

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

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STATEMENT BY THE PRESS SECRETARY

Last February, when the President announced the lifting of the trade embargo against Vietnam, he also announced that he would send another top-level delegation to Vietnam later in the year to press for further progress from Vietnam on unresolved POW-MIA issues. This Presidential delegation will travel to Vietnam July 1 to 4, and to Laos July 4 to 5. It will stop in Hawaii for briefings by the Commander-in-Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC), the Joint Task Force-Full Accounting (JTF-FA) and the U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory (CILHI).

The delegation will be jointly led by Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs Hershel Gober, Assistant Secretary of State Winston Lord and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for POW/MIA Affairs James Wold. A similar high-level delegation went to Vietnam in July 1993.

At the invitation of the President, leaders of the five largest veterans organizations -- the Executive Director of the American Legion, John F. Sommer, Jr.; the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Paul A. Spera; the National Legislative Director of the Disabled American Veterans, Richard F. Schultz; the National Commander of the American Veterans of World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War, Donald M. Hearon; and the National Vice President of the Vietnam Veterans of America, Jack Clark -- will be members of the delegation. The Executive Director of the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia, Ann Mills Griffith, will also be a member of the delegation.

President Clinton has asked this delegation to continue the search for answers that will help us achieve the fullest possible accounting for our POW/MIAs.

The delegation will make clear to Vietnam that further steps in relations between our two nations depend on additional tangible progress on the outstanding POW/MIA cases. In particular, the President is looking for concrete progress in four key areas:

REMAINS: Concrete results from efforts on their part to cases, live sightings and field activities.

DISCREPANCY CASES: Continued resolution of 55 discrepancy cases, live sightings and field activities.

LAOS: Further assistance in implementing trilateral investigations with the Lao.

ARCHIVES: Accelerated efforts to provide all POW/MIA-related documents that will help lead to genuine answers.

While in Laos, the delegation will discuss with senior Lao officials ways to further advance joint efforts to achieve the fullest possible accounting of the 504 Americans missing in Laos. In particular, the delegation will seek progress in establishing a live-sighting mechanism, in expanding the pace and scope of joint U.S.-Lao field activities, furthering trilateral cooperation with the Vietnamese and obtaining broader access to Lao government archival holdings.

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