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Speeches

THANKS BOB FOR THAT KIND INTRODUCTION. IT IS INDEED A PLEASURE TO BE INVITED TO ATTEND AND SPEAK AT A JOINT SESSION OF THE FALL CONFERENCE OF THE AMERICAN LEGION AND AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY. I WANT TO FIRST THANK CHUCK FERGUSON FOR MEETING ME THIS MORNING AND TAKING ME OUT FOR COFFEE AND DONUTS. THEY WERE GOOD, I JUST DIDN'T EXPECT TO DONATE BLOOD YESTERDAY.

I REALLY DID WELCOME THE OPPORTUNITY TO VISIT THE GREAT STATE OF MINNESOTA WITH ITS RICH HERITAGE AND PROUD TRADITION AND SPEAK TO YOU ABOUT OUR ONGOING EFFORTS ON THE POW AND MIA ISSUE. TO BE CANDID HOWEVER, HAVING YOUR DEPARTMENT ADJUTANT GO DIRECTLY TO GENERAL VESSEY TO SOLICIT A SPEAKER FOR THE CONFERENCE DID ENHANCE THE SITUATION SOMEWHAT. IT'S DARN HARD FOR A COLONEL TO TURN DOWN A FOUR-STAR GENERAL EVEN THOUGH HE MAY BE A RETIRED FOUR STAR. SO ON BEHALF OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, THE HONORABLE FRANK CARLUCCI, I BRING YOU GREETINGS FROM WASHINGTON.

IN THE ARMED FORCES, FROM TOP TO BOTTOM, WE HAVE A PERSONAL AS WELL AS PROFESSIONAL INTEREST IN THE POW/MIA ISSUE, ESPECIALLY THOSE OF US WHO SAW ACTION IN VIETNAM. MANY WHO FOUGHT IN VIETNAM HAVE A LINGERING SENSE OF UNEASINESS. FOR SOME OF US IT WAS THE UNSATISFYING OUTCOME. FOR OTHERS IT WAS THE AMBIVALENT ATTITUDES ON THE HOME FRONT. BUT MOST POIGNANTLY, ALL VETERANS OF THAT CONFLICT SHARE THE SEARING THOUGHT THAT SOME OF THEIR COMRADES REMAIN UNACCOUNTED FOR AND MAY STILL BE HELD AGAINST THEIR WILL IN INDOCHINA.

TODAY, 2,387 AMERICANS ARE STILL MISSING OR UNACCOUNTED FOR IN INDOCHINA, 15 YEARS AFTER THE END OF US INVOLVEMENT. YET I CAN ASSURE YOU THEY ARE NOT FORGOTTEN. THE PRESIDENT HAS DIRECTED THAT RESOLUTION OF THE POW/MIA ISSUE BE A MATTER OF THE HIGHEST NATIONAL PRIORITY. THE PRESIDENT ELOQUENTLY EXPRESSED OUR ATTITUDE WHEN HE SAID THESE WORDS:

"WE WRITE NO LAST CHAPTERS. WE CLOSE NO BOOKS. WE PUT AWAY NO FINAL MEMORIES. AN END TO AMERICA'S INVOLVEMENT IN VIETNAM CANNOT COME BEFORE WE'VE ACHIEVED THE FULLEST POSSIBLE ACCOUNTING OF THOSE MISSING IN ACTION.'

FORMER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE CASPAR WEINBERGER, HAS DESCRIBED OUR MOTIVATION WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AS "THREE D'S;" WHICH STAND FOR DUTY, DEBT AND DOWNPAYMENT. DUTY - WE FEEL AN INHERENT OBLIGATION TO RECOVER OUR FALLEN AND MISSING COMRADES FROM THE BATTLEFIELD. DEBT - WE OWE THE FAMILIES, WHO IN ESSENCE LENT US THEIR FATHERS, THEIR HUSBANDS, THEIR BROTHERS, THEIR SONS, OUR MAXIMUM EFFORT AND PERSERVERENCE IN RECOVERING AND RETURNING THEIR LOVED ONES. DOWNPAYMENT - OUR ENDEAVORS SERVE AS DOWNPAYMENT TO REASSURE CURRENT AND FUTURE MEN AND WOMEN IN THE ARMED FORCES THAT SHOULD THEY BECOME MISSING OR CAPTURED, THE US GOVERNMENT WILL EXERT EVERY EFFORT TO ACCOUNT FOR THEM AND TO SECURE THEIR RETURN.

BEFORE GIVING YOU A RUNDOWN ON HOW THIS ISSUE HAS
PROGRESSED, I WANT TO SPEND TIME ON A VERY CRITICAL ASPECT: THE
QUESTION OF LIVE AMERICANS IN INDOCHINA. DURING THE WAR, THERE
WERE INSTANCES IN WHICH MEN WERE OBSERVED BEING CAPTURED,
INSTANCES IN WHICH THE ENEMY ANNOUNCED IN ITS RADIO BROADCASTS
THE CAPTURE OF AMERICANS, INSTANCES IN WHICH THE ENEMY RELEASED
PROPAGANDA FILMS OF AMERICANS BEING CAPTURED, OR INSTANCES IN
WHICH THE ENEMY DISPLAYED CAPTURED PERSONAL EFFECTS SUCH AS
IDENTIFICATION CARDS. AND YET, NEITHER THESE MEN NOR THEIR
REMAINS HAVE ALL BEEN RETURNED. TODAY, WE STILL DO NOT HAVE
SATISFACTORY ANSWERS TO SOME OF THESE DISCREPANCY CASES, AS WE
CALL THEM. ADDED TO THIS DISTURBING SITUATION, THE DEFENSE
INTELLIGENCE AGENCY SINCE THE FALL OF SAIGON ON APRIL 30, 1974,
HAS RECEIVED OVER 8000 REPORTS RELATED TO AMERICANS IN SOUTHEAST
ASIA. OF THESE REPORTS, OVER 1,000 HAVE BEEN FIRST-HAND LIVE
SIGHTING REPORTS: ACCOUNTS IN WHICH THE SOURCE DESCRIBED SEEING
WHAT THE SOURCE THOUGHT TO BE AN AMERICAN OR AMERICANS. IN
PAINSTAKINGLY CHECKING OUT THESE FIRST-HAND LIVE SIGHTINGS, THE
DIA HAS CORRELATED 66% TO CASES OF AMERICANS WHO HAVE BEEN
ACCOUNTED FOR. DIA HAS FOUND ANOTHER 22% TO BE FABRICATIONS,
LEAVING 12% (APPROX 125 UNRESOLVED FIRST-HAND LIVE SIGHTINGS.
THESE CASES ARE UNDER CONTINUING INVESTIGATION BY THE DIA, WHICH
HAS TASKING AUTHORITY OVER ALL US INTELLIGENCE ASSETS AND
ORGANIZATIONS IN CHECKING OUT THESE REPORTS. TO BE BLUNT, SOME
OF THE REPORTS ARE QUITE SCANTY AND CONTAIN FEW DETAILS, BUT
STILL WE WILL NOT DISCARD THEM AS ONE OF THESE REPORTS MAY YET
PROVE TO BE A VITAL PIECE OF THE PUZZLE.

IT WAS PRECISELY THIS DILEMMA OF UNRESOLVED FIRST-HAND LIVE SIGHTING REPORTS AND OF UNANSWERED DISCREPANCY CASES WHICH LED THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION IN 1982 TO DETERMINE IT COULD NOT RULE OUT THE POSSIBILITY OF LIVE AMERICANS IN INDOCHINA. GIVEN THE SITUATION, THERE WERE THREE POSSIBLE APPROACHES: DO NOTHING, ASSUME THAT NO AMERICANS REMAIN ALIVE OR ASSUME THAT AMERICANS ARE ALIVE. IT WAS DETERMINED THAT THE LAST POSSIBILITY IS THE ONLY RESPONSIBLE POSITION. SO SINCE 1982, YOUR GOVERNMENT HAS OPERATED ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT AT LEAST SOME AMERICANS ARE STILL HELD CAPTIVE, AND SHOULD ANY REPORT PROVE TRUE, THE PRESIDENT HAS PLEDGED APPROPRIATE AND DECISIVE ACTION TO ENSURE THEIR RETURN.

BUT THUS FAR, DESPITE THE MULTITUDE OF REPORTS AND OUR BEST EFFORTS, WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO FIND A REPORT OR COMBINATION OF REPORTS WHICH PROVIDES THE EVIDENCE WE NEED TO GO TO THE PRESIDENT. BUT, YOU CAN REST ASSURED THAT WE'RE STILL TRYING. AND YET, WE ENCOUNTER CRITICS WHO WITHOUT ANY BASIS, ACCUSE US OF INCOMPETENCE OR INSENSITIVITY, SIMPLY BECAUSE WE HAVE NOT HAD SUCCESS IN THE LIVE PRISONER AREA. WELL, I CANNOT PROMISE RESULTS; BUT I CAN PROMISE COMMITMENT, DEDICATION, RESOURCES AND EFFORT. THESE ELEMENTS DO EXIST IN OUR UNRELENTING SEARCH FOR ANSWERS TO THE LIVE PRISONER QUESTION.

