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ADDRESS BY WILLIAM P. CLARK
ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS
TO THE NATIONAL LEAGUE OF FAMILIES
JANUARY 27, 1983

GEORGE BROOKS, ANN GRIFFITHS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

PRESIDENT REAGAN WILL BE SPEAKING WITH YOU TOMORROW. I CANNOT OVERSTATE HIS PERSONAL AND ABIDING COMMITMENT TO OUR MISSING MEN AND TO YOU, THEIR FAMILIES. HIS DEEP PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT EXTENDS BACK MANY YEARS AND HAS BEEN TRANSLATED INTO POLICIES, PROGRAMS, AND PRIORITIES WHICH GIVE ALL OF US HOPE THAT SEEMINGLY IMPENETRABLE BARRIERS TO PROGRESS MAY YET BE OVERCOME. I KNOW THESE BARRIERS HAVE BEEN THE CAUSE OF YEARS OF PERSONAL FRUSTRATION AND HEARTBREAK. WHILE WE CANNOT BEGIN TO EXPERIENCE THE COLLECTIVE PAIN YOU HAVE ENDURED, YOU SHOULD KNOW WE ARE ACUTELY AWARE OF YOUR ADDED BURDENS WITH EACH PASSING DAY WITHOUT PROGRESS.

WE RECOGNIZE THAT WITH OUR HIGHER PRIORITY AND OUR GREATER EMPHASIS, THERE WILL BE INCREASED PUBLIC AWARENESS AND GREATER DEMANDS FOR IMMEDIATE, SOMETIMES IRRESPONSIBLE, ACTION. WE ACCEPT THIS WILLINGLY AND IN CLEAR CONSCIENCE, BECAUSE WE ARE

COMMITTED TO RESPONSIBLE, EFFECTIVE ACTION IN THE SHORTEST POSSIBLE TIMEFRAME.

I WILL BE AS SPECIFIC AS POSSIBLE TODAY, TRUSTING YOU WILL UNDERSTAND THAT WE CANNOT PUBLICLY REVEAL ALL OUR INITIATIVES. HOPEFULLY, WHAT I CAN SAY WILL PROVIDE CLEAR EVIDENCE THAT YOUR GOVERNMENT RECOGNIZES ITS RESPONSIBILITY AND IS FAITHFULLY DISCHARGING IT.

FIRST, I WOULD LIKE TO RESTATE THIS ADMINISTRATION'S POLICY POSITIONS.

- RESOLUTION OF THE ISSUES INVOLVING OUR MISSING MEN IS A MATTER OF HIGHEST NATIONAL PRIORITY.
- THIS ADMINISTRATION WILL WORK UNCEASINGLY FOR THE FULLEST POSSIBLE ACCOUNTING.
- INFORMATION NOW IN OUR POSSESSION PRECLUDES RULING OUT THE POSSIBILITY THAT AMERICANS ARE STILL BEING DETAINED AGAINST THEIR WILL.
- INVESTIGATIONS OF LIVE SIGHTING REPORTS ARE ASSIGNED, AND WILL CONTINUE TO BE ASSIGNED, HIGHEST PRIORITIES AND NECESSARY RESOURCES, BASED ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT SOME AMERICANS ARE STILL BEING HELD CAPTIVE.

- WE ARE FIRMLY COMMITTED TO THE CLOSEST COOPERATION WITH THE NATIONAL LEAGUE OF FAMILIES.

THESE POLICY POSITIONS ARE MORE THAN MERE WORDS. IN IMPLEMENTING THEM, WE ARE SIMULTANEOUSLY PURSUING A NUMBER OF INITIATIVES. ACTIONS I REPORT TO YOU TODAY HAVE ALL OCCURRED SINCE YOUR JULY MEETING.

FIRST, INTELLIGENCE COLLECTION PRIORITIES ON THE POW/MIA ISSUE WERE ONCE AGAIN RAISED LATE LAST YEAR. LAST MONTH, A SECRETARIAL POSITION WAS ADDED TO THE JOINT CASUALTY RESOLUTION CENTER IN BANGKOK TO FREE PROFESSIONAL STAFF FROM ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES.

THIS MONTH, THE ADDITION OF A LANGUAGE-CAPABLE INTERVIEWER TO THE STAFF FOR A MINIMUM PERIOD OF 90 DAYS, WILL AUGMENT JCRC CAPABILITY TO DEBRIEF REFUGEES.

WE ARE IN THE MIDST OF A REVIEW OF OVERALL NEEDS OF JCRC AT THE PRESENT TIME.

LAST JULY, YOUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND ANN GRIFFITHS MET WITH MY DEPUTY, BUD MCFARLANE, AND IDENTIFIED AREAS OF SPECIFIC CONCERN TO THE FAMILIES. EACH WAS SERIOUSLY ADDRESSED. SEVERAL OF THESE CONCERNS NEEDED ATTENTION AND BECAME PRIORITY INTERAGENCY ACTION ITEMS. ALTHOUGH I REPORTED SEPARATELY BY

MEMO TO THE LEAGUE, I WILL BRIEFLY REVIEW THE STATUS OF SOME OF THE MAJOR CONCERNS EXPRESSED BY YOUR BOARD.

