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Bob

Here is the transcript
from the May 28th
press conference

Get Chris Noel's next
conference

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION
REFERENCE SLIP

TO (Name or title—Organizational element—Room No. and bldg.)		INITIALS—DATE
1	061 FRH LRM	
2	062 RDB JRH WCG	
3	063 SMA JM AR WS	
4	064 DRF BD JO	
5	06DC	

REASON FOR REFERENCE

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| <input type="checkbox"/> APPROVAL | <input type="checkbox"/> CONCURRENCE | <input type="checkbox"/> NOTE AND RETURN |
| <input type="checkbox"/> AS REQUESTED | <input type="checkbox"/> FOR YOUR FILES | <input type="checkbox"/> PER CONVERSATION |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CALL ME | <input type="checkbox"/> INFORMATION | <input type="checkbox"/> RECOMMENDATION |
| <input type="checkbox"/> COMMENTS | <input type="checkbox"/> NECESSARY ACTION | <input type="checkbox"/> SIGNATURE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PREPARE REPLY FOR SIGNATURE OF | | |

REMARKS

06 FILES NHP
 To: KATHY CHRISTIANSON
 OEOB - 17th St. entrance
 Go to mailroom
 Call Kathy at 2657. They will
 send someone to pickup.
 Bob.

PERIOD	DATE
	TEL. EXT.

*File
Hunger Strikers*

VA Veterans Administration

REFERENCE SLIP

TO (Name or title-Mail routing symbol)	INITIALS-DATE
1. Strat Appleman	
2. Acting Asst. Administrator for	
3. Information Services	
4. VACO	
5.	

REASON FOR REFERENCE

- | | | |
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REMARKS

Attached is the transcription of that portion of my tape recording of the hunger strikers' news conference at the Wadsworth VAMC the morning of May 28, 1981. I went back outside and all of the news people had left the premises and I was unable to locate anyone who had a verbatim report of Chris Noel's statements. In this transcription her remarks are indicated by the initials "CN". Ron Kovic was also in attendance and his statements are also indicated. Pages 1 through 3 of this transcription are being mailed to you inasmuch as they did not include any remarks by Chris Noel. Those remarks attributed to "Q" are either questions by reporters or remarks by some of the hunger strikers.

Frank

Frank W. Terry, Area Director
Office of Information Services (06LA)

DATE	5/28/81
TEL. EXT.	799-7686

(Excited screams)

voice Hey, hey, the White House just ok'd all the statements.

Q Says who?

(more excited screams and mixed talk)

CN But those of you who don't know, the President has, in a moment, a time we find a new acting director of the Veterans Administration temporarily . I guess you know that?

Q No, I don't know anything.

G Alright, fine.

CN What I am telling you is this. The original hunger strikers are about ready to make a settlement. That's what I'm trying to tell you. And I've been trying to get in touch with Ron Bitzer and Ron Kovic this morning, but I have not been able...

Mr. Kovic I'm here right now. I'm here right now.

CN What has happened is that the acting director of the VA...

Q Who is who?

CN His name has just escaped me.

R Kovic Rufus Wilson.

CN Yes.

Q O.K. The acting director of the VA...

CN Has walked out...

Q Walked out over this strike?

CN I would think so. It seems that everybody has ok'd, and a senior staff member has ok'd the document...

Q The four requests, the four requests...

CN They are in this document.

Q Each and everyone of the four requests. Has each and everyone of them been met?

CN I will be able to tell you everything shortly.

Alright, one other question. Will we receive, will we receive a statement from the

White House? That's what we want.

CN You will receive a statement from the White House in the form of a telegram later on this afternoon. I will be able to tell you shortly as soon as we get the phone call what is in this document, and ^{they} we will be sending a copy of it to Ron Bitzer, Ron Kovic...

G And the hunger strikers...?

CN And the hunger strikers and also to a group in Santa Barbara.

R. Kovic O.k. Alright, our response to that...our response to that is that we are cautiously optimistic, um, the strike continues, we await the response from the President, we will make no decision on the status, we will make no decision on the status of the strike until we have read, until we have read everything, we are cautiously optimistic, we are awaiting it. This is, as far we're concerned, this is information, it's conjecture, until we see the material, until we can go over the material and then we will make a decision.

CN I tell, it is quite positive, the acting director of the VA to have walked out means that it is definitely very positive...

B It looks very good.

G ...for the Vietnam veteran.

R Can you say the original hunger strikers reached a settlement?

CN No.

CN No. No. No.

G Who are you referring to?

CN I am referring to the two that have been on the strike for 14 days
14 days, that's correct.

R. Kovic O.k. Again, we're going to be in communication with Merlin and with John. No decision no decision on the strike will be made until everyone here, everyone here, is made aware of the President's statement, everyone. And we are not, this strike is going to continue until we are completely satisfied that everyone of the four requests has been met, and we will not know that until this afternoon. So we are waiting.

CN I would like to make something very clear. We do not want a division over this.

R. Kovic We're not going to have one.

CN We do not want a division, so we really want to work this out all together so that it's peace for Vietnam veterans throughout the country. In spite of controversy,

Q This is a major breakthrough.

CN We are, we will work together.

Q Do you work for the VA?

CN No. No. I don't. I work with Vietnam veterans.

Q Chris, you'll have to repeat it for the cameras.

Q Tell me again what your new information is?

CN The information is that the documents have been prepared, accepted by the senior staff and at this point the acting director of the Veterans Administration, Rufus Wilson, has just resigned.

Q He's resigned over this?

CN We'll...

Q It's look like that.

Q How'd you get all this.

CN I am in touch with the White House.

Q No' when do they say that you will have these documents you're waiting on.

CN As soon as the new acting director has been chosen by the President. At this point it's between two men...

Q And what does this do the hunger strikers? Are they going to stay on their hunger strike until...

CN Until there's a need Stay on the hunger strike until there's a new administrator of the VA.

Q When will this be?

CN By tomorrow for sure.

basic Excuse me, you're saying the hunger strike will continue until we, we must evaluate the statement. This is conjecture, until we evaluate the statement thoroughly, no decision on the direction of the strike can be made until everyone here is able to study this document and to vote on the direction we're going to go.

Now I want to make that clear.

Q They have been continually ⁱⁿ support of Vietnam veterans since 1966.

Q You were with Armed Forces Radio?

Q I was with Armed Forces Radio, I am a friend of veterans everywhere, Vietnam veterans everywhere. I choose not to represent any particular organization. This is the hunger strike that was started by two individuals that believe in something so strong that they are willing to give their lives...

Q Who then, Marlin and John?

Q That's right. And these...

Q Where are they now?

Q They're not here. They will be here shortly.

Q What is your name?

Q Chris Noel. N O E L.

Q N O E L?

Q Yes. You will hear from us again probably, actually it's momentarily, we are simply waiting for the President to make his decision.

Q But you have been in contact with the White House this morning?

Q Yes.

Two Hunger Strikers Collapse at VA Site

By Cheryl Crooks
Time-Life News Service

LOS ANGELES - Two hunger-striking protesters collapsed yesterday as a group of Vietnam veterans began its second week of a sit-in. Leaders said the vets would not leave Wadsworth VA Medical Center until all their demands for improved medical care are met with documents on White House stationery and signed by the president.

But protest leader Ron Bitzer of the Center for Veteran's Rights indicated the hunger strike and sit-in at the hospital could be ended without a previously demanded personal meeting with the president.

"We must have a written statement from the White House," Bitzer said.