IN THE PAST YEAR, WE HAVE WITNESSED PROGRESS ON THE POW/MIA ISSUE, ALBEIT LESS AND SLOWER THAN WE THINK IS POSSIBLE ON THE

PART OF THE INDOCHINESE GOVERNMENTS. THERE HAS BEEN A LONG-
OVERDUE INCREASE IN RESPONSIVENESS BY THE GOVERNMENTS OF VIETNAM
AND LAOS ON A SPECTRUM OF US CONCERNS. A TEAM OF US TECHNICAL
EXPERTS RETURNED FROM HANOI FRIDAY AFTER COMPLETING WORK WITH
THEIR VIETNAMESE COUNTERPARTS DURING A SECOND JOINT MISSION TO
INVESTIGATE AND SURVEY INCIDENTS INVOLVING AMERICANS MISSING IN
VIETNAM. THE FIRST JOINT MISSION WAS CONDUCTED FROM SEPTEMBER
25 TO OCTOBER 5 AND WENT VERY SMOOTHLY . THE US TEAM RECEIVED
FINE COOPERATION FROM VIETNAMESE OFFICIALS AS WELL AS INDIVIDUAL
VIETNAMESE CITIZENS. ALTHOUGH THE RESULTS OF THE SECOND JOINT
MISSION ARE STILL BEING EVALUATED THIS EFFORT ALSO RECEIVED
EXCELLENT COOPERATION. THE US TEAMS WERE COMPOSED OF THREE
MEMBERS: A TEAM CHIEF, SEARCH AND RECOVERY SPECIALIST AND AN
ANALYST/LINGUIST. THEY WERE JOINED BY SIMILAR TEAMS OF
VIETNAMESE PERSONNEL FROM THE OFFICE FOR SEEKING MISSING
PERSONS. THE TEAMS FOCUSED ON SO CALLED DISCREPANCY CASES IN
THE AREA WEST OF HANOI BUT THEY ALSO INVESTIGATED ADDITIONAL
INCIDENTS ENCOUNTERED DURING THE MISSION. THE US GOVERNMENT IS
OF COURSE VERY PLEASED TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO CONTINUE THESE
JOINT INVESTIGATIVE EFFORTS SINCE, WITH ONE EXCEPTION, THE
VIETNAMESE HAD PREVIOUSLY CONDUCTED UNILATERAL INVESTIGATIONS.
THE RESULTS OF THESE EFFORTS HAVE BEEN DISCOURAGING IN THAT ONLY
196 AMERICANS HAVE BEEN REPATRIATED FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA SINCE
1974. THAT LEAVES 1751 STILL UNACCOUNTED FOR IN VIETNAM.

LAST THURSDAY, THE VIETNAMESE REPATRIATED 23 REMAINS WHICH
MAY BE ASSOCIATED WITH AMERICANS STILL MISSING OR UNACCOUNTED

FOR FROM VIETNAM, THE REMAINS WERE THEN FLOWN TO THE CENTRAL IDENTIFICATION LABORATORY IN HAWAII FOR EVALUATION. THIS TURNOVER WAS THE SIXTH IN A SERIES OF REPATRIATIONS SINCE THE POW/MIA MISSION TO HANOI BY PRESIDENTIAL EMISSARY JOHN VESSEY. AMONG THESE ARE REMAINS RECOVERED AT TWO LOCATIONS DURING THE TEN DAY JOINT US AND VIETNAMESE INVESTIGATIVE EFFORT CONDUCTED FROM SEPTEMBER 25 TO OCTOBER 5, 1988. ALTHOUGH 100 REMAINS HAVE BEEN REPATRIATED SINCE THE VESSEY INITIATIVE, ONLY 23 HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AS AMERICANS. THOUGH THIS IS A LOWER PERCENTAGE OF IDENTIFIABLE REMAINS THAN WE HAVE PREVIOUSLY ENCOUNTERED, IT REFLECTS, IN PART, A U.S. REQUEST THAT THE VIETNAMESE PROVIDE US WITH ANY REMAINS WHICH MIGHT POSSIBLY BE THOSE OF AMERICANS MISSING IN ACTION AS PART OF OUR COMMITMENT TO OBTAIN THE FULLEST POSSIBLE ACCOUNTING OF OUR MISSING MEN. WE PREFER TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXAMINE FOR OURSELVES ALL REMAINS FOUND IN THE VICINITY OF A CRASH SITE. THE RETURN OF U.S. REMAINS IS IMPORTANT, PARTICULARLY TO THE FAMILIES WHO HAVE ENDURED YEARS OF UNCERTAINTY AND ANGUISH, SO WE WILL CONTINUE TO REPATRIATE ALL RECOVERABLE REMAINS AND TO INDIVIDUALLY IDENTIFY THEM, IF POSSIBLE.

IN SUMMARY, WE ARE VERY ENCOURAGED THAT VIETNAM AND THE US ARE ADDRESSING COOPERATIVELY THESE HUMANITARIAN ISSUES AND WE BELIEVE IT IS IN THE INTEREST OF BOTH NATIONS TO CONTINUE ALONG THIS PATH AND TO MAINTAIN THE ESSENTIAL SEPARATION BETWEEN THESE HUMANITARIAN UNDERTAKINGS AND THE POLITICAL DIFFERENCES THAT CONTINUE TO EXIST BETWEEN US.

A TEAM OF FIVE TECHNICAL EXPERTS FROM THE POINT CASUALTY RESOLUTION CENTER AND CENTRAL IDENTIFICATION LABORATORY IN HAWAII HAVE CONCLUDED SURVEY ACTIVITIES WITH THEIR LAO COUNTERPARTS SEPTEMBER 27 TO OCTOBER 1, AT SITES IN THE SEPONE AREA OF EASTERN LAOS. FINDINGS FROM THESE ACTIVITIES WILL BE EVALUATED IN WASHINGTON AND VIETIANE AND WILL BE USED TO PLAN UPCOMING EXCAVATIONS. THUS FAR, THE UNITED STATES AND LAOS HAVE CONDUCTED THREE CRASH SITE EXCAVATIONS, MOST RECENTLY IN APRIL 1988, THE TWO PREVIOUS TOOK PLACE IN 1985 AND 1986.

THERE ARE STILL 547 AMERICANS WHO REMAIN UNACCOUNTED FOR IN LAOS, BUT THESE LATEST ACTIVITIES WERE UNDOUBTLY THE MOST CORDIAL, OPEN AND PRODUCTIVE WE CAN REMEMBER HAVING WITH THE LAO. IT IS CLEAR THAT RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES HAVE CHANGED SIGNIFICANTLY AND I BELIEVE, FOR THE BETTER. AGREEMENT TO LOOK AT A NUMBER OF SITES THEN CONSULT ON WHICH TO EXCAVATE IS A SOLID ADVANCE OVER THE FRUSTRATING RHYTHM OF ONE SURVEY AND ONE EXCAVATION PER ANNUN. INDICATIONS ARE THAT THE LAO WILL MAINTAIN THEIR COOPERATIVE ATTITUDE.

TWO WEEKS AGO I MET WITH OFFICIALS FROM THE LAO MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO DISCUSS TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF SEARCH AND RECOVERY OPERATIONS AND FORENSIC IDENTIFICATIONS. THE LAO DELEGATION RECEIVED ORIENTATION BRIEFINGS, FAMILIARIZATION TRAINING ON TECHNICAL AND FORENSIC EQUIPMENT USED IN THE POW-MIA

RESOLUTION EFFORT, AND TOURS OF BOTH THE JCRC AND CILHI FACILITIES IN HAWAII.

THE VISIT HAD TWO MAJOR PURPOSES. MEMBERS OF THE LAO DELEGATION HAVE PARTICIPATED WITH U.S. COUNTERPARTS IN SURVEYING OR EXCAVATING U.S. AIRCRAFT CRASH SITES IN LAOS. DURING THIS TRIP, THEY WERE BRIEFED ON THE CAPABILITIES AND PROCEDURES OF BOTH THE JCRC AND CILHI. WE ALSO DISCUSSED FUTURE JOINT SITE SURVEYS AND EXCAVATIONS AND INCREASING OPPORTUNITIES OF JOINT INVESTIGATION EFFORTS, I.E., TWO BEFORE THE END OF YEAR, AND YEAR-AROUND ACTIVITIES. WE SHOULD RECEIVE THEIR RESPONSE WITHIN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS.

INCIDENTALLY, FOR THOSE OF YOU OLD ENOUGH TO REMEMBER THE DAYS OF KOREA AND THE BIG ONE, WORLD WAR II, IT MAY COME AS A SURPRISE THAT WE ALSO ARE WORKING TO RESOLVE CASES OF AMERICANS UNACCOUNTED FOR FROM THOSE CONFLICTS. YOU MAY BE SURPRISED TO LEARN THAT OVER 78,000 AMERICANS WERE UNACCOUNTED FOR FROM WORLD WAR II, AND THERE WERE OVER 8,000 IN THE KOREAN WAR. HOWEVER, THERE ARE SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THOSE WARS AND THE WAR IN VIETNAM TO ARGUE AGAINST HASTILY DRAWING ANALOGIES. FOR INSTANCE, SINCE WE WON WORLD WAR II; WE HAD ACCESS TO THE BATTLEFIELDS SO WE COULD CONDUCT INTENSIVE SEARCHES. NEVERTHELESS, MANY MEN WERE LOST AND NOT RECOVERED IN PART DUE TO BEING LOST A SEA DURING NAVAL BATTLES. ALSO, IN BOTH WORLD WAR II AND KOREA, THERE WERE AMERICANS WHOSE REMAINS WERE UNIDENTIFIED AND THUS BURIED AS UNKNOWN SOLDIERS. IN FACT, THIS

IS THE CASE OF OVER 8,400 AMERICAN SOLDIERS FROM WORLD WAR II WHO LIE IN U.S. CEMETERIES AROUND THE WORLD AND OF ANOTHER 848 U.S. KOREAN WAR DEAD BURIED IN HAWAII. THOUGH THEIR UNIDENTIFIED REMAINS ARE BURIED ON AMERICAN SOIL, THEY ARE STILL UNACCOUNTED FOR.

IN ADDITION, KOREA PRESENTS A UNIQUE SITUATION. MEN FROM FIFTEEN ALLIED NATIONS AS WELL AS SOUTH KOREA FOUGHT WITH US SERVICEMEN ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA UNDER THE UNITED NATIONS FLAG. SINCE THE CEASE-FIRE SUSPENDING HOSTILITIES IN 1953, THE UNITED NATIONS COMMAND HAS CONTINUED TO DEMAND FROM THE OTHER SIDE AN ACCOUNTING, IN PARTICULAR FOR THE 2,233 UNITED NATIONS COMMAND SOLDIERS, INCLUDING 389 AMERICANS, WHO WERE BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN UNDER ENEMY CONTROL AND YET NEITHER THEY NOR THEIR REMAINS HAVE BEEN RETURNED. IN ADDITION, UNDER THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION, THE UNC, EVERY YEAR SINCE 1982, HAS REQUESTED THE REPATRIATION OF UNITED NATIONS AND REPUBLIC OF KOREA WAR DEAD. WE HAVE TURNED OVER TO THE NORTH KOREANS, A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF INFORMATION ON PROBABLE LOCATIONS IN THE NORTH WERE MISSING UNC PERSONNEL WERE HELD AS POWS OR WHERE THEY WERE KILLED IN ACTION. THE INFORMATION, THE PRODUCT OF MONTHS OF RESEARCH, WAS INTENDED TO ASSIST THE NORTH IN UNILATERALLY LOCATING REMAINS OF MISSING UNC MEMBERS.

SO FAR, THE OTHER SIDE HAS YET TO GIVE A REASONABLE RESPONSE TO THE U.N. COMMAND'S APPEALS TO ACCOUNT FOR AND RETURN THE REMAINS OF THE MEN WHO FOUGHT IN DEFENSE OF FREEDOM IN KOREA.

BUT THIS OBSTINATE WILL NOT BLUNT OUR DETERMINATION TO PURSUE THE TOPIC.

SHIFTING FOR A MOMENT TO THE DOMESTIC SCENE, I WANT TO ADDRESS INTERNAL EVENTS RELATED TO THE POW/MIA ISSUE. THERE ARE THOSE WHO WANT TO KEEP REHASHING THE PAST. WHO WANT TO KEEP DISCUSSING US POW/MIA EFFORTS AT THE END OF THE WAR AND THE FIRST FEW YEARS THEREAFTER. THAT HISTORY IS IMPORTANT - IT GIVES A SENSE OF PERSPECTIVE REGARDING WHERE WE'VE BEEN. BUT THE PAST IS DONE AND CANNOT BE CHANGED. WE CAN ONLY START WITH THE PRESENT AND PRESS ON TOWARD THE FUTURE. AND I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT TODAY WE ARE FURTHER ALONG ON THE ROAD TO RESOLVING THIS ISSUE THAN AT ANY OTHER TIME SINCE THE WAR ENDED AND HOPEFULLY WE STAND ON THE VERGE OF EVEN MORE PROGRESS.

IT IS THE HEIGHT OF IRONY THAT SOME DETRACTORS, MANY OF WHOM ARE NEWCOMERS TO THIS ISSUE, BELIEVE THE US GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO DO MORE OR ISN'T DOING ENOUGH TO RESOLVE THE QUESTION OF AMERICANS MISSING IN INDOCHINA. SOME OF THESE SAME PEOPLE LOUDLY ESPOUSE DRAMATIC ACTION, SUCH AS OPERATIONS GLORIFIED IN ADVENTURE-PACKED MOVIES, BUT YET THEY HAVE LITTLE OR NO EVIDENCE UPON WHICH TO BASE ANY SORT OF ACTION. IN SOME CASES, THESE SAME PEOPLE REFUSE TO DIVULGE WHATEVER INFORMATION THEY SAY THEY HAVE TO THE US GOVERNMENT. FOR OUR PART, WE CANNOT AND WILL NOT ACT ON RUMORS, ON INCOMPLETE OR FABRICATED INFORMATION. WE DO INVESTIGATE ANY REPORT. WE ACCEPT INFORMATION FROM ANY SOURCE.

THOSE WHO THINK THE PROBLEM LIES WITH THE US GOVERNMENT EITHER DON'T KNOW THE FACTS OR REFUSE THE TRUTH.

NOW, MORE THAN EVER, ON THIS ISSUE, THERE IS A NEED FOR UNITY AND COMMITMENT BY THE AMERICAN PEOPLE, THE TWO MOST VITAL INGREDIENTS IN DEALING WITH COMMUNIST GOVERNMENTS. DISUNITY WILL ONLY SERVE THE INTERESTS OF THOSE WHO DO NOT SHARE OUR DESIRES FOR RESOLUTION. THOSE WHO SOW THE SEEDS OF DIVISIVENESS ARE DETRACTING FROM LEGITIMATE EFFORTS TO RESOLVE THIS ISSUE. THE KEY TO RESOLUTION LIES WITH THE INDOCHINESE GOVERNMENTS. IT IS TO THEM THAT OUR MAXIMUM EFFORTS AND OUR UNIFIED MESSAGES SHOULD BE DIRECTED AND SUSTAINED. WORKING TOGETHER, WE CAN FOCUS PROPERLY OUR CAPABILITIES TO RESOLVE THIS ISSUE BUT I CAN'T AND DON'T OFFER A QUICK SOLUTION. I CAN ASSURE YOU THOUGH, THAT A DEDICATED EFFORT IS BEING MADE BY THE U.S. GOVERNMENT TO SEE IT THROUGH, AND I AM OPTIMISTIC THAT, WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE, WE WILL HASTEN THE DAY WHEN THIS MATTER IS SATISFACTORILY RESOLVED.

THE AMERICAN LEGION AND OTHER PATRIOTIC ORGANIZATIONS LIKE YOURS REPRESENT A COMMITMENT OF FAITH, AN UNSPOKEN BOND BETWEEN THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AND THE AMERICAN SERVICE MEMBER AND HIS OR HER FAMILY. IT IS A BOND THAT LETS SERVICE MEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES KNOW THAT THEY WILL BE SUPPORTED IN THEIR TIME OF NEED AND THAT THEY CAN COUNT ON YOU, THE AMERICAN PEOPLE. FOR THOSE WHO ANSWERED THE CALL OF THE COUNTRY AND YET TODAY REMAIN UNACCOUNTED FOR, WE WILL DO ALL THAT IS POSSIBLE TO DETERMINE

THEIR FATE. EACH OF YOU PLAYS A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN THE POW/MIA
EFFORT. BY YOURSELF, INDIVIDUALLY, YOU MAY SEEM BUT A LONE
VOICE OF CONCERN AND CARING. COLLECTIVELY, HOWEVER, WE CAN
SIGNAL THE RESOLVE OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE TO NOT REST UNTIL THE
FULLEST POSSIBLE ACCOUNTING IS ACHIEVED.

THANK YOU FOR LISTENING AND THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED
SUPPORT.

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

November 11, 1988

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
AT THE VETERANS DAY CEREMONY
AT THE VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial
Washington, DC

11:45 A.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Well, thank you, Jack Wheeler, thank you very much. I shall treasure that gift. And to all of you, thanks and good morning.

Before I begin, let me take a moment to congratulate the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund and the other distinguished guests without whom the construction and operation of this memorial would not have been possible. Let me also say that America is grateful to the hundreds of Vietnam veterans who, when I asked them to join my administration, did so and have and are serving our nation so proudly. For your devotion to America, I salute you.

We're gathered today, just as we have gathered before, to remember those who served, those who fought, and those who -- those still missing, and those who gave their last full measure of devotion for our country.

We're gathered at a monument on which the names of our fallen friends and loved ones are engraved, and with crosses instead of diamonds beside them, the names of those whose fate we do not yet know. One of those who fell wrote, shortly before his death, these words: "Take what they have left and what they have taught you with their dying and keep it with your own. And take one moment to embrace those gentle heroes you left behind."

Well, today, Veterans Day, as we do every year, we take that moment to embrace the gentle heroes of Vietnam and of all our wars. We remember those who were called upon to give all a person can give. And we remember those who were prepared to make that sacrifice if it were demanded of them in the line of duty, though it never was. Most of all, we remember the devotion and gallantry with which all of them ennobled their nation as they became champions of a noble cause.

I'm not speaking provocatively here. Unlike the other wars of this century, of course, there were deep divisions about the wisdom and rightness of the Vietnam War. Both sides spoke with honesty and fervor, and what more can we ask in our democracy? And yet, after more than a decade of desperate boat people, after the killing fields of Cambodia, after all that has happened in that unhappy part of the world, who can doubt that the cause for which our men fought was just? (Applause.) It was, after all, however imperfectly pursued, the cause of freedom, and they showed uncommon courage in its service. Perhaps at this late date we can all agree that we've learned one lesson -- that young Americans must never again be sent to fight and die unless we are prepared to let them win. (Applause.)

But beyond that, we remember today that all our gentle heroes of Vietnam have given us a lesson in something more -- a

MORE

lesson in living love. Yes, for all of them, those who came back and those who did not, their love for their families lives. Their love for their buddies on the battlefields and friends back home lives. Their love of their country lives.

This memorial has become a monument to that living love. The thousands who come to see the names testify to a love that endures. The messages and momentos they leave speak with a whispering voice that passes gently through the surrounding trees and out across the breast of our peaceful nation. A childhood teddy bear, a photograph of the son or daughter -- born too late to know his or her father; a battle ribbon; a note: There are so many of these and all are testimony to our living love for them. And our nation itself is testimony to the love our veterans have had for it and for us. Our liberties, our values, all for which America stands is safe today because brave men and women have been ready to face the fire at freedom's front. And we thank God for them.

Yes, gentle heroes and living love and our memories of a time when we faced great divisions here at home. And yet if this place recalls all this -- both sweet and sad -- it also reminds us of a great and profound truth about our nation -- that from all our divisions we have always eventually emerged strengthened. Perhaps we are finding that new strength today, and, if so, much of it comes from the forgiveness and healing love that our Vietnam Veterans have shown. (Applause.)

For too long a time, they stood in a chill wind, as if on a winter night's watch. And in that night, their deeds spoke to us, but we knew them not. And their voices called to us, but we heard them not. Yet in this land that God has blessed, the dawn always at last follows the dark, and now morning has come. The night is over. We see these men and know them once again -- and know how much we owe them, how much they have given us, and how much we can never fully repay. And not just as individuals, but as a nation, we say we love you. (Applause.)

These days, we show our love in many ways -- some of it through the government. We now fly the POW-MIA flag at this memorial on Memorial Day, Veterans Day, and POW-MIA Recognition Day. This is a small gesture, but a significant one. America also keeps a vigil for those who have not yet returned. We have negotiated with the Vietnamese to bring our nation's sons home and for the first time to have joint teams investigating remote areas of Vietnam that might shed light on the fate of those we list as missing. In Laos we have also begun a new round of surveys and excavations of crash sites. And we have told Hanoi that it must prove to the American people, through its cooperation, whether men are still being held against their will in Indochina. Otherwise we will assume some are, and we will do everything we can to find them. (Applause.)

Here, at home, a new Department of Veterans Affairs and extended veterans benefits are merely outward and visible signs of an inward and invisible grace that has come to our land. Vietnam service is once more universally recognized as a badge of pride.

Four years ago, I noted that this healing had begun and that I hoped that before my days as Commander-in-Chief were over it would be completed. Well, now as I approach the end of my service and I see Vietnam veterans take their rightful place among America's heroes, it appears to me that we have healed, and what can I say to our Vietnam veterans but, "Welcome home." (Applause.)

Now before I go, as have so many others, Nancy and I wanted to leave a note at the wall, and if I may read it to you before doing so. We will put this note here before we leave.

"Our young friends -- yes, young friends, for in our hearts you will always be young, full of the love that is youth, love of life, love of joy, love of country. You fought for your country and for its safety and for the freedom of others with strength and courage. We love you for it. We honor you. And we have faith that,

as He does all His sacred children, the Lord will bless you and keep you, the Lord will make His face to shine upon you, and give you peace, now and forever more."

Thank you all and God bless you. (Applause.)

END

11:56 A.M. EST

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

November 11, 1988

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
AT TOMB OF THE UNKNOWNNS

Arlington National Cemetery
Arlington, Virginia

11:17 A.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Please be seated.

Those who live today remember those who do not. Those who know freedom remember today those who gave up life for freedom.

Today, in honor of the dead, we conduct ceremonies. We lay wreaths. We speak words of tribute. And in our memories, in our hearts -- we hold them close to us still.

Yet we also know -- even as their families knew when they last looked upon them -- that they can never be fully ours again, that they belong now to God and to that for which they so selflessly made a final and eternal act of devotion.

We could not forget them. Even if they were not our own, we could not forget them. For all time, they are what we can only aspire to be: giving, unselfish, the epitome of human love -- to lay down one's life so that others might live.

We think on their lives. We think on their final moments. In our mind's eye, we see young Americans in a European forest, or on an Asian island, or at sea, or in aerial combat. And as life expired, we know that those who could had last thoughts of us and of their love for us.

As they thought of us then, so, too, we think of them now. With love, with devotion. And with faith -- the certainty that what they died for was worthy of their sacrifice. Faith, too, in God and in the nation that has pledged itself to his work and to the dream of human freedom.

And a nation, too, that today and always pledges itself to their eternal memory.

Thank you. God bless you. (Applause.)

END

11:20 A.M. EST

ADDRESS TO THE MID-WINTER
CONFERENCE - VETERANS OF
FOREIGN WARS, WASHINGTON, D. C.
MARCH 10, 1985
RICHARD T. CHILDRESS
Director of Political-Military Affairs -
National Security Council

I appreciate this opportunity to speak with you concerning an issue of personal priority of President Reagan and governmental priority of this Administration, accounting for our missing men in Southeast Asia. Having just returned to Washington last night from a ten-day mission to both Vietnam and Laos, the opportunity is timely and I will provide you the results of this trip later.

As you well know, President Reagan was active in urging responsible government action on this question long before assuming office and directed that a strategy be developed and implemented to achieve the fullest possible accounting of our missing servicemen. This strategy was developed and is being actively implemented by all relevant departments and agencies.

We had several challenges to this strategy to overcome. One of the most difficult was to convince the governments of Vietnam and Laos that the issue was not a dead issue between our governments. Given the apathy and inaction of the past, this proved no ordinary task. You must remember that the USG had made presumptive findings of death for legal/administrative reasons and there had been no turnover of remains by the Vietnamese for over two years (1979-80) when President Reagan assumed office. Since that time, there has been turnovers in each year, regular technical meetings established, the first ever joint crash site excavation in Laos or Indochina since the end of the war and I'm optimistic after this trip of accelerated progress from both Vietnam and Laos.

Another major challenge was and is domestic. Since the priority was raised, public awareness has generated an incredible array of POW/MIA groups and individuals purporting special interest or ability to solve this issue. Quite frankly, I have seen the issue exploited for political reasons, for financial reasons and for ego reasons. The most damaging private effort was the comic-opera foray by a retired Lieutenant Colonel who delayed agreement on the Pakse joint excavation for one year by crossing into Laos using fabricated intelligence. Incredibly, he went public again just prior to the scheduled excavation again purporting to have crossed the border. But he is not alone. There are others, some well intentioned, some simply scam artists who are raising money on

this issue claiming the USG is either not serious or incapable of taking action.

There is a legitimate role for the private sector to aid us, but it is not as diplomats, intelligence agents or soldiers. The USG has no shortage of these talents. Some of your local chapters have been approached by these would be saviors-and it is critical that responsible mainline veterans groups have current information so the incredible amount of misinformation being spread can be refuted and energy directed towards responsible activities.

The above continuing problem aside, let me update you on the latest trip which Ann Griffiths and I took over the past 10 days.

In Vietnam, we met with Nguyen Co Thach, the Vietnamese Foreign Minister, and an alternate member of the Vietnamese politburo. The discussions were frank and open and progress was made.

Although I am not at liberty to divulge all of the sensitive exchanges, I can provide you with some specific results:

- They agreed to increase the number of technical meetings by the JCRC from four per year to a minimum of 6 per year. These meetings are the opportunity for exchanges on specific cases and the instrument that the Vietnamese use to demonstrate progress. The more meetings held, the greater the data exchange and the more likely progress will ensue.
- They agreed, based upon information available and need, to meet even more frequently. This is a positive sign of flexibility and holds the promise of accelerated case resolution.
- They agreed to an early repatriation of five sets of remains in March of this year based upon the results of the February technical meeting.
- They took us to a previously unvisited crash site of a B-52 on the outskirts of Hanoi, now filled in and covered by a garden. This site is an obvious candidate for excavation.
- We discussed the question of joint crash site excavations as conducted in Laos and although they have not yet agreed to such a venture, it is under study and the Foreign Minister indicated he would seriously consider it for the future.

The Vietnamese have indicated in the past that their own people question Vietnamese cooperation with us since so many of their own relatives are missing from the war. In this regard, before

our departure, a Vietnam Veteran approached the League saying he had some information on 3 locations where North Vietnamese or Viet Cong soldiers had been buried. We passed this information to the Vietnamese in Hanoi and they indicated such actions were helpful in demonstrating reciprocal cooperation. Here is a new area that veterans can aid us. I would request that the VFW membership poll their Vietnam Veterans to find such information and provide it to DOD or the League so we can pass it to the Vietnamese or Lao as appropriate in our meetings.

In Laos, we met with Vice Foreign Minister Soubanh to express official appreciation for the successful excavation of the Pakse crash site in February and discuss next steps. We have been working with the Lao in the context of overall improvement of the relationship between our governments and informed them that our principle measure of sincerity would be progress on the POW/MIA issue. We have made it clear that we desire improved relations and have provided disaster relief to a Vientiane hospital, cast positive votes in international financial institutions for development loans and sent a shipment of rice to meet a disaster shortage in that country.

The Pakse excavation was a major step forward which we applaud. The Congress, on a bipartisan basis, has agreed with us to lift the current bilateral aid ban on Laos should the Lao demonstrate a sustained pattern of progress. Vice Foreign Minister Soubanh said his government would continue their efforts, but was not specific concerning the means. We discussed further steps that we hoped the Lao could take to show that future cooperation did not stop with Pakse and they have these suggestions under consideration. Should we obtain agreement, we will approach Congress and request this ban be lifted. At that time, we will ask for veterans groups' support of our request.