IMPROVED CONTACT WITH NEXT OF KIN. THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AND THE INDIVIDUAL SERVICES HAVE GIVEN HIGH PRIORITY TO UPDATING THE NEXT OF KIN ADDRESS RECORDS. TO COMPLETE THIS TASK, WE WILL NEED THE HELP OF THE FAMILIES. A TOTAL OF 2,857 LETTERS HAVE BEEN MAILED WITH A POSITIVE RESPONSE RATE OF 79%. FOLLOW-UP ACTION ON OVER 400 UNDELIVERED LETTERS IS UNDERWAY WITH ATTEMPTS TO UPDATE ADDRESSES THROUGH OTHER GOVERNMENT AGENCIES SUCH AS THE SOCIAL SECURITY AND VETERANS ADMINISTRATIONS. THE FIRST ISSUE OF NEXT-OF-KIN NEWSLETTERS FROM THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT HAS BEEN MAILED, AND OTHERS WILL FOLLOW TO ADVISE FAMILY MEMBERS ON SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS. WE WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR ASSISTANCE IN OBTAINING INFORMATION CONCERNING FAMILIES WHO HAVE NOT RESPONDED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE LETTER.

EXPLOITATION OF REFUGEES. IN ADDITION TO THE JCRC AUGMENTATION MENTIONED EARLIER, A COMPLETE REVIEW OF OUR PROCEDURES AND POLICIES ON REFUGEE EXPLOITATION WAS CONDUCTED, FIRST, AT EACH EMBASSY IN THE APPROPRIATE COUNTRY FOLLOWED BY CONSOLIDATION OF RESULTS AND INTERAGENCY REVIEW. MY ORIGINAL INFORMATIONAL MEMO TO THE LEAGUE INDICATED THAT WE HAD CONFIDENCE IN THE DEVELOPED PROCEDURES. SUBSEQUENTLY WE LEARNED OF PROBLEMS NOT IDENTIFIED IN THE FIRST REVIEW. WE HAVE MADE SIGNIFICANT

PROGRESS IN RESOLVING THESE PROBLEMS AND REALIZE THAT THEY WILL REQUIRE CONTINUOUS REVIEW.

THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES HAS TAKEN ACTION TO ASSIST IN CONTACTING INDOCHINESE REFUGEES WHO HAVE RESETTLED IN THE UNITED STATES AND MAY HAVE ACCESS TO INFORMATION ON POWs AND MIAs. ON DECEMBER 7, HHS SENT ALMOST 500 LETTERS TO REFUGEE MUTUAL ASSISTANCE ASSOCIATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES, REQUESTING THEIR COOPERATION IN CONTACTING THEIR MEMBERS FOR INFORMATION ON POWs AND MIAs. THE HHS LETTER WAS THE MOST LIKELY MEANS OF REACHING REFUGEES, AS HHS NO LONGER PUBLISHES A REFUGEE NEWSLETTER AND INCLUSION OF A FLYER IN WELFARE CHECKS HAS PROVED UNWORKABLE FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS. REFUGEE ORGANIZATIONS CONTACTED WERE VERY SYMPATHETIC FROM A HUMANITARIAN POINT OF VIEW TO THE NEED FOR POW/MIA INFORMATION, BUT THEY DID NOT WISH THEIR COOPERATION TO APPEAR TO BE LINKED TO THE RECEIPT OF PUBLIC ASSISTANCE.

DIPLOMATIC ACTIONS. IN OUR REGULAR CONTACTS WITH OFFICIALS OF FRIENDLY FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS, WE NOW EMPHASIZE THE NEED THAT THEY RAISE THE POW/MIA ISSUE IN THEIR CONTACTS WITH THE CONCERNED GOVERNMENTS. WE BELIEVE THAT APPROACHES FROM SUCH COUNTRIES MAKE THE VIETNAMESE AND LAO AWARE THAT THE POW/MIA ISSUE IS OF INTEREST TO OTHER COUNTRIES AS WELL AS THE UNITED STATES. WE WILL CONTINUE TO SEEK THE ASSISTANCE OF COUNTRIES HAVING DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH VIETNAM.

INCREASED PUBLIC AWARENESS. THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE HAS DEVELOPED TWO TELEVISION PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS WHICH HAVE BEEN DISTRIBUTED TO OVER 400 STATIONS. ADDITIONAL SUCH ANNOUNCEMENTS WILL BE DEVELOPED AND DISTRIBUTED. IN ADDITION, WE ARE ACTIVELY SUPPORTING PRIVATELY DEVELOPED TELEVISION PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PUBLIC AWARENESS ACTIVITIES BY VETERANS GROUPS AND OTHERS. A NEW DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE FACT BOOK HAS NOW BEEN PUBLISHED AND IS AVAILABLE. PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY THE PRESIDENT AND OTHER ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN MADE AND WILL CONTINUE. BOTH THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE AND THE CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF HAVE ASKED THE INDIVIDUAL SERVICES TO ACTIVELY SUPPORT AWARENESS BY PUBLICIZING THE ISSUE THROUGHOUT ALL MAJOR COMMANDS. IN ADDITION, THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT IS REGULARLY DISTRIBUTING POW/MIA ARTICLES FOR PUBLICATION IN THE MAGAZINES OF MAJOR VETERANS GROUPS.

TALKS WITH THE LAO GOVERNMENT. WE WERE GRATIFIED TