustained, cost-effective vehicle operations and maintenance for the search teams and will soon initiate procurement actions which will alleviate shortfalls in this area. Meanwhile, the staff of the U.S. Army Pacific Command has prepared a concept of operations for providing helicopter support to the JTF teams.

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We will ensure the work of these teams is made known to the families and to the American public. To the extent possible, we will give the media every opportunity to cover our activities and, in keeping with our longstanding practice, we will notify expeditiously the families on the results of our investigations and recovery oper-

ations through the established service casualty affairs channel. We have nothing to hide; to the contrary, we are most anxious to tell the American public of the dedication of our people and the hard, often dangerous work which they perform.

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The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, General. General Ryan, do you have a statement?

**STATEMENT OF MAJ. GEN. MICHAEL E. RYAN, VICE DIRECTOR,
STRATEGIC PLANS AND POLICY (J-5), THE JOINT STAFF**

General RYAN. I do not have a prepared statement, Senator. I stand ready to answer questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much. Let me begin the questioning, Mr. Secretary, by asking you when was your first official involvement with the POW/MIA issue.

Mr. FORD. It was 1987 or 1988, and I do not recall the exact date. I was serving as the National Intelligence Officer for East Asia and was asked to do an estimate on the POW/MIA issue. Prior to that time I had, as an interested student of the region—as a former serviceman generally interested in the issue, but had no formal responsibilities—after the estimate, I did not have another occasion to work on the issue until I came to the Defense Department in March of 1989.

The CHAIRMAN. What did your 1987 estimate require you to do?

Mr. FORD. It was to look at the questions on whether or not—to check on whether the intelligence community was looking at all the right issues and to make a best judgment as to the question of whether there were any Americans alive in Southeast Asia.

The CHAIRMAN. Whom did you do that for?

Mr. FORD. I did that for the Director of Central Intelligence.

The CHAIRMAN. What conclusions did you come to?

Mr. FORD. I would have to refresh my memory on the actual findings. My recollection was that we could not make a judgment based on the evidence that we had available.

The CHAIRMAN. Was that a formal report submitted to the DCI?

Mr. FORD. Yes, sir. I am sure that it is available.

The CHAIRMAN. Would that report be at CIA?

Mr. FORD. It would be. I think it was at the secret level, but I am not sure.

[Requested classified material was provided to the committee.]

The CHAIRMAN. Well, we will request that, obviously. Apart from the assessment about the flow of intelligence, what conclusion did you draw with respect to the probability of live Americans being in Southeast Asia?

Mr. FORD. In that intelligence estimate?

The CHAIRMAN. At that time.

Mr. FORD. I think that, as I recall and again, I would have to refresh my memory, a lot has happened since then on this issue. I think that we determined that there was not enough information to make a firm judgment that there was somebody alive. There was clearly no evidence that there—we could not demonstrate that there were not. In fact, it was very similar in terms of our findings to what has become the standard position of the U.S. Government.

The CHAIRMAN. Was there any evidence that you recall that distinctly suggested to you that somebody was alive?

Mr. FORD. No evidence at that time. In fact, I think that subsequent to that estimate, there has been far better—far more detailed work done by others than was available at the time in 1987, 1988, when I did that estimate.

The CHAIRMAN. Did you have any difficulties with any agency in securing answers to inquiries that you made?

Mr. FORD. None that I recall.

The CHAIRMAN. Did you come across any evidence of any kind whatsoever leading you to believe that, for any period of time, there might have been a so-called cover-up or effort to avoid evidence?

Mr. FORD. None that I looked at personally. Most of my effort was managing the process of the intelligence community in looking into this issue, and we were focusing more on contemporary, current practices in intelligence and questions. The estimate was not focused and did not cover, as I remember in any detail at all, what happened in the period, say, 1970 to 1975 timeframe.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, you are now really the principal point person on this. Is that fair to say?

Mr. FORD. I think it would be fair to say that I have been the Secretary's representative on this issue. I have other responsibilities. This is not my only job.

The CHAIRMAN. I understand.

Mr. FORD. I am more of the person who if I can identify problems, if I can be of assistance to either a Government agency and/or a family, or an interested person, I try to put them in touch with the right people, or try to solve the problems if they come up.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, as a former service-person yourself, and flanked by distinguished generals and recognizing as well as anybody in this country what is at stake here, there are not any of us who does not find our skin crawling at the notion that somebody might have tubed some information or cast it aside, or somehow found other imperatives that were more important than pursuing this. Is there anything that you have come across? I mean, this thing lives, we all know it lives. You have said we have a credibility problem. What is it that allows this to live? Have you come across anything that suggests to you that at some point in time someone might have paid less than the attention that was due, or is this just something that has come out of whole cloth?

Mr. FORD. I certainly, Mr. Chairman, do not have any evidence that anyone knowingly, for example, made decisions or did things knowing that there were Americans alive in Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. Even if there were, I do not see any evidence of that, but I think that those are the sorts of questions that you really have to ask the people that were responsible for our Government policies

in those days—what was in their mind, what they knew at the time?