Finally, I would like to publicly thank the VFW, who along with the American Legion, DAV, AmVets, PVA and others who have vigorously supported our efforts and those of that brave group who have carried the torch for so long, the National League of Families. Continuous and responsible veterans groups actions in support of our priority will demonstrate the unity of this nation to resolve finally this national tragedy and institutionalize the concept of vigorous efforts to account for any of our men that may be lost in future conflicts. I salute you for your past efforts, thank you for your current efforts and humbly request your future support.

Thank you.

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Birmingham, Alabama)

For Immediate Release

June 6, 1985

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
TO FUNDRAISING LUNCHEON FOR
SENATOR JEREMIAH DENTON

Main Hall
Birmingham-Jefferson Civic Center
Birmingham, Alabama

12:48 P.M. CDT

THE PRESIDENT: Mr. Chairman, Mr. Mayor, Senator Denton, Mrs. Denton, all of you, thank you all very much.

You know, listening to Jerry, I was reminded of what a general of ours said when he was asked about any secret weapons we might possess in World War II. And he said that our secret weapon was just the best darn kids in the world. Well, whenever I'm -- (applause) -- with Jerry I see that one of the best darn kids grew up into one of the best darned officers and now is one of the best darned Senators in the United States Congress. (Applause.)

Jerry and I came into office in the same year, 1981, and for the last 4 -1/2 years, he's been a pillar of support for our efforts to keep America strong and free and true. He's been rated the most conservative Senator by the National Journal. That's my kind of Senator. (Applause.) His voting record has been rated 100 percent by the American Conservative Union, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Conservatives Against Liberal Legislation -- I like the name of that one -- the National Alliance of Senior Citizens, the Christian Voters Victory Fund and some others. The magazine, Conservative Digest, took a poll of its readers and Jerry Denton was their second most admired Senator. Now, knowing Jerry, he's probably wondering where he slipped up. But that's all right because we're going to make sure that you have at least another six years to make number one. (Applause.)

He's more than one voice and one vote in the Senate. He's one of the most persuasive leaders on the Hill. And he's also one of the most effective spokesmen I know for the interests of his state, this proud and growing State of Alabama, which, as he says so well, is marching confidently into the future.

One example of Jerry's abilities in looking out for Alabama is the Tenn-Tom Waterway, which, due in great part to his support and leadership, was completed ahead of schedule.

MORE

We're also joined tonight with three very able state leaders -- State Republican Chairman Emory Folmar who also did a tremendous job for us as his finance chairman in the campaign and from the Republican National Committee, Perry Hooper and Jean Sullivan. I also want to recognize the job that's being done by Congressmen Bill Dickinson and Sonny Callahan. I don't know if Sonny claims any -- (applause) -- I don't know if Sonny claims any relation to Harry Callahan, but after all he's done, he really makes my day. (Laughter.) (Applause.)

Jerry's been telling me about the progress of Operation Open Door, the program that's been set up to bring Democrats into the Republican fold. So let me pause right here and congratulate all of you. Welcome on board. And those of you made the decision in the Grand Old Party. Nowadays we also call it the Great Opportunity Party. Switching to the Republican Party is rapidly becoming a venerable tradition -- Sonny and Emory are both Republican converts and, well, so is the President of the United States. (Laughter.) (Applause.)

I know from personal experience how hard it can be to make the change from Democrat to Republican. I also know that there comes a time when you look in your heart and realize that it may be hard to change but it's just something that you've got to do. Party loyalty can be mighty fierce, though.

We all know that story about way back when -- probably one of the first Republicans was running here in the South for office, out soliciting votes and he was rejected by one gentleman who said to him, "I'm a Democrat, always been a Democrat, my Pappy was a Democrat, and my grandpappy was a Democrat." And the candidate made the mistake of saying, "Well, if your pappy was a jackass and your grandpappy was a jackass, what would that make you?" And he says, "A Republican." (Laughter.)

But the -- I think all that's changing. While a lot of Democrats have stood fast by their principles, the party has been pulled out from under their feet by a kind of left-wing leadership. I know it's what made me change and I found the answer and will suggest it to others who maybe are considering it. And as I say, I know the pain. It was like changing your religion. And I was converted in principle before I could still come -- bring myself to make that change in party. And then I heard the words of another man who had changed party -- Winston Churchill. And Winston said, "Some men change principle for party and some change party for principle." (Applause.)

A lot of Democrats supported Senator Denton and me in 1980 and we're very grateful. And we just want to say to any registered Democrats out there who might not be so happy about the direction their party is heading -- if you're looking for a new home the Republican Party has a welcome mat out and the doors are wide open. Come on over. And I can tell you, if you really look back -- and I look back to that first vote that I cast in 1932 as a Democrat and others that I cast subsequently -- and I remember what I voted for, not who. And then, the time came when I realized that what I had voted for there -- reduction of the federal government in cost, elimination of useless boards and commissions, states rights -- not protectionism, but free trade. The leadership of the Democratic Party today does not represent those things, but millions of rank and file patriotic Democrats throughout the nation represent those things and I believe that we're trying to represent them in the leadership of the Republican Party. So you're welcome. (Applause.)

Today, June 6th, is a double anniversary. It marks the day, 41 years ago, that the Allies won Normandy Beach, and the day 39 years ago that Jerry won his lovely bride, Jane, and convinced her to marry him. Happy anniversary. (Applause.) Congratulations to you both.

That coincidence kind of makes you think how closely intertwined our families, our faith and our communities are with the freedom that we cherish. The family is the guardian of our most treasured possessions -- our values of loyalty, chastity and love, and our belief in human dignity, and the incalculable worth of each individual life -- and through the family, each generation passes these values on to the next as a sacred inheritance. It's the family that civilizes us, that keeps us human, and ensures that our future will be humane.

Totalitarian ideologies, in their drive to subvert human nature, will always be hostile to the family and its transcendent loyalties. We have seen that today in Russian totalitarianism; the taking over of the children by the state, the virtual elimination of family control. But free and democratic nations must be sure to honor, protect and nourish their families as if their very survival depended on it, because it truth, it does.

In his 4-1/2 years in the Senate, Jerry's been an untiring advocate of the family, and I might say his seven children and eight grandchildren attest to the fact that he practices what he preaches. (Laughter and applause.)

Jerry established and chairs the Senate Caucus on the Family. He's been a leader in the fight against child abuse, and his Adolescent Family Life Act has been on the books since 1981, helping to combat the tragedy of adolescent pregnancy. And Jerry knows that families don't hand over to the state all rights to their children when they walk through the front door on their way to school. I know there's been a strong push here in Birmingham to help restore voluntary prayer in public schools. As this week's Supreme Court decision shows, we still have an uphill battle before us. So I hope we can also count on the support of Alabama's entire congressional delegation for our prayer amendment, because it is time it was adopted. (Applause.)

Last year, with the passage of the "Equal Access Act," Jerry made sure that student religious groups have the same rights as other student groups. Thomas Jefferson said, "The God who gave us life gave us liberty." Well, thanks to Jerry's determined efforts, Alabama schoolchildren now have a little more liberty to thank their God for both these great gifts.

Last week I announced our plan to completely overhaul our nation's tax structure and replace it with one that's fairer, simpler, more compassionate, and most importantly, one that gives the American family a long-overdue break. As I said then, our proposal is the strongest pro-family initiative in post-war history. First, it will take the tax lid off our economy and make America an engine of economic growth and job creation. We've called it America's Tax Plan, and I'm convinced that it is quite simply the most effective jobs creation bill that ever came before the United States Congress. We're not going to rest until every American who wants a job has a job, until the doors of opportunity are open so wide that everyone from the inner cities to the countryside can walk right on through.

We're also going to give immediate tax relief to America's families by nearly doubling the personal exemption, raising the standard deduction, lowering income tax rates and making tax deductible IRA accounts fully available to homemakers, so that spouses that choose to stay home and take care of the children are no longer penalized. (Applause.) Through our plan, a family of four wouldn't pay of cent in federal income tax on the first \$12,000 of income, and only 15 cents on the dollar up to \$29,000 of taxable income.

Our tax proposal will right the injustices in the old system, help families and increase economic opportunity. There are two things that our tax plan will not do, however. It will not expand the deficit and it will not raise taxes. Now, I'm glad that some forward-looking Democrats in Congress have decided to join hands with us and work alongside their Republican colleagues to remold our tax system along the lines of fairness, simplicity and economic growth. Since "Rosty" and I went on TV urging tax change, Washington has been deluged under a mountain of letters and telegrams, most with one very simple message: "America, go for it." Well, all I have to say is, keep those cards and letters coming, folks. (Applause.)

I can only hope that this emerging spirit of a bipartisanship will also transfer to the transcendent moral issue of our time: The support and protection of freedom from the assault of communism. (Applause.) Sooner or later, we're all forced to shed any illusions we may have -- or may have had -- about communist regimes. Jeremiah Denton knows from experience what communism means. He wrote about it graphically in a book called, When Hell Was in Session. And we're all seeing that communism has become synonymous with starvation, terror, brutality and prison camps.

Some would like to ignore Nicaragua's connection to the international terrorist network, the PLO, Libya and the followers of the Ayatollah Khomeini, who now -- thanks to the Sandinista communists -- have a foothold in Central America, just two hours by air from our southern border. Some would like to ignore the incontrovertible evidence of the communist religious persecution -- of Catholics, Jews and fundamentalists; of their campaign of virtual genocide against the Miskito Indians; of their attempted subversion of their free, democratic neighbors.

When it comes to the communists in Nicaragua, some have adopted a hear -- hear nor a -- see no, hear no evil -- speak no evil attitude. But as the refugees come flooding out of Nicaragua, it becomes harder and harder not to hear their cries of anguish, not to see the suffering of their shattered lives. And it becomes all but impossible not to speak out against the tragedy the communists are inflicting on their country.

I remember in Washington a few weeks back meeting a young man who was a fundamentalist preacher in Nicaragua. His face was simply a gargoyle. He had prayed, and they came in the night, the military, with the Sandinistas, and took him out, tied him to a pillar of the house where he was sleeping and then threw gasoline in the house and set it on fire. Well, fortunately, the fires burned the ropes before they could kill him. But he, with his clothing in flames and his body in flames, fled. Campesinos found him, took him to a hospital. He had to hide who he was and how this had happened or they would have caught him again. And he was in Washington, there, still speaking out for what he believes in. And what was his sin in the eyes of the Sandinista government? He'd prayed, and prayed with some of the people, the citizens there who still wanted to have religion.

When it comes to the communists and what they're doing to their country, well, Daniel Ortega's money-run to the Soviet Union should have come as no surprise. Still, for many, it took this last trip to dispel their final illusions and to make it clear that the Nicaraguan communists are no more and no less than agents of Soviet expansionism and the sworn enemies of freedom. (Applause)

But still, in spite of what some are -- keep saying, we remain committed to a peaceful solution. And so do the democratic opposition in Nicaragua. But while they're waiting for their own government to talk to them they must survive. And that's what our assistance is designed to do -- to give peace a chance and to keep alive the goal of freedom in Nicaragua.

Congress is now reconsidering its aid cut-off to the freedom fighters. In fact, the Senate vote comes up today. So I'm afraid Jerry and I are going to have to do a quick disappearing act after my speech to get him up there in time to cast his vote to give freedom a chance in Nicaragua. (Applause.)

If aid to the freedom fighters passes the Senate, which I have faith it will, then it will be up to the Democratically-controlled House to show the Sandinista communists that they're not fooling anybody; that when it comes to supporting freedom and reconciliation in Nicaragua, the United States can be counted on. American stands as one.

very different
This, as I mentioned, is a day of anniversaries, proud and happy ones. But a few weeks ago on the other side of the globe, another terrible and bitter anniversary was noted -- the 10th anniversary of the fall of South Vietnam to the communists. Today the Vietnamese communists can celebrate the transformation of their nation into one of the poorest countries on earth. [They can celebrate the creation of new Vietnamese gulags, ten years of torture and forced relocations, and the flight of nearly a million refugees and boat people.]

substantive

They can celebrate so-called reeducation camps, boat people, relocations, almost total dependence on the Soviet Union and Vietnamese soldiers dying in Cambodia.

Well, ten years later, after a prolonged season in hell, the memory of freedom still survives. The young children may have known only the darkness of communist tyranny, but even they have parents and older relatives who tell them of South Vietnam before the fall and bring a ray of hope into their lives. The Vietnamese people say that America is number one because America tried to give freedom a chance in Vietnam. And ten years later, the people for whom our brave American soldiers fought and died and sacrificed are still profoundly grateful.

The Vietnamese government says they also want us back -- they want to normalize relations with the United States. But we have made it clear there is only one way this can take place. The American people demand the fullest possible accounting for our POWs and MIAs. (Applause.) This and a peaceful resolution of their brutal occupation of Cambodia would help bring Vietnam out of international isolation.

substantive

The Vietnamese government says they want us back also and we have made it clear how that can take place: The American people will not allow us to come back without substantial resolution of the POW/MIA issue. This and peaceful negotiations with their neighbors over Cambodia would bring Vietnam back into the family of nations -- a course we as Americans could welcome.

He learned then that the struggle for liberty is the struggle for life, itself. And he learned that Abraham Lincoln's words were never truer -- that the United States is still the "... last, best hope of earth."

I think Jeremiah Denton said it best when, after almost eight years of unimaginable suffering and hardship, he stepped from that plane and onto his home soil. And I remember seeing that early in the morning in Sacramento on television, without any knowledge that we would ever be standing here in this particular situation.

And I think we can all say with him today what those of us who were watching saw him say then -- the simplest, truest words ever spoken, "God bless America." (Applause.)

Thank you, thank you all, God bless you all and God bless America. Thank you. (Applause.)

END

1:11 P.M. CDT

POW/MIA
Speeches

4614 Add-on

INFORMATION

June 10, 1985

TO: BUD McFARLANE

FROM: DICK CHILDRESS

SUBJECT: Speechwriters and Policy

FYI.

regime and warned that a persistent "hostile attitude" would harm the search for American MIAs in Indochina.

The official Radio Hanoi called Reagan's remarks in Birmingham, Ala., on Thursday "foul slanders."

In the speech, Reagan said, "Today the Vietnamese communists can celebrate the transformation of their nation into one of the poorest countries on earth. They can celebrate the creation of new Vietnamese gulags, 10 years of torture and forced relocations and the flight of nearly 1 million refugees and boat people."

From news services and staff reports.

Vietnam Threatens


■ BANGKOK, Thailand—Vietnam bristled at President Reagan's criticism of the communist

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

June 7, 1985

INFORMATION

MEMORANDUM FOR ROBERT C. McFARLANE

FROM: RICHARD CHILDRESS 

SUBJECT: Speechwriters and Policy

When you called the other night and asked me about some of the wording for the President's speech in Alabama, I had a weary feeling you were reading from a version that did not reflect NSC changes. I was right.

I'm not sure how we deal with this, but they ignored the fixes we had put in and as a result, there are not only inaccuracies, but mixed policy signals. This kind of thing is inhibiting progress on our bilateral issues with Vietnam. Without at least continued incremental movement, I can't hold the domestic side together, which in some quarters (other than the League) is becoming increasingly vociferous.

Hanoi reacted immediately -- speaking of gross slander, rejection of POW/MIA as a precondition to normalization and that we are setting up obstacles. We will wait to see if this translates into a retreat on POW/MIA.

Attachment

Tab A Page 5 of President's Alabama Speech
with ignored NSC fixes

But still, in spite of what some are -- keep saying, we remain committed to a peaceful solution. And so do the democratic opposition in Nicaragua. But while they're waiting for their own government to talk to them they must survive. And that's what our assistance is designed to do -- to give peace a chance and to keep alive the goal of freedom in Nicaragua.

Congress is now reconsidering its aid cut-off to the freedom fighters. In fact, the Senate vote comes up today. So I'm afraid Jerry and I are going to have to do a quick disappearing act after my speech to get him up there in time to cast his vote to give freedom a chance in Nicaragua. (Applause.)

If aid to the freedom fighters passes the Senate, which I have faith it will, then it will be up to the Democratically-controlled House to show the Sandinista communists that they're not fooling anybody; that when it comes to supporting freedom and reconciliation in Nicaragua, the United States can be counted on. American stands as one.

very different
This, as I mentioned, is a day of anniversaries, proud and happy ones. But a few weeks ago on the other side of the globe, another terrible and bitter anniversary was noted -- the 10th anniversary of the fall of South Vietnam to the communists. Today the Vietnamese communists can celebrate the transformation of their nation into one of the poorest countries on earth. [They can celebrate the creation of new Vietnamese gulags, ten years of torture and forced relocations, and the flight of nearly a million refugees and boat people.] *substantive*

They can celebrate so-called reeducation camps, boat people, relocations, almost total dependence on the Soviet Union and Vietnamese soldiers dying in Cambodia.

their command to say, "America, number one."

Well, ten years later, after a prolonged season in hell, the memory of freedom still survives. The young children may have known only the darkness of communist tyranny, but even they have parents and older relatives who tell them of South Vietnam before the fall and bring a ray of hope into their lives. The Vietnamese people say that America is number one because America tried to give freedom a chance in Vietnam. And ten years later, the people for whom our brave American soldiers fought and died and sacrificed are still profoundly grateful.

The Vietnamese government says they also want us back -- they want to normalize relations with the United States. But we have made it clear there is only one way this can take place. The American people demand the fullest possible accounting for our POWs and MIAs. (Applause.) This and a peaceful resolution of their brutal occupation of Cambodia would help bring Vietnam out of international isolation. *substantive*

The Vietnamese government says they want us back also and we have made it clear how that can take place: The American people will not allow us to come back without substantial resolution of the POW/MIA issue. This and peaceful negotiations with their neighbors over Cambodia would bring Vietnam back into the family of nations -- a course we as Americans could welcome.

He learned then that the struggle for liberty is the struggle for life, itself. And he learned that Abraham Lincoln's words were never truer -- that the United States is still the "... last, best hope of earth."

I think Jeremiah Denton said it best when, after almost eight years of unimaginable suffering and hardship, he stepped from that plane and onto his home soil. And I remember seeing that early in the morning in Sacramento on television, without any knowledge that we would ever be standing here in this particular situation.

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

May 31, 1985

File
Spencer
w/ speech memo.
P

ACTION

MEMORANDUM FOR ROBERT M. KIMMITT

FROM: ROGER W. ROBINSON *RWR*

SUBJECT: Presidential Remarks: Fundraiser for Senator Denton

David Chew has requested comments be provided to Ben Elliott by noon today on the attached proposed Presidential remarks for a fundraiser for Senator Denton.

Dick Childress has recommended the following changes:

-- Page 7, third paragraph, third line, delete words "terrible and bitter" and substitute words "very different."

-- Page 7, third paragraph, last sentence, change to read: They can celebrate so-called reeducation camps, boat people, relocations, almost total dependence on the Soviet Union and Vietnamese soldiers dying in Cambodia.

-- Page 8, line 16, at the end of the sentence add following sentence: "The Vietnamese government says they want us back also and we have made it clear how that can take place: The American people will not allow us to come back without substantial resolution of the POW/MIA issue. This and peaceful negotiations with their neighbors over Cambodia would bring Vietnam back into the family of nations -- a course we as Americans could welcome."

Jack Matlock questions the use of the phrase "hell on earth" on page 6.

RECOMMENDATION:

That you sign the memorandum to Ben Elliott and response block at Tab I recommending changes on pages 6, 7 and 8.

Approve *K* Disapprove

Attachments

Tab I Memo to Elliott
Tab A Presidential Remarks

CMZ
KS
N/A
JM
N/A
N/A
SS
Chris Lehman, Karna Small, Walt Raymond, Jack Matlock,
Ray Burghardt, Howard Teicher, Ron Sable, Steve Steiner,
Ollie North concur.
N/A

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

June 3, 1985

ROBINSON

MEMORANDUM FOR BEN ELLIOTT

FROM: ROBERT M. KIMMITT *Rh*

SUBJECT: Presidential Address: Fundraiser for Senator Denton

The NSC staff recommends the following changes to the attached Presidential address:

-- Page 6, line 15, we question the use of the phrase "hell on earth."

-- Page 7, third paragraph, third line, delete words "terrible and bitter" and substitute words "very different."

-- Page 7, third paragraph, last sentence, change to read: "They can celebrate so-called reeducation camps, boat people, relocations, almost total dependence on the Soviet Union and Vietnamese soldiers dying in Cambodia."

-- Page 8, line 16, at the end of the sentence add the following sentence: "The Vietnamese government says they want us back also and we have made it clear how that can take place: The American people will not allow us to come back without substantial resolution of the POW/MIA issue. This and peaceful negotiations with their neighbors over Cambodia would bring Vietnam back into the family of nations -- a course we as Americans could welcome."

Attachment

Tab A Presidential Remarks

cc: David Chew

WHITE HOUSE STAFFING MEMORANDUM

DATE: 5/30/85 ACTION/CONCURRENCE/COMMENT DUE BY: Noon, 5/31/85

SUBJECT: REMARKS: FUNDRAISER FOR SENATOR DENTON

(5/30 - 6:30 p.m. draft)

	ACTION FYI			ACTION FYI	
VICE PRESIDENT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	LACY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
REGAN	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	McFARLANE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
STOCKMAN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	OGLESBY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BUCHANAN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	ROLLINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
CHAVEZ	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	RYAN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
CHEW	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	SPEAKES	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
DANIELS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	SPRINKEL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
FIELDING	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	SVAHN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
FRIEDERSDORF	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	TUTTLE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
HENKEL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	ELLIOTT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
HICKEY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
HICKS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
KINGON	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

REMARKS:

Please provide any comments directly to Ben Elliott, with an info copy to my office by noon tomorrow. Thanks.

RESPONSE:

NSC Staff comments on the attached remarks have been passed to Ben Elliott. A copy is attached for your information.

Robert M. Kimmitt
Executive Secretary

David L. Chew
Staff Secretary
Ext. 2702

(Gilder/BE)
May 30, 1985
6:30 p.m.

Received 08

MAY 30 1985

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: FUNDRAISER FOR SENATOR DENTON
BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA
THURSDAY, JUNE 6, 1985

Thank you. Thank you all very much.

You know, listening to Jerry, I was reminded of what a general said of the soldiers who fought in the Second World War. He called them our "secret weapon." "Just the best darn boys in the whole world." Well, whenever I'm with Jerry I see that one of the best darn boys grew up into one of the best darn officers, and is now one of the best darn Senators in the United States Congress.

Jerry and I came into office the same year, 1980, and for the last 4-1/2 years he's been a pillar of support for our efforts to keep America strong and free and true. He was rated the most conservative Senator by the National Journal. That's my kind of Senator. His voting record has been rated 100 percent by the American Conservative Union, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Conservatives Against Liberal Legislation -- I like the name of that one -- the National Alliance of Senior Citizens, the Christian Voters' Victory Fund, and others. The magazine, Conservative Digest, took a poll of its readers, and Jerry Denton was their second most admired Senator. Knowing Jerry, he's probably wondering where he slipped up.

But that's all right, Jerry, because we're going to make sure you have at least another 8 years to make number one.

Jerry is more than one voice, one vote in the Senate. He is one of the most persuasive leaders on the Hill, and he is also

one of the most effective spokesmen I know for the interests of his State, this proud and growing State of Alabama, which, as he says so well, is marching confidently into the future. One example of Jerry's abilities in looking out for Alabama is the Tenn-Tom Waterway, which, due in great part to his support and leadership, was completed below budget and ahead of schedule.

We're also joined tonight with three very able State leaders -- State Republican Chairman, Emory Folmer, who also did a tremendous job as our State Chairman in the campaign, and from the Republican National Committee, Perry Hooper and Jean Sullivan. I want to recognize as well Congressmen Bill Dickinson and Sonny Callahan. I don't know if Sonny claims any relation to Harry Callahan, but I just want to say that your being here really makes my day. Both of you.

Jerry has been telling me about the progress of Operation Open Door, the program that's been set up to bring Democrats into the Republican fold. So let me pause right here and congratulate you, Sage Lyon. Welcome on board the Grand Old Party. Nowadays, we also call it -- the Great Opportunity Party. Switching to the Republican Party is rapidly becoming a venerable tradition -- Sonny and Emory are both Republican converts, and, well, so is the President of the United States. I know from personal experience how hard it can be to make the change from Democrat to Republican -- I also know that there comes a time when you look in your heart and realize that it may be hard to change, but it's just something you've got to do.

Party Loyalty sure can be mighty fierce, though. I remember a story of one of the first Republicans running in the South -- it might have been right here in Alabama. One guy came up to him at a rally and told him flat out there was no way he'd ever get his vote. "Why my father was a Democrat," he said, "his father was a Democrat, and his father before him was a Democrat. That's why I'm a Democrat." So the candidate asked, "What if your father had been a jackass, and his father had been a jackass and his father before him. What would that make you?" "That's simple," the guy shot back, "that would make me a Republican."

But I think all that's changing, because, while a lot of Democrats have stood fast by their principles, the Party has been pulled out from under their feet by the left wing. A lot of registered Democrats supported Senator Denton and me in 1980. We're very grateful, and we just want to say to any registered Democrats out there who might not be so happy about the direction their Party is heading, if you're looking for a new home, the Republican Party has the welcome mat out and its doors wide open. Come on over.

Today, June 6th, is a double anniversary. It marks the day, 41 years ago, that the Allies won Normandy Beach, and the day, 39 years ago, that Jerry won his lovely bride, Jane, and convinced her to marry him. Congratulations to you both.

That coincidence kind of makes you think how closely intertwined our families, our faith, and our communities are with the freedom we cherish. The family is the guardian of our most treasured possessions -- our values of fidelity, loyalty,

chastity, and love, and our belief in human dignity and the incalculable worth of each individual life -- and through the family, each generation passes these values on to the next as a sacred inheritance. It is the family that civilizes us, that keeps us human, and ensures that our future will be humane.

Totalitarian ideologies, in their drive to subvert human nature, will always be hostile to the family and its transcendent loyalties; but free and democratic nations must be sure to honor, protect, and nourish their families as if their very survival depended on it -- because, in truth, it does.

In his 4-1/2 years in the Senate, Jerry has been an untiring advocate of the family. And I might say, his seven children and eight grandchildren attest to the fact that he practices what he preaches.

Jerry established and chairs the Senate Caucus on the Family, he has been a leader in the fight against child abuse, and his Adolescent Family Life Act has been on the books since 1981, helping to combat the growing tragedy of adolescent pregnancy. And Jerry knows that families don't hand over to the State all rights to their children when they walk through the front door on the way to school. Last year, with the passage of the "Equal Access Act," he became the first Member of Congress to get school prayer legislation enacted into law. Thomas Jefferson said, "The God who gave us life, gave us liberty." Thanks to Jerry's determined efforts, our schoolchildren now have a little more liberty to thank their God for both these great gifts.

Last week I announced our plan to completely overhaul our Nation's tax structure and replace it with one that is fairer, simpler, more compassionate, and most importantly, one that gives the American family a long-overdue break. As I said then, our proposal is the strongest, pro-family initiative in postwar history. First, it will take the tax lid off our economy and make America an engine of economic growth and job creation. We've called it America's Tax Plan, and I'm convinced that it is, quite simply, the most effective jobs creation bill that ever came before the United States Congress. We are not going to rest until every American who wants a job has a job, until the doors of opportunity are opened so wide that everyone, from the inner cities to the rural farms, can walk right on through.

We're also going to give immediate tax relief to America's families by practically doubling the personal exemption, raising the standard deduction, lowering income tax rates, and making tax-deductible I.R.A. accounts fully available to homemakers, so that spouses who choose to stay home and take care of the children are no longer penalized. A family of four wouldn't pay a cent in Federal income tax on the first \$12,000 of earnings, and only 15 cents on the dollar for the next \$29,000 of taxable income. Now a family with seven children like Jerry's -- well, it would be a while before they payed any income taxes at all.

Our tax proposal will right the injustices in the old system, help families, and increase economic opportunity. There are two things our tax plan will not do, however. It will not expand the deficit and it will not raise taxes. I'm glad that

some forward-looking, progressive Democrats in Congress have decided to join hands with us and work alongside their Republican colleagues to remold our tax system along the lines of fairness, simplicity and economic growth. Since "Rosty" and I went on T.V. urging tax change, Washington has been deluged under a mountain of letters and telegrams, most with one very simple message -- "America: Go for it." All I have to say is, keep those cards and letters coming in, folks.

I can only hope that this emerging spirit of bipartisanship will also transfer to the transcendent moral issue of our time -- the support and protection of freedom from the worldwide assault of communism. Sooner or later, we are all forced to shed any illusions we may have had about Communist regimes. Jeremiah Denton knows from experience that communism means, quite literally, hell on Earth. We are all seeing that communism has become synonymous with terror, brutality, prison camps, and mass murder.

Some would like to ignore Nicaragua's connection to the international terrorist network -- the P.L.O., the Libyans and the followers of the Ayatollah Khomeini, who now, thanks to the Sandinista Communists, have a base of operations on the American mainland, just 3 hours by air from our Southern border. Some would like to ignore the incontrovertible evidence of the Communists' religious persecution -- of Catholics, Jews, and Fundamentalists; of their campaign of virtual genocide against the Miskito Indians; of their attempted subversion of their free, democratic neighbors.

When it comes to the Communists in Nicaragua, some have adopted a hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil attitude. But as the refugees come flooding out of Nicaragua, it becomes harder and harder not to hear their cries of anguish, see the suffering of their shattered lives; and it becomes all but impossible not to speak out against the tragedy the Communists are inflicting on their country.

Daniel Ortega's money-run to the Soviet Union should have come as no surprise. The number of times he's flown over there, you'd think they'd installed shuttle service between Managua and Moscow. Still, for many, it was Ortega's last trip to the Soviet Union, following hard on the heels of the House's vote to deny funds to the Nicaraguan Freedom Fighters, that punctured their final illusions and made it clear that the Nicaraguan Communists are no more, and no less, than agents of Soviet expansionism and the sworn enemies of freedom.

This, as I mentioned, is a day of anniversaries, proud and happy ones; but a few weeks ago on the other side of the globe, another terrible and bitter anniversary was noted -- the 10th anniversary of the fall of South Vietnam to the Communists. Today the Vietnamese Communists can celebrate the transformation of their nation into one of the poorest countries on Earth. They can celebrate the creation of new Vietnamese gulags, 10 years of torture and forced relocations, and the flight of over a million refugee boat people.

I can imagine how Jerry felt about the media coverage of the Communists' celebrations. I know how I felt. But there was one

bittersweet-moment that I will never forget. One of the T.V. commentators, at the end of his stay there, remarked that he couldn't understand it, but everywhere he went in South Vietnam, as soon as the people found out he was an American, they would rush up to him with smiles and shouts of joy, using all the English at their command to say over and over again, "America, number one."

Ten years later, after a prolonged season in hell, the memory of freedom still survives. The young children may have known only the darkness of Communist tyranny, but even they have parents and older relatives, to tell them of South Vietnam before the fall and bring a ray of hope into their lives. The Vietnamese people say America is number one, because America tried to give freedom a chance in Vietnam, and 10 years later, the people for whom our brave American soldiers fought and died and sacrificed are still profoundly grateful.

For almost 8 years, Jeremiah Denton endured the inhuman trials and tortures of a North Vietnamese prison camp, but his faith and the love of his family and country not only gave him the courage to survive, but to alert the world to the horrors of the Vietnamese gulag. He became in those 8 years not only a great hero to his country, but a hero to the cause of human freedom.

He learned then that the struggle for liberty is the struggle for life itself; and he learned that Abraham Lincoln's words were never truer -- that the United States is still the "last, best hope of man on Earth."

I think Jeremiah Denton said it best, when after 8 years of unimaginable suffering and hardship, he stepped from that plane and onto his home soil. And I think we can all say with him today the simplest, truest words ever spoken, "God Bless America."

Thank you. God bless you all, and God bless America.

League Mtg '85

MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

July 3, 1985

MEMORANDUM FOR WILL CATTAN

FROM: DICK CHILDRESS *D*

SUBJECT: Vice President's Speech to the National League
of Families

Attached is the rough draft I promised. As you will note, there are a couple of places on hold waiting further developments. I will return from the Shultz trip on July 15 and have some additional info.

The families are reassured on a number of points in the current draft and also reinforced on the basic nature towards the issue. It is one of high emotion and the slightest nuance change or use of certain code words can make an enormous difference.

If you could work with this while I'm away, I'll be in touch as soon as I return. The VP's WWII experiences are a natural and perhaps his CIA experience, although the priorities on this were not as high during his tenure.

Bud McFarlane will be speaking at their award dinner and will parallel the VP's remarks with more specifics. Many thanks -- look forward to working with you upon my return.

NB/also attached is background material I promised.

Attachment
Rough Draft

cc: Don Gregg

I am speaking to one of the bravest audiences of heroes in America and it is my privilege to be here. Ten years after the end of United States involvement in the Vietnam War, it is the greatest tragedy that we must still gather like this to seek answers to the fate of your relatives in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Those answers are rightfully yours and it is both our goal and obligation to do all we can to find them.

You, the families of our missing men, not only suffered the anxiety of service of your relatives in combat, but continue to endure uncertainty as to their fate or the absence of the return of their remains for honorable burial. Our Vietnam veterans are belatedly receiving the recognition due them for their sacrifices and heroism in an unpopular war. You, and only you, represent those Vietnam veterans and civilians, who have not yet returned and cannot receive such accolades.

We know this. That is why I am here, and why the President has made resolution of their fate a matter of highest national priority. His commitment is not just words. I know. His personal determination to return your relatives, whether still held captive or who sacrificed their lives in service to this nation, has galvanized an entire government, gained the attention of friend and foe, and has finally awakened this nation to the unresolved fate of our missing men.

I would be remiss if I did not make it clear that such an effort would have been impossible without the National League of Families. You spent much of your vigil in an adversarial role to your government. We understand the reasons. But, the most impressive feature of the League has been your ability to recognize when the government is serious. Your support of the President's priority, your close consultations with us through the interagency group on strategy and policy have been invaluable to the progress we have made thus far. Ann Griffiths found the common ground between us and the Vietnamese on this issue during the early days, and her role continues to be invaluable. They also tell me she can be the most direct and insistent player in the issue and many government phone lines have felt the heat. The important thing about this, however, is characteristic of the League -- you criticize constructively and privately, understanding that public divisiveness now only creates the perception in Hanoi that delays on their part may bring changed attitudes favorable to them, not us.

Hanoi's attitude is changing. After a stalemate from 1979 to 1981, they began to slowly return our brave men back home. This process has been painfully slow, but has quickened each year. We have seen them taking steps to fulfill high-level commitments made to us. They are responding to the public interest that you have generated in conjunction with our public awareness efforts. Hanoi responds when they believe it to be in their national interest. Resolution of this issue is clearly in their

interest. They have heard it from you, from us, from the Congress, from veterans and concerned citizens, and from our allies and friends.

Although normalization of relations between our countries is officially conditioned upon a political settlement in Cambodia, they have clearly heard the message that the American body politic would oppose such a move without the fullest possible accounting for our men. Thus, solving it now and quickly in a humanitarian, not a political manner positions Vietnam for the future. We will not allow them to link this issue with normalization. They have agreed with us that it is a humanitarian issue and we will hold that posture. We are grateful for recent developments [More to be furnished based on developments in next 10 days].

We have been pursuing a policy of an improvement of relations with Laos since 1982. We have informed them that our principal measure of their sincerity is progress on the POW/MIA issue. We have made some progress for which we thank the Lao Government. The recent joint excavation at Pakse was a major step towards a sustained pattern of progress on this issue. The Lao are interested in removal of the Congressional ban on aid to that country. We have told them we are prepared to request this of the Congress when we are assured of continued progress. [More to be furnished based on developments in next 10 days.]

We can and should be grateful for the progress we have made together, but not satisfied. Resolution will take continuous hard work by all the relevant departments in the government, and we are determined to continue. It is a complex problem, not subject to simplistic solutions.

Increasingly, public awareness has generated interest in the issue nationwide, but also generated calls for special short-term commissions, private rescue operations or private diplomacy. Some of these attempts have delayed progress, others have sent the wrong signals to Hanoi. Your long history in the issue and knowledge of what is productive and what is harmful has set an example of responsibility to the entire country. I salute you for your sound, reliable judgment and advice.

I am heartened by the increased activity in the Congress in support of the national goal. Especially noteworthy have been the bipartisan efforts by the House Subcommittee on Asian Affairs and the House POW/MIA Task Force. They have traveled to Vietnam and Laos to reinforce our messages, held public and executive hearings and coordinated closely with us and the League on major initiatives.

The possibility of prisoners still being held captive against their will haunts us. We are pursuing this question with deliberate serious action through our intelligence apparatus and through direct negotiations. Despite some voices to the

contrary, who do not have access to the information, we have not yet been able to confirm that this is true. But, we do not rule it out and have made this clear to Hanoi. They have the answers to this question and they can provide them, not with words, but deeds. We will not relent and they know it.

Since 1981, the number of families without answers has dwindled by almost fifty. Despite our deep affection for you all, our goal is to put you completely out of business by resolving this issue. You have gained the respect of the Administration, the Congress, the major veterans groups, the media, millions of concerned Americans, our allies and our friends and the Vietnamese and Lao governments. You have done this, not solely because you are family members, but because you are serious, organized, experienced, responsible and determined. The Nation looks to you with honor, respect and admiration. Preserve that for your missing men and for our mutual quest to return them. History will then write about you in wondrous words. I am honored that you invited me to be with you, and I pledge to continue in my role as Vice President or in any future role to support resolution of this issue, in the President's words, as a matter of "highest national priority."