Max Inglett, a paraplegic who had been on a water-only diet since Saturday and had already collapsed twice, and Chuck Bass, on his 14th day without solid food, were reported in stable condition but were still not eating, Bitzer said.

The 12 hunger strikers and their supporters are camped in 13 brightly colored tents pitched on the hospital's front lawn. Another six protest-

ers, in a demonstration organized by the Center for Veterans Rights, a non-profit, independent veteran's organization in Los Angeles, occupy one section of the hospital's lobby.

Both groups are demanding an evaluation of the medical programs for Vietnam veterans by outside experts; adequate research and examination for health problems relating to toxic herbicide exposure, including Agent Orange; a delayed re-entry program for Vietnam veterans; and attention from President Reagan.

Hunger striker John Avalos, 34, of Glendale, Calif., has been fasting for six days. The ex-Marine said the protest is "like a call of duty."

"We're ready for a battle and know that some of us might not make it," he said. "If some of us don't make it, then that's what it's going to cost because we'll be here as long as it takes."

The protest at the hospital began May 20 in reaction to the death of James Hopkins, 32, an ex-Marine who felt he was losing his mind because of his exposure to Agent Orange in Vietnam. On March 14, Hopkins put on his military fatigues, crashed his jeep into the Wadsworth lobby and shot up the walls with an M-14.

He died at home two months later. An open liquor bottle and empty pill container were found near his body. The Los Angeles County coroner is investigating his death.

"Am I going to be next?" asked Virgil Neigel, 30, of Riverside, Calif. Neigel, an ex-Army helicopter crew chief, is one of the so-called "inside six" protesters at the hospital. On the first day of the sit-in, Neigel tore up his honorable discharge from the Army because, he said, "I honor my country by serving in Vietnam but the U.S. government is not honoring me in medical benefits, schooling or jobs."

Other protesters allege that some VA doctors treat delayed stress by prescribing medication until the patient is "doped up like a zombie," that VA staff are unsympathetic; that medical school residents and interns are often inadequately supervised by staff physicians, and that new drugs have been tested on the veterans.

Nick Longworth, VA representative for Dr. Donald Custis, acting administrator of veterans affairs, said he assured the protesters that medical programs at Wadsworth and the VA's Brentwood Psychiatric Hospital would be evaluated by outside experts and that Hopkins' death would be investigated by an outside team, both to begin within a week to 10 days.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

804-428-8105
x 25

P

Chris

305-833-3059

~~422~~

~~422 6906~~
~~422 6919~~

MEMORANDUM
OF CALL

*File Hunger
Strikers*

TO:

YOU WERE CALLED BY— YOU WERE VISITED BY—

OF (Organization)

PLEASE CALL → PHONE NO. CODE/EXT. FTS
 WILL CALL AGAIN IS WAITING TO SEE YOU
 RETURNED YOUR CALL WISHES AN APPOINTMENT

MESSAGE

Mr Wm. Anderson
213 · 478-3711
Wadsworth VA Hosp.

RECEIVED BY

DATE

TIME

63-109

U.S. G.P.O. 1980-311-156/16

STANDARD FORM 63 (Rev. 8-76)
Prescribed by GSA
FPMR (41 CFR) 101-11.6

MEMORANDUM
OF CALL

Nick +

TO:

then you

YOU WERE CALLED BY—

YOU WERE VISITED BY—

OF (Organization)

PLEASE CALL → PHONE NO. CODE/EXT.

FTS

WILL CALL AGAIN

IS WAITING TO SEE YOU

RETURNED YOUR CALL

WISHES AN APPOINTMENT

MESSAGE

Chris Noel

305-833-3059

has been worked out
can be ended

RECEIVED BY

DATE

TIME

63-109

U.S. G.P.O. 1980-311-156/16

STANDARD FORM 63 (Rev. 8-76)
Prescribed by GSA
FPMR (41 CFR) 101-11.6

She needs to
fall to you -
gp. wants to fall
to you - committee
Signal close to
Pres.)

hours before
it's over

W Post 7/6/81

8 More Veterans On Way to Join Hunger Strike *VV Hunger Strike*

SAN FRANCISCO, July 5 (UPI) — A group of eight Vietnam era veterans who have been staging protest demonstrations since May 20 arrived today in San Francisco on the first leg of a trip to Washington, D.C. to join other veterans on a hunger strike.

The vets, most of whom participated in a recent sit-in and hunger strike at a Veterans Administration hospital in Los Angeles, left Los Angeles early today from Exposition Park in a motor home with two accompanying vehicles. The vets were met in San Francisco by a number of supporters who staged a rally in their behalf at Glide Memorial Church.

The traveling protest will stop at 26 cities before it reaches Washington. One of the veterans participating abandoned a 36-day hunger strike only 24 hours before the caravan departed.

The vets said they would join other veterans in Washington in a request for a meeting with President Reagan.

They are demanding investigations into the overall effects of the herbicide Agent Orange used in Vietnam, better health care for veterans, and recognition of delayed stress syndrome as a service-related illness.

The motor home carrying the eight veterans will lead two other cars, one of them ostensibly for newpeople and the other a support car in the 3,000-plus mile trek.

The caravan has been dubbed "Operation Snowball," because veterans said they hoped others would join them along the way.

File

**MEMORANDUM
OF CALL**

TO:

Re Hunger Strikers

YOU WERE CALLED BY— YOU WERE VISITED BY—

Keep these dates

OF (Organization)

PLEASE CALL → PHONE NO. CODE/EXT. FTS

WILL CALL AGAIN IS WAITING TO SEE YOU.

RETURNED YOUR CALL WISHES AN APPOINTMENT

MESSAGE

*June 9 '81 written
May 28 - original Hunger
Strikers*

RECEIVED BY

DATE

TIME

63-109

U.S. G.P.O. 1980-311-156/16

STANDARD FORM 63 (Rev. 8-76)
Prescribed by GSA
FPMR (41 CFR) 101-11.6

WMAH
July 5, 1971
Hunger
Striker

MARY McGRORY

The War That Still Divides

Inside the tent on Lafayette Park, three veterans in combat fatigues - two of them hunger strikers - were talking quietly about lost jobs and lost wives, about flashbacks and nightmares and boneheaded doctors in the Veterans Administration. Outside, a tall figure in a white linen suit with a camouflage headband around his long hair and full beard was dancing in the sunlight to the music of a portable radio.

"He's not helping," said Bob Zappy, who is 37 years old, from Lynn, Mass., and in day 37 of fasting.

"Dr. John" Michel poked his head in the tent and looked sad. "When I am happy, I have to dance," he said, "to express my feelings and to exercise. 'Dr. John' is not a veteran and has been fasting for 42 days, 'for some other causes, too.'"

He went back to his boogying, "to get the attention of the chump across the street" - by whom he meant the president of the United States. One of the demands is for a meeting with the commander in chief.

Bob Zappy sighed. "He's Mr. California," he said of the dancer. "He's a flower child of the '60s. We really ought to weed him out."

The Vietnam veterans' hunger strike began in California on May 13 in discord. There were those who sat in the lobby of the Wadsworth Veterans Hospital to protest the death of James Hopkins, a veteran who died of a drug overdose. Another group camped out on the grounds. They got massive coverage, but split on goals and strategy.

The fast came to Washington - and yawns - two weeks ago. The nine participants are living in St. Stephen and the Incarnation Church, and they come in pairs to the park in the wan hope that Ronald Reagan will ask them in for lunch.

The Park Police gave them a permit for their Fourth of July demonstration in Constitution Gardens. The White House Secret Service came across the street to inquire how they were getting along. Shades of Richard Nixon, who wanted to arrest the Vietnam Veterans Against the War who camped on the Mall in 1971.

