

Lift the Trade Sanctions Against Vietnam

It will surprise those with whom I have associated for many years on behalf of the Vietnam POW/MIAs that today I urge the lifting of trade sanctions against Vietnam for the good of the POW/MIA cause.

From 1968 until 1974, I served first as commander of the Brown Water Navy in Vietnam and then as Chief of Naval Operations and member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in those final years of the Vietnam war. As a result I have carried a special responsibility not to forget the sacrifices and to deal with the hardships of the magnificent men and women who served their country in that war--and their families.

That responsibility has led me to expend considerable time and effort on Vietnam veterans' causes over the last twenty years:

- Calling for exhaustive efforts to account for missing POWs and MIAs while denying recognition to Vietnam.

- Winning compensation for Vietnam veterans suffering from diseases judged to result from exposure to Agent Orange or compensation for their families.

- Joining in supporting an appeal to the US Supreme Court of a federal court's flagrant violation of Vietnam veterans' rights to seek compensation from Agent Orange manufacturers in the Ivy v. Diamond Shamrock class action suit.

I list these actions to demonstrate whose side I am on in this appeal that the time has come in the interests of those families whose loved ones lost in the Vietnam war are not yet

accounted for to lift the sanctions against and to recognize Vietnam.

I have had the opportunity to examine with President Clinton and his staff recent progress in this accounting.

In July 1993, the President announced four main areas in which further tangible progress in accounting was required. In pursuit of that national objective, an intensive diplomatic effort by 500 skilled and devoted men and women with a combined budget of over \$100,000,000 has achieved significant progress in all four categories:

- Remains. In 1993 remains of 67 servicemen came home--the third highest number in any year since the war's end.

- Discrepancy Cases. 198 servicemen were known to be alive after the incidents leading to their loss. In 1993, 82 of those not previously known to have died have become confirmed deaths with 73 still to be accounted for. Hundreds of reported sightings of live American prisoners have been investigated on the ground in Vietnam since 1991. None have produced evidence that an American POW is today held captive in Vietnam but each additional report is intensively investigated.

- Vietnam's Assistance in Arranging Trilateral Border Cooperation with Laos. Last August the Vietnamese and Lao agreed to US requests for trilateral investigations along the Vietnam/Laos border and the Ho Chi Minh trail. The first operation in December located remains and crash sites to be excavated in coming months.

- Accelerated Efforts to Provide Documents Relating to

POW/MIAs. Since the President's July announcement, we have received for the first time records: from Vietnamese wartime anti-aircraft units along the Ho Chi Minh trail, from a key wartime military-political unit, from Hanoi's unilateral investigations seeking to locate American remains--24,000 POW/MIA related documents and artifacts, more than previously received during the entire post-war period, have been correlated to over 600 unresolved cases.

So today we have virtually unlimited access and every assistance from Vietnamese officials in this vital work so desperately important to the bereaving families and to us who feel responsible for them.

But much more could be accomplished and the time required could be greatly foreshortened. There are thousands of acres in obscure areas still to be examined and there are many thousands of potential witnesses still to be identified within the Vietnamese population. We need thousands more Americans travelling the width and breadth of Vietnam, talking to Vietnamese in the villages and in the rural areas. We need to provide free access for POW/MIA families to all the locations they desire to explore and to see for themselves the extent to which the Vietnamese people are now seeking to be helpful. We need the additional efficiencies that a US diplomatic presence in Vietnam will bring to this effort.

I lost a son as a result of his exposure to Agent Orange in Vietnam. Therefore, I know, both as a parent and as a wartime commander responsible for some of their lost love ones, the

anguish POW/MIA families feel.

It is in that light that I strongly urge that for their sakes we need to speed up the day when they will know what happened to their loved ones or know that all that can be done has been done. This can only come if we put aside bitterness and revenge, lift the trade sanctions, recognize the government, and begin the process of the peaceful penetration of Vietnam.