In retrospect, I have to admit to you that if I had been there, I hope—I do not know how I would have reacted, because I know a lot more now than I probably would have known in those periods of time—I hope that I would have been a little bit more firm on pressing the governments, particularly Laos, about their holding of Americans and holding them to account for it. It is easy for me, 19 years after the fact or 10 years after the fact—whatever, and the perspective of 1991 to make that—and I do not know if even I, as strongly as I feel about this issue, would have acted differently if I had been responsible at the time. It does seem to me that there could have been more done.

The CHAIRMAN. This committee has, through individuals, often met with Ross Perot. I have had occasion to meet with him. I know my vice chair has, others have. Here is a man who invested considerable money, time, energy, effort, and finally threw his hands up with a sense of disgust, whose motives are just unquestionable with respect to this issue. Looking back at that now, as you undoubtedly have had to, have you talked to him? Has any current generation of policymakers on this issue met with those sort of people to really debrief and to get a sense of where they are coming from in this, or has that been too much a part of the past to deal with?

Mr. FORD. I personally have not talked to Mr. Perot. I have tried to talk to people who have worked this issue over the years, long before I was involved in it, to sort of get their sense of history, their sense of what happened and why, at least in part so that I did not have to reinvent the wheel, as a new kid on the block. And—but that only goes back, quite frankly, to the early to mid-80's, in which a new group of people who took it, quite frankly, more seriously and were—at least the ones I have talked to—I am confident tried to do better than they thought people in the past had done. They are clearly not in exhaustive discussion with all of the people who have done this problem before me.

The CHAIRMAN. Have you ever in the course of your tenure in this job previously heard of any documents being destroyed?

Mr. FORD. No. No. If I did, I would have been very, very angry and upset, and would have done something about it. That is not to say that documents haven't been destroyed. It just simply has not come to my attention.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, that was my question.

Mr. FORD. Yes, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Have you—well, I will strike that. Let me turn to colleagues so that we can keep the round going and be fair. Senator Smith.

Senator SMITH. Mr. Ford, the interagency group some time in 1989, January, I think, put out a report saying that there was an agreement reached with Laos, that they would provide access to wartime records and so forth on Americans who not only were under the alleged Pathet Lao control, but also under the control of North Vietnamese in Laos—any records that they had, either dead or alive. Have they lived up to that? Give me one line or two. Where are we on that? Have they responded to that in a positive way?

Mr. FORD. I think that there has been some progress in Laos—Laotian cooperation on POW/MIA. There are a number of firsts that we can point to within the past year or so, of finally getting into areas, some of the cave areas for example, where we knew that Americans were being held prisoner at one time. These areas had been denied to us for many years. We also have seen cases where, although we wanted to do it ourselves, before we could get down to Savannakhet, the Laotians had found the man who was in the purported Borah photograph, for example. But if you ask me, am I satisfied, are they doing all they can do, the answer is absolutely no, they are not and that there are a lot of things that we would like them to do for us that they are not doing.

Now, part of it is because there is a big difference between Laos and Vietnam. In Vietnam, as best we can tell, they were great recordkeepers and every scrap of paper having to do with Americans, there is a long record of this keeping things.

In Laos, these were guerrillas operating in an area being bombed regularly by the United States. They were not in control of the whole country. They did not apparently keep records quite as well as the Vietnamese. They often had a practice, unlike the Vietnamese, that if they found an American, they more frequently killed him than not, and that you had to be very lucky to be one of those who was captured and did not die immediately. Subsequently, as they have taken power, trying to go back and get into these issues, they quite frankly consider it a matter of national security. It is like trying to pull teeth to get them to 'fess up to some of these things. I am not sure that we will ever get them to be able to convince us in the same sort of detail that the Vietnamese may be able to, because they do not have the sort of records that we would like to see in the absence of other information.

We are not going to trust what the Vietnamese or Laotians say 100 percent, but it certainly helps if we have their journal of the day of an incident and they say that this particular American was captured, was shot by local militia 30 minutes after his capture and we think his remains are located so-and-so. That certainly is more information than maybe we had at the time of loss. In the case of Laos, all we have got basically are anecdotal memories of villagers to put together with our investigations.

One of the differences though, also in Laos, is because of its more rugged terrain and because of fewer people. When we actually visit crash sites, for example, we often find things that have been there since 1971 or 1968. That is not really the case in Vietnam. Often, we do not find anything. So there are pluses and minuses and I think that the Lao are trying to do better, but they have a long way to go yet.

Senator SMITH. In all my interactions with you since I have been in the Senate, and since you have been in your position, we have had some differences, but you have always, as far as I know, been totally candid with me. I hate to ask this kind of a high, inside fast ball here, and I realize you would probably not be the one to make such a decision, but supposing somebody were to turn up who was a deserter by the military definition of the word today. What would be your recommendation in terms of that individual? Would you recommend prosecuting that individual as a deserter? The reason I