The veterans don't like comparisons to Bobby Sands, the world's pop-star hunger striker.

For one thing, "he was not educated nutritionally," says Dr. John disapprovingly. "He drank tap water, which is full of chlorine, and he took salt tablets - most debilitating."

For another: "They were prisoners and terrorists," says Bob Zappy. "We are citizens demanding our rights. We want an outside investigation of the VA, an international commission on Agent Orange, and recognition of Delayed Stress Syndrome."

And finally, the vets will not fast to the death in the IRA way.

They had a meeting in the Speakers' Lobby with Rep. G. L. "Sonny" Montgomery a week ago, in an interval in the tumultuous fight over budget cuts: He was so persuasive in his promises for action that they decided to add fruit juice to their diet of bottled water. Like this, they can go on indefinitely.

The non-faster in the tent spoke up. "I'm the only guy who's got a wife," said Richard Weinberg, another native of Lynn, and age 35. He told of Heather, his wife, and their two children, back home in New Zealand, where he has been living since 1976.

He came back to the U.S. on business in May, bumped into the protest in Los Angeles and "had" to join. He was ruled ineligible to fast, because he has to take drugs. He was shot in the head in Vietnam where he served as a Ranger.

"My marriage would never have lasted in the U.S.," said Weinberg, a small, bright-eyed, engaging man with a useless left arm, who works in a boystown.

"In New Zealand, the people are supportive of vets. They sent 5,000 to Vietnam. A lot of people there protested the war, but they directed it at the government. They never spit on the GIs; the way they did here."

A light rain began to fall, and the fasters scrambled out to rescue their "Agent Orange Kills" poster outside the tent. They talked philosophically about the condemnation of their effort by Bobby Muller, who runs the Vietnam Veterans of America from his wheelchair.

Muller explained over the phone from his New York office.

"I'm tired of the confrontational politics we have used for decades without results," he said. "We were getting somewhere through negotiations."

Muller sent a telegram to the hunger strikers in California on May 29 urging them to quit, after a letter from the acting head of the VA went to the chief of the hospital, promising cooperation with Congress on the vets' Rap Centers and continuation of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Agent Orange.

"If you are serious about the dismal state of affairs," says Muller, you have to go about it in a different way."

Differences over Vietnam, in other words, continue. The hollow-eyed folks on the Mall tell us once again that it is the war that never ends.

DRAFT

Dear Mr. Anderson:

I just wanted to express my ^{own} gratitude for your superb handling of the recent protest at the Wadsworth Hospital Center. The Administration very much appreciates the skill with which you handled what was an extremely difficult situation.

Once again, congratulations on an outstanding job.

Sincerely,

Morton C. Blackwell
Special Assistant to the President

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Write letter of
thanks and congratulations
to Mr. Bill Anderson

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION

REFERENCE SLIP

TO (Name or title—Mail routing symbol)	INITIALS-DATE
1. Morton Blackwell	
2. Special Asst. to the President for Public Liaison	
3.	
4.	
5.	

REASON FOR REFERENCE

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| <input type="checkbox"/> CONCURRENCE | <input type="checkbox"/> NECESSARY ACTION | <input type="checkbox"/> SIGNATURE |

REMARKS

FROM

NICK LONGWORTH
Special Assistant
Veterans Administration

DATE

7/14/81

TEL. EXT.



June 19, 1981

OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN
DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY
UCLA SCHOOL OF MEDICINE
CENTER FOR THE HEALTH SCIENCES
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90024

Donald L. Custis, M.D.
Acting Administrator
Veterans Administration Central Office
810 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Dr. Custis,

I am writing you this letter in my official capacity as Chairman of the VA Wadsworth Medical Center Dean's Committee.

Our last Dean's Committee meeting was held on Wednesday, June 10, 1981, the day after the Vietnam veteran protesters were removed from the premises. For the benefit of our Dean's Committee, Mr. William K. Anderson, Central Director, and H. Earl Gordon, M.D., Chief of Staff, gave an extensive report on the background and course of events relating to these demonstrations. As you can well imagine, members of the Dean's Committee had been, as a result of continuing newspaper coverage, in a state of concern for a period of two and a half weeks. Early in the course of events undue attention was focused upon this small group of protesters because of the visit of President Reagan to his home in this area. From the administrative point of view it appeared to be one of those classic "no win" situations. Almost any action (or inaction) on the part of those responsible for the decision making could have led to a very embarrassing situation for the Veterans Administration/University community.

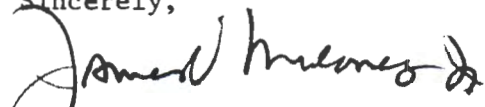
I should like to summarize for you the substance of the comments by various members of the Dean's Committee present on June 10th. Many of these views were expressed by Dr. Louis Jolyon West, Chairman of the Department of Psychiatry, UCLA, who is a recognized international authority on the psychological techniques for dealing with violence and demonstrations. The tone of the meeting was congratulatory to both Mr. Anderson and Dr. Gordon for the superb way that they had handled an explosive situation over a period of two weeks. They were assisted in their efforts by the advice and counsel of Central Office staff, particularly those staff members that came to Los Angeles to help. It was pointed out that if definitive action had been taken at a time that media coverage was highest, in the first few days of the episode, adverse publicity would have resulted to the Veterans Administration. At that time either capitulation to the demands of the demonstrators, or aggressive action against them, would have been unfortunate. Similarly, further delay in handling the situation would have resulted in intolerable interference with the activities of the Wadsworth Hospital Center.

Donald L. Custis, M.D.
June 19, 1981
Page Two

In the discussions at the Dean's meeting, it became apparent that the handling, from the psychological point of view, both of the individual demonstrators as well as handling of the group dynamics, were accomplished with great psychological and administrative skill.

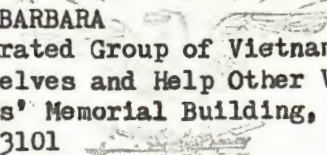
I should like to express to you, Dr. Custis, on behalf of the Dean's Committee, our admiration for the superb way that this crisis was handled.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "James V. Maloney, Jr.", written in dark ink.

James V. Maloney, Jr., M.D.
Chairman, Dean's Committee

JVM:jl



VIETNAM VETERANS of SANTA BARBARA
An Independent Non-Incorporated Group of Vietnam Veterans
Meeting to Help Ourselves and Help Other Vietnam Veterans
7:30 pm, Tuesdays, Veterans' Memorial Building, 112 W. Cabrillo Blvd.
Santa Barbara, CA. 93101

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Steve Schlah

Phone: 687-1134

OFFICIAL

Vietnam Veterans of Santa Barbara have given a list of requests to a representative of President Ronald Reagan at the Western White House, Refugio Canyon, CA. 93117. Below are those requests.

1. We request a Housing Program be implimented for Vietnam Veterans that is comenserate with that given to veterans of World War II. Articles of that Housing Program for Vietnam Veterans should include provisions "no money down", extended mortgage term, and "avallability".
2. We request "real" employment opportunities within the Private Sector, implimented under similar guidelines to the "HIRE" program, but solely formulated for Vietnam Veterans.
3. We request that funding be continued and expanded for the "VET CENTER" Vietnam Veterans Outreach Program. It has shown both that it can be effective and that it is truly needed by the Vietnam Veteran community.
4. We request that the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) continue to be funded by the Department of Labor and to add "permenant status to the DVOP representative positions. This program could be used to help impliment our employment request labeled number 2.
5. We request that the nearly one billion dollars (\$1,000,000,000) cut from the Veterans Administration budget be restored. For years, the V.A. has not been able to give the services to "all" veterans that it was mandated by Congress to perform, due to inadequete budgets in the past. Thus, there is no fat to cut from that budget, only lives.
6. We request that as the V.A.'s budget is restored, that its hospital and out-patient care should be brought up to the standards of hospitals in the Private Sector. President Reagan should now be aware what "good" medical care can and should be, and the care he received is not what veterans receive in V.A. facilities. (This is not to say that the Doctors and nurses the V.A. employ are substandard, but that they are underpaid and overworked. Their extreme dedication can only work so many days per week.)
7. We request that the V.A. impliment actions and compensation for cases involving Post-Traumatic Stree Disorders as they have been requested in studies sponsored by the Disabled Veterans of America (DAV) and researched by Dr. John Wilson and Dr. Charles Figley.
8. We request that the Federal Government initiate research into the side effects of Agent Orange (Dioxin Herbicide used in Vietnam as a defoliant) when it contacts human life, as it did to Vietnamese and Americans in Vietnam.
9. We request that the present time limit of ten (10) years of GI Bill eligibility be eliminated. Whether a veteran uses his or her benefits (up to 45 monthes of benefit) should be determined by his or her own individual needs and assessments and not the calendar. In a time of technological change, as today, educational needs change, and if a veteran still has benefits that have not been used, he should be entitled to use that which he has earned.

We, Vietnam Veternas of Santa Barbara, feel that these requests are not anything that veterans are not entitled to, but that which they deserve and should have been granted long ago.



THE DIAGNOSIS OF CHLORACNE DESPITE THE V.A. SO-CALLED PHYSICAL EXAMINATION FOR AGENT ORANGE THAT THE V.A. HAS ADMINISTERED FOR MORE THAN TWO YEARS AND THE MORE THAN 40,000 VIETNAM VETERANS WHO HAVE REQUESTED SUCH AN EXAMINATION FROM THE V.A. HOSPITALS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY?

WHY IS THE V.A. ONLY ABLE TO RESPOND TO QUESTIONS FROM THE CENTER FOR VETERANS RIGHTS CONCERNING THIS IMPORTANT MATTER WITH THE APRIL 27, 1981 STATEMENT FROM DR BARCLAY M SHEPARD THAT "THE TASK FORCE (ON AGENT ORANGE) IS CURRENTLY IN THE PROCESS OF REFINING DIAGNOSTIC PROCEDURES RELATIVE TO CHLORACNE?"

2. WHY HAS THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION CENTRAL OFFICE REFUSED TO ALLOW OR DENY THE MARCH 31, 1980 REQUEST BY THE CENTER FOR VETERANS RIGHTS FOR THE NAMES AND ADDRESSES OF ALL DISABLED VETERANS OF THE VIETNAM ERA IN CALIFORNIA UNDER 38 U.S.C. SECTION 3301(F) FOR THE PURPOSE OF OUTREACH TO THEM CONCERNING THE AGENT ORANGE SERVICES OF THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION?

3. WILL YOU APPOINT AN EXPERT PANEL OF NON-V.A. INDIVIDUALS TO EVALUATE THE NEED FOR A NATIONAL DELAYED RE-ENTRY PROGRAM FOR ALL 4.2 MILLION VIETNAM VETERANS WHO HAVE LACKED INFORMATION ABOUT THE VIETNAM RELATED PROBLEMS OF DELAYED STRESS AND USE OF TOXIC HERBICIDES?

4. WHY ARE VIETNAM VETERANS PLANNING TO PICKET THE CENTRAL OFFICE OF THE V.A. IN WASHINGTON DC ON FRIDAY MAY 22, 1981 CONCERNING V.A. LACK OF ACTION ON THE AGENT ORANGE ISSUES?

BUDGET CUTS IN THE V.A.

"I CALL ON PRESIDENT REAGAN TO STOP SPENDING MILLIONS OF DOLLARS ON INAUGURAL BALLS AND TO UTILIZE THE MONEY FOR WHAT THE DEFENDERS OF OUR FINE COUNTRY ARE ENTITLED TO," FROM THE MARCH 19, 1981 STATEMENT OF THE LATE JAMES R HOPKINS.

1. WHY HAS THE DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET ORDERED A 743 MILLION DOLLAR REDUCTION IN THE NEXT FISCAL YEAR BUDGET OF THE V.A. SYSTEMS WITHOUT ANY EVALUATION OF THE COSTLY MEDICAL SCHOOL AFFILIATION IN THE V.A. SYSTEM WHICH DRAINS UP TO 60 PERCENT OF THE MEDICAL BUDGET INTO TRAINING COSTS (SEE JULY 3 1979 V.A. DEPT OF MEDICINE AND SURGERY LETTER 1L-14-79-4)?

2. HOW WILL V.A. HOSPITALS BE ABLE TO OPERATE AT ALL WITH THE PLANNED REDUCTION OF 20,000 PHYSICIANS IN THE HOSPITAL SYSTEM BY 1986?

PLEASE RESPOND
 CENTER FOR VETERANS RIGHTS
 RONALD BITZER
 TEL 213-746-6315
 514 WEST ADAMS BLVD
 LOS ANGELES CA 90007

13:23 EST

MGMCOMP MGM

MEMORANDUM FOR: JAMES BAKER

MAY 26, 1981

FROM: KARNA SMALL *KS*

RE: VIETNAM VETERANS PROTESTS

*To Morton
to file*

I am concerned about the various protests taking place regarding Vietnam Veterans and I understand that Elizabeth will bring up the subject at tomorrow's staff meeting. Since we will all be at West Point, I wanted to bring a few matters to your attention so you would be aware of the latest developments.

1. According to wire stories (attached) there are 8 hunger-strikers -- some who have not eaten for 10 days. They seem to be supporting another group of Vietnam Veterans who are staging a simultaneous sit-in at the VA hospital there in California. (The hunger-strikers are out on the lawn)
2. The organizer of the sit-in sent a mailgram to the White House - to the President (attached). Morton Blackwell, of Elizabeth Dole's shop had it and has been coordinating with "our" man at the VA (the only Reagan appointee over there running the place: Nick Longworth) The demands in the mailgram are lengthy and absurd, but Nick Longworth is working up a reply. Longworth feels that someone should GO TO CALIFORNIA to talk to these people to end the sit-in and hunger strike...he has offered to go himself. (I'm not sure that would be necessary, but obviously, that is something you all must decide). The VA has been waiting for some sort of direction from the White House evidently. You should know that in the mailgram they refer to the late James Hopkins....he had believed his hearing was impaired by agent orange and had demanded a device for his telephone. The VA hospital staff tested him, found no pronounced impairment. Hopkins was so mad he crashed his car into the front of the hospital and later took an overdose and died. You should also know that the leader of the hunger-strikers has, according to physicians who have treated him, suicidal tendencies and has been a psychiatric patient.
3. Another veterans group, organized by David Belding (who originally was with Vietnam Veterans against the war) called today. They had presented a Madonna plus 10 demands, or areas of concern, to the gate at Santa Barbara yesterday and wanted a response. I gave him a lengthy analysis of the budget (cuts restored for vets etc.) and what we're doing on agent orange. He was actually pleasant and said we should get that word out because his people did not know that.
4. There are POSITIVE things we should get out about Vietnam Veterans funds etc. and the story has not been told:
 - (a) Gramm-Latta restores virtually ALL veterans monies -- no medical personnel will be cut, no regional offices cut - and we probably will not oppose funds for store-front centers.
 - (b) We have an inter-agency task force examining scientific evidence on agent orange.
 - (c) On-going budget expenditures will insure research on agent orange. In 1981 we're spending 3.1 million, in 1982, we will spend \$9.5 million on this.

CENTER FOR VETERANS RIGHTS R BIT
514 WEST ADAMS BLVD
LOS ANGELES CA 90007

WESTERN UNION

Mailgram



4-0318789140 05/20/81 ICS IPPMTZZ CSP WSHB
2134799215 MGM TDMT LOS ANGELES CA 733 05-20 0125P EST

PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN
WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON DC 20500

VIETNAM VETERANS ARE REQUESTING A MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES DURING YOUR MEMORIAL DAY VISIT TO SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AT THE SITE OF THE MARCH 14, 1981 PROTEST BY THE LATE JAMES R HOPKINS TO INHUMANE TREATMENT BY VETERANS ADMINISTRATION PERSONNEL TO THE SICK VETERANS OF THE NATION.

THE REASONS FOR THE NECESSITY OF THIS PERSONAL VISIT, WHICH SOME VIETNAM VETERANS AND SUPPORTERS ARE STRESSING BY OUR WAIT-IN THERE, ARE THE FOLLOWING:

DELAYED STRESS AMONG VIETNAM VETERANS

"THERE ARE NO FEATURES, COMPLAINTS OR CLINICAL FINDINGS TO SUPPORT ANY RELATIONSHIP TO AGENT ORANGE, OR THE POST-VIETNAM STRESS SYNDROME, ALTHOUGH THIS WAS SPECIFICALLY EXPLORED" FROM THE APRIL 7-8, 1981 CASE REVIEW OF THE LATE JAMES R HOPKINS AT THE BRENTWOOD V.A. HOSPITAL BY DOCTORS CYRIL BARNERT, RAMZI KIRIAKOS, GERALD MCKENNA AND MANUEL STRAKER.

1. WHY DID THE BRENTWOOD V.A. CASE REVIEW FOR JAMES R HOPKINS COMPLICATE THE CRITERIA FOR A DIAGNOSIS OF DELAYED STRESS BY ADDING SYMPTOMS IN ADDITION TO THE MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS OF THE AMERICAN PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION (REFER TO SEE DIAGNOSTIC AND STATISTICAL MANUALS OF MENTAL DISORDERS, 3RD EDITION)?
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HEALTH PROBLEMS RELATED TO AGENT ORANGE HERBICIDE EXPOSURE
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1. WHY HAS THE V.A. FAILED TO INSTRUCT THEIR EXAMINING PHYSICIANS

glt
11
Draft ~~of~~ ^R Response for signature of ~~Acting~~ Veterans ^{Administration} Affairs ~~Affairs~~ ^{Acting}
Director, Dr. Donald Custis, ~~to communications from Ron~~
~~Bitzer, Chris Noel, and Steve Schlah.~~

The President has asked me as his newly designated Acting Administrator of Veterans Affairs to respond to your recent communications about issues of particular concerns to the Vietnam Veterans.

As you may know, the President appointed me Acting Administrator today to fill the vacancy created by the departure of Rufus Wilson.

First, I am pleased to inform you that the President has decided to continue the ongoing work of the Interagency Work Group which has been the focal point within the government for Agent Orange activities. Many Vietnam Veterans and leaders of Veterans groups had urged the President to take this step.

Second, while many activities and programs of the Federal government have been slated by the President for substantial reductions or elimination, the President is pleased that his fiscal year 1982 budget contains \$9,540,000 of budgeted monies for Agent Orange activities. ~~The~~ ^{is} is more than 300% larger than the \$3,126,000 budgeted for Agent Orange in the current fiscal year of 1981.

Third, in the overall figures for the Veterans Administration, the President's budget sets out budget authority for fiscal year 1982 of \$24.2 billion. This is an increase of \$1.3 billion over the \$22.9 billion budget authorization for

current year 1981. Again, this increase is in contrast to the well known budget cuts proposed by the President for many other areas.

Fourth, the major battle in Congress over the President's economic recovery package has been the fight in the House for the Reagan Bipartisan Budget Resolution for fiscal year 1982, otherwise known as the Gramm-Latta proposal. As you know from the news coverage, the President won an impressive victory. The Reagan Bipartisan Budget Resolution, for which the Administration fought so hard, included a \$597 million increase over previously proposed cuts in the Veterans Administration budget. This budget authorization of \$24.2 billion, \$1.3 billion over the current year and \$597 million over the initially proposed cuts, will permit the Veterans Administration to operate with no reductions in personnel in the Department of Medicine and Surgery and no reductions in veterans benefits.

Fifth, the President feels it is important to correct a widespread misunderstanding with respect to the funding of the Vietnam Veteran Outreach Centers. Many Vietnam Veterans have contacted the President in recent days expressing their dismay that these Outreach Centers are to be discontinued. While it is true that the U.S. Senate did pass many weeks ago a version of a budget resolution which many thought would end funding of the Outreach Centers, the situation has completely changed.

The President gave his full support in the House to

the Reagan Bipartisan Budget Resolution which restored the overwhelming majority of previously proposed cuts in Veterans programs. The level of funding restored is more than enough to fund the Outreach Centers.

Congressional support for the Outreach Centers is overwhelming. Virtually all Senators and Congressmen have the clear understanding that the restored funding will keep the Outreach Centers open.

The Congress has authorized the spending levels but it now must pass legislation specifically extending the life of the Outreach Centers. This has the overwhelming support of both parties in both the House and Senate. The President wants you to know he is specifically committed to keeping the Outreach Centers funded and open when Congress authorizes and appropriates funds for this program by law.

The Veterans Administration has been specifically directed by the White House to cease plans to implement any proposed reductions in Veterans programs which were reversed and restored by the Reagan Bipartisan Budget Resolution Congress passed. In short, extension of the life of the Outreach Centers is locked in by overwhelming sentiment in the Congress and by the President's commitment mentioned above.

In part because of the restored funding levels and because of the specific commitment of the President, the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign War, AMVETS, Blinded Veterans Association, and Jewish War Veterans all endorsed the Reagan Bipartisan Budget Resolution which restored funding to a level which would permit the extension of the Outreach Centers and the retention of personnel levels in the Veterans Administration's Department of Medicine and Surgery and no reductions in veterans benefits.

~~I only wish that every news reporter covering Veterans affairs was aware of these facts.~~

An unfortunate legacy of the Vietnam conflict is the continuing concern of many veterans that they may have suffered or may yet develop health problems as a result of long-term effects of certain chemicals to which they were exposed while serving in Vietnam. The President is committed to the fullest possible scientific examination of these concerns, with the aim of insuring that this matter is dealt with fairly and equitably. The important scientific research being coordinated by the White House Interagency Work Group, including the AirForce Ranch Hand Personnel Study, will be a major priority of this Administration

The President has personally designated me to be his acting Administrator of Veterans Affairs until such time as the Senate confirms his nominee, Mr. Robert Nimmo, as Administrator of Veterans Affairs. I believe you will find me an

an enthusiastic supporter of the President's policies outlined in this letter. My office looks forward to working with you in the future.

Cordially,

CENTER FOR VETERANS RIGHTS R BIT
514 WEST ADAMS BLVD
LOS ANGELES CA 90007



4-031878s140 05/20/81 ICS IPPMTZZ CSP WSHB
2134799215 MGM TDMT LOS ANGELES CA 733 05-20 0125P EST

Agent Orange

PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN
WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON DC 20500

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1. WHY HAS THE V.A. FAILED TO INSTRUCT THEIR EXAMINING PHYSICIANS IN

Hearing bad Agent Orange

Drove into hospital

Wife thinks accident

Contro

Embraced Brown Latta

Pres. Response Draft. by close of business

Send someone to negotiate
Brown Latta



THE DIAGNOSIS OF CHLORACNE DESPITE THE V.A. SO-CALLED PHYSICAL EXAMINATION FOR AGENT ORANGE THAT THE V.A. HAS ADMINISTERED FOR MORE THAN TWO YEARS AND THE MORE THAN 40,000 VIETNAM VETERANS WHO HAVE REQUESTED SUCH AN EXAMINATION FROM THE V.A. HOSPITALS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY?

WHY IS THE V.A. ONLY ABLE TO RESPOND TO QUESTIONS FROM THE CENTER FOR VETERANS RIGHTS CONCERNING THIS IMPORTANT MATTER WITH THE APRIL 27, 1981 STATEMENT FROM DR BARCLAY M SHEPARD THAT "THE TASK FORCE (ON AGENT ORANGE) IS CURRENTLY IN THE PROCESS OF REFINING DIAGNOSTIC PROCEDURES RELATIVE TO CHLORACNE?"

2. WHY HAS THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION CENTRAL OFFICE REFUSED TO ALLOW OR DENY THE MARCH 31, 1980 REQUEST BY THE CENTER FOR VETERANS RIGHTS FOR THE NAMES AND ADDRESSES OF ALL DISABLED VETERANS OF THE VIETNAM ERA IN CALIFORNIA UNDER 38 U.S.C. SECTION 3301(F) FOR THE PURPOSE OF OUTREACH TO THEM CONCERNING THE AGENT ORANGE SERVICES OF THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION?

3. WILL YOU APPOINT AN EXPERT PANEL OF NON-V.A. INDIVIDUALS TO EVALUATE THE NEED FOR A NATIONAL DELAYED RE-ENTRY PROGRAM FOR ALL 4.2 MILLION VIETNAM VETERANS WHO HAVE LACKED INFORMATION ABOUT THE VIETNAM RELATED PROBLEMS OF DELAYED STRESS AND USE OF TOXIC HERBICIDES?

4. WHY ARE VIETNAM VETERANS PLANNING TO PICKET THE CENTRAL OFFICE OF THE V.A. IN WASHINGTON DC ON FRIDAY MAY 22, 1981 CONCERNING V.A. LACK OF ACTION ON THE AGENT ORANGE ISSUES?

BUDGET CUTS IN THE V.A.

"I CALL ON PRESIDENT REAGAN TO STOP SPENDING MILLIONS OF DOLLARS ON INAUGURAL BALLS AND TO UTILIZE THE MONEY FOR WHAT THE DEFENDERS OF OUR FINE COUNTRY ARE ENTITLED TO," FROM THE MARCH 19, 1981 STATEMENT OF THE LATE JAMES R HOPKINS.

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PLEASE RESPOND
 CENTER FOR VETERANS RIGHTS
 RONALD BITZER
 TEL 213-746-6315
 514 WEST ADAMS BLVD
 LOS ANGELES CA 90007

13:23 EST

MGMCOMP MGM

Asst. Hosp. Director

Leo Nackman - 213 824-3133

Ron Kovick - gone

Bitzer 6 people inside

5-8 outside

they claim to support Bitzer
N

Merlin Atkins - U. of Uet

psychiatric
patient

Brentwood Hosp.

Physicians says

suicidal tendencies

Connie Hoffman - U.A. Controller

Letter Ron Bitzer to Seward to Please leave

Hosp found Bitzer easy to work with

Sit in in lobby

won't move until fear from men.

Bitzer - Negotiator come to

- told that White House
- Hospital police doing double duty

CENTER FOR VETERANS RIGHTS R BIT
514 WEST ADAMS BLVD
LOS ANGELES CA 90007

western union Mailgram®



1-0511208155 06/04/81 ICS IPMMTZZ CSP WSHA
2137466315 MGM TDMT LOS ANGELES CA 554 06-04 0428P EST

PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN
ATTN MORTIN BLACKWELL ASSISTANT FOR
VETERANS AFFAIRS
WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON DC 20500

SPECIFICATIONS OF DEMANDS

A. ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS FROM THE WHITE HOUSE

1. THE APPOINTMENT OF A TEAM OF NON-VA EXPERTS TO INVESTIGATE MEDICAL TREATMENTS AT THE WADSWORTH AND BRENTWOOD VA HOSPITALS AND THE MEDICAL TREATMENT BY THE VA OF THE LATE JAMES HOPKINS.

2. THE APPOINTMENT OF DR CHARLES FIGLEY AND DR ROBERT LIFTON OF PURDUE AND YALE UNIVERSITIES RESPECTIVELY TO THIS NON-VA TEAM TO ENSURE THAT THE TEAM INCLUDES IN ITS INVESTIGATION THESE 3 MEDICAL ISSUES:

A. THE FUNCTION OF THE VET CENTER

B. THE ADEQUACY OF THE AGENT ORANGE SCREENING EXAMINATIONS

C. THE FUNCTIONING OF THE REGIONAL OFFICE RATING BOARDS WITH RESPECT TO DECISIONS BY VA PHYSICIANS CONCERNING CLAIMS FOR POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDERS

3. AGREEMENT BY THE VA TO RESPOND TO ALL FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUEST FROM THE CENTER FOR VETERANS RIGHTS WITHIN THE SPECIFIED TIME PERIOD UNDER THE LAW (50.U.S.C.552A).

4. AGREEMENT TO ESTABLISH OFFICES OF PATIENT REPRESENTATION IN ALL VA HOSPITALS COMPARABLE TO THE PATIENT REPRESENTATIVES IN THE OKLAHOMA VA HOSPITAL BY JANUARY 1 1982.

5. AGREEMENT FOR A MEETING IN LOS ANGELES WITH OFFICIALS OF THE VA DEPARTMENT OF MEDICINE AND SURGERY, INCLUDING DR BARCLAY SHEPARD, TO BRIEF THE PUBLIC ABOUT THE RESEARCH PROGRAMS SPONSORED BY THE GOVERNMENT INTO THE LONG TERM HEALTH EFFECTS OF HERBICIDE EXPOSURE IN VIETNAM. THIS MEETING WILL TAKE PLACE IN JUNE OR JULY THROUGH COORDINATION WITH THE CENTER FOR VETERANS RIGHTS.

6. ESTABLISHMENT OF AN OFFICE OF VETERANS AFFAIRS INSIDE THE WHITE HOUSE WITH ACCESS TO THE PRESIDENT AND THE LEADERS OF ALL FEDERAL GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES.

TO REPLY BY MAILGRAM, PHONE WESTERN UNION ANY TIME, DAY OR NIGHT:

FOR YOUR LOCAL NUMBER, SEE THE WHITE PAGES

OF YOUR TELEPHONE DIRECTORY

OR

DIAL (TOLL FREE) 800-257-2241

(EXCEPT IN NEW JERSEY 800-632-2271)

OR DIAL WESTERN UNION'S INFOMASTER SYSTEM DIRECTLY:

FROM TELEX 6161

FROM TWX 910 420 1212

B. LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS PROPOSED BY THE WHITE HOUSE TO CONGRESS

1. PROPOSAL BY PRESIDENT REAGAN OF A PROGRAM OF MEDICAL SCREENING OF ALL VETERANS WHO WISH TO BE SCREENED FOR CURRENT DISABILITIES FROM MILITARY SERVICE. THIS PROGRAM, A "DELAYED RE-ENTRY PROGRAM" WILL INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

(1) INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING WITH ANOTHER VIETNAM VETERAN WHO HAS BEEN TRAINED TO UNDERSTAND AND TO FIND THE VARIOUS READJUSTMENT PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH VIETNAM WAR SERVICE AND THE LACK OF COMPASSION BY SOCIETY UPON RETURN FROM THAT WAR TIME EXPERIENCE.

(2) PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELING AND CLAIMS ASSISTANCE FOR VETERANS WITH POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDERS AND OTHER PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS, INCLUDING REPRESENTATION BEFORE THE BOARD OF VETERANS APPEALS.

(3) COMPLETION OF HEALTH QUESTIONNAIRES AND EXAMINATIONS FOR SYMPTOMS THAT COULD BE RELATED TO EXPOSURE TO TOXIC HERBICIDES. VA HOSPITALS WOULD BE UTILIZED ONLY TO COMPLETE NECESSARY MEDICAL TESTS, IN VIEW OF THE PROBLEMS WITH THE CURRENT AGENT ORANGE SCREENING EXAM.

(4) SCREENING OF ALL LESS THAN HONORABLE MILITARY DISCHARGES TO DETERMINE QUALIFICATION FOR UPGRADING OF LESS THAN HONORABLE MILITARY DISCHARGE.

(5) REVIEW OF ALL MENTAL AND PHYSICAL DISABILITIES TO DETERMINE STATUS OF TREATMENT, COMPENSATION AND VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION BY THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION.

(6) COORDINATION OF EXISTING SERVICES IN THE COMMUNITY TO PROVIDE EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE.

(7) OUTREACH TO INCARCERATED VETERANS IN ALL PRISONS.

2. PROPOSAL BY PRESIDENT REAGAN OF THE ELIMINATION OF THE DELIMITING DATE FOR EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS, SINCE MANY DISABLED VETERANS HAVE NOT UTILIZED THEIR EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS.

3. PROPOSAL FOR RETROACTIVE DISABILITY COMPENSATION FOR POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER WHEN THE DATE OF ORIGIN OF THIS DISABILITY IS ESTABLISHED BY MEDICAL RECORDS TO PRE-EXIST THE CHANGE OF POLICY BY THE VA FOR COMPENSATION FOR THIS DISORDER (1980).

VIETNAM VETERANS
514 WEST ADAMS BLVD
LOS ANGELES CA 90007
16:30 EST

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FROM TELEX 6161

FROM TWX 910 420 1212

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

*Vietnam
Veterans
Hunger
Strike*

THE JOAN MAIMAN REPORT

JUNE 11, 1981

According to Joan, Ron Bitzer is telling the veterans that the White House is actively campaigning against the extension of the veterans centers. This campaigning is taking place on the floor of the House and Senate.

The hunger strikers plan a caravan across country to meet with the President and camp in Lafayette Park until such a meeting takes place. Scott Green (unidentified) says if a meeting can be arranged with the President and the veterans liaison for selected representatives of these veterans group, they (the hunger strikers) will call off the caravan and the strike.

MEMORANDUM

% Green Siegel

Suite 104

8350 Sunset Avenue, L.A.

Blvd 90069

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

President aware looking into

Waldworth Hospital

305 833-3059

Chris Noel

Johnny Grant - TV show in L.A.

Frank 865-7404

Intercontinental Hotel

1. Private Med. Team Brentwood, Wadsworth
put in investigation - pull out records

Not being taken care of

Hard to get admitted to hospital

5 weeks - saw doctor ten minutes
haven't seen in ten days
stopped eating

No body

Vials of pills

Anti-Flashbacks

Post Traumatic stress disorder
post-war syndrome
stress syndrome

Problem in admission room
end up on street + in jail

57,000 man suicides - DAV

VIET NAM VETERANS OF AMERICA M L
329 8 ST NORTHEAST
WASHINGTON DC 20002

western union Mailgram®



4-0706268149 05/29/81 ICS IPMMTZZ CSP WSHB
2025463700 MGM TDMT WASHINGTON DC 293 05-29 0633P EST

Attn: Norton

ELIZABETH DOLE
SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT
WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON DC 20500

THIS IS A COPY OF ORIGINAL MESSAGE SENT TO RON KOVIC AND RON BITZER.

THIS COMMUNICATION IS TO ADVISE YOU OF OUR HOPE THAT YOU WILL DISCONTINUE YOUR PROTEST AT THE VA HOSPITAL. THE VIET NAM VETERANS OF AMERICA DOES NOT SUPPORT YOUR CONTINUING PROTEST FOR SEVERAL REASONS. WE FEEL THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION HAS ACTED IN A COMMENDABLE MANNER BY RESPONDING TO THE REQUESTS OF MARLIN ATKINS AND JOHN KEAVENEY. DR CUSTIS, ACTING VA ADMINISTRATOR, HAS COMMITTED THE PRESIDENT TO THE MOST SIGNIFICANT GOALS VIET NAM VETERANS HAVE BEEN LOBBYING FOR OVER THE LAST SEVERAL MONTHS. THE COMMITMENT TO CONTINUE THE INTERAGENCY WORK GROUP AS A MOVING VEHICLE TO RESOLVE THE AGENT ORANGE ISSUE PLEASES US GREATLY, AS DOES THE EXPANDED BUDGET FOR AGENT ORANGE RESEARCH. THE ADDITIONAL COMMITMENT TO HONOR CONGRESSIONAL INTENT IN CONTINUING TO OPERATE THE VET CENTERS IN THEIR PRESENT FORM, AS STORE FRONT FACILITIES, AT THE FULL LEVEL THAT CONGRESS APPROPRIATED FUNDING FOR, IS A MAJOR BREAKTHROUGH. TO CONTINUE A POSITIVE DIALOG BETWEEN VIET NAM VETERANS AND THE ADMINISTRATION REQUIRES VIET NAM VETERANS ALSO TO ACT IN GOOD FAITH, AND, TO CONTINUE PROTESTING, IN LIGHT OF THE VERY SIGNIFICANT COMMITMENTS THE HUNGER STRIKERS WERE GIVEN, IS UNWARRANTED. ANY CONTINUED ACTION ON YOUR PART WILL ONLY SERVE TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION OF DIVISIVENESS AND UNREASONABLENESS ON THE PART OF THE VIET NAM VETERAN COMMUNITY.

HOPEFULLY, YOU WILL RECONSIDER YOUR ACTIONS BEFORE SERIOUS AND IRREPARABLE DAMAGE IS DONE TO THE VIET NAM VETERAN COMMUNITY.

CC PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN
CC ELIZABETH DOLE
CC DR DONALD CUSTIS, ACTING ADMINISTRATOR VAGO
CC SHAD MESHAD, VAMC WADSWORTH
CC WILLIAM ANDERSON, DIRECTOR VAMC WADSWORTH
ROBERT O MULLER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
VIET NAM VETERANS OF AMERICA

18:34 EST

MGMCOMP MGM

JUN 03 Rec'd

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FROM TELEX 6161

FROM TWX 910 420 1212

VETERANS: Protesters Await Reagan

Continued from First Page

veterans. He said Saturday that their gains under the Carter Administration after years of protests were being eroded under Reagan.

"I'm warning the President of the United States and the Republican Administration," Kovic said bitterly. "We can only take so much. The death of James Hopkins is symbolic, indicative of how desperate the Vietnam veteran is becoming. How many more time bombs must go off."

Hopkins, a 32-year-old ex-Marine who drove a jeep through the glass doors of Wadsworth and sprayed the hospital lobby with machine gun fire on March 14, was awaiting a federal court appearance on charges of destruction of federal property when he was found dead.

The cause of death has not been determined, but Los Angeles County Coroner Thomas T. Noguchi has ordered an investigation into whether Hopkins died as a result of exposure to Agent Orange, a powerful defoliant used in Vietnam.

When Hopkins, in camouflage battle gear, surrendered to police

after crashing into the hospital, he told them he was suffering from exposure to the herbicide.

Subsequently, Hopkins was examined by a team of VA doctors, who wrote in his case file, "There are no features, complaints or clinical findings to support any relationship to Agent Orange, or the post-Vietnam stress syndrome," according to Ron Bitzer, co-director of the Center for Veterans Rights.

That finding, Bitzer complained, was typical of the VA's failure to address the special needs of Vietnam-era veterans.

"We are dealing with a bureaucracy that's out of control," Bitzer charged. "The VA . . . is incapable of providing readjustment services to the Vietnam-era veteran. We have special problems: emotional disturbances, exposure to toxic herbicides and an inability to deal with institutions and authority."

All the veterans in the Wadsworth lobby complained bitterly about the planned elimination of the more than 90 veterans outreach centers recently established across the country specifically to deal with

the problems of Vietnam veterans.

"We just got a place to go to and they're cutting it off," said Virgil Niegel. Niegel said he has been unable to hold a job or get proper treatment since his discharge and survives by donating plasma and getting food stamps.

Keaveney said he began his hunger strike March 15 because he was tired of being tranquilized instead of treated for what he called "delayed combat neurosis."

Keaveney said he had tried to admit himself as a patient at Brentwood about six weeks ago because he was "tired of the nightmares, of the mortar shells dropping in on me and seeing my friends dead." He said he was only admitted after he threatened to "pull off the doctor's head."

"The last time I saw a doctor was two weeks ago for 10 minutes."

The Memorial Day march in honor of Hopkins was scheduled to begin at 1 p.m. Monday in front of the Wadsworth Hospital lobby.

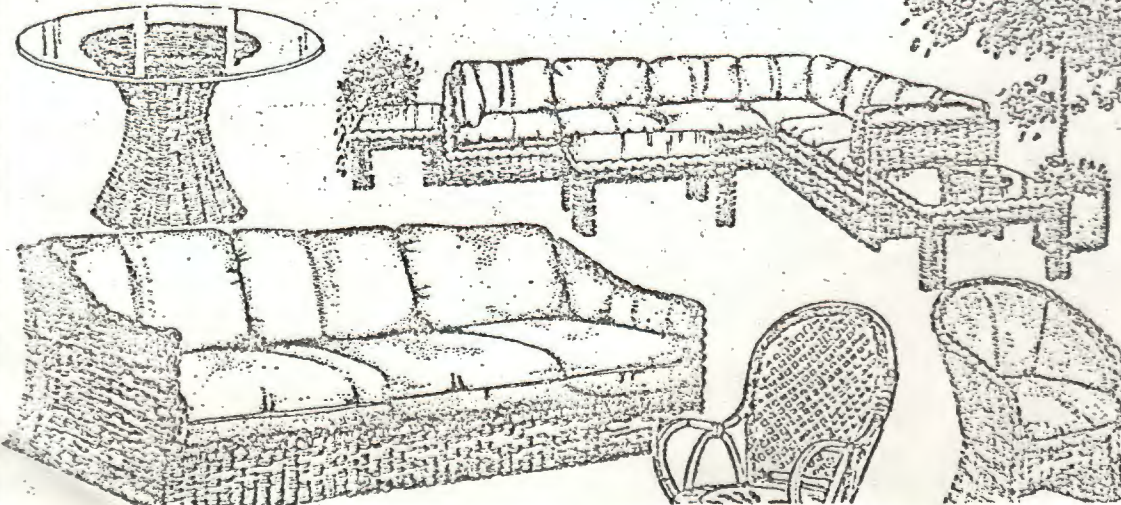
A separate rally in support of the hunger strikers was planned today at 2 p.m.

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Harry Handler after selection as L.A.
schools chief. After interviewing candi-
dates from across the country, the board
promoted its deputy superintendent.

Please see SCHOOLS, Page 5

L.A. Times May 24, 1981
**Vigil Continues as
Vets Await Reagan**

**Protesters Say They Will Discuss Their
Complaints About VA Only With President**

By KRISTINA LINDGREN, *Times Staff Writer*

More than 30 Vietnam veterans
sat out the fourth day of their
protest at the Veterans Administra-
tion's Wadsworth Hospital in West
Los Angeles Saturday, waiting in
vain for a response from President
Reagan.

On the lawn outside, three hun-
ger strikers—two of whom are pa-
tients at the nearby Brentwood
Hospital, a VA psychiatric complex
—staged an independent protest of
conditions there.

Both groups insisted that the
issues—from hospital mistreatment
to cuts in veterans programs—that
motivate their protest are broader
than the death last Sunday of the
emotionally troubled ex-Marine
James R. Hopkins. In fact, two of
the hunger strikers said they began
their fast two days before Hopkins
died, triggering the Wadsworth
"wait-in" protest.

'I Want Respect'

"People are not aware of a lot of
things that go on here," said John
Keaveney, 31, who said he stopped
eating solid food May 15 along with
Marlin Adkins, 37.

"It's a warehouse for people,
that's why I'm here," said Keaveney,
who served two tours of duty
with the U.S. Army in Vietnam. "I
want the respect of the American
people, the respect they owe us.

"If not, I'll die."

Michael McCarthy, co-director of
the Center for Veterans Rights and
one of the "wait-in" leaders said,
"We are staying in the hospital until

we have a meeting with Reagan,"
whose proposed budget cuts threa-
ten veterans' programs.

Wednesday, the veterans sent
the President a telegram detailing
their grievances against the VA and
the proposed budget cuts, then took
over part of the Wadsworth lobby,
vowing they would not leave until
Reagan met with them.

But White House Deputy Press
Secretary Larry Speakes, who was
with Reagan at the President's
ranch near Santa Barbara, said Sat-
urday that the matter is being han-
dled by the VA in Washington.
Speakes said the White House is not
directly involved.

Insist on Seeing Reagan

McCarthy said his group has had
no contact with VA officials in
Washington, adding that, in any
case, the protesters would discuss
only hospital complaints with the
VA. Of their broader grievances, he
said:

"We aren't talking to anyone but
the President."

As demonstrators planned a sym-
bolic Memorial Day funeral march
for Hopkins, whose body was found
in his Calabasas home lying next to
a liquor bottle and an empty pill
vial, Vietnam veteran leader Ron
Kovic predicted, "This protest is
going to be big, very big."

Kovic led a 17-day hunger strike
in Sen. Alan Cranston's (D-Calif.)
Los Angeles office seven years ago
to publicize the plight of Vietnam

Please see VETERANS, Page 5



JOHN OLIGNY / Los Angeles Times

them to camp, but thousands of needy
summertime experience with their peers.

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shed the average cost of a week of camp to
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help from the Camp Fund, their savings can
ely pay the whole bill.

Thousands of disadvantaged young people are

Please see CAMP FUND, Page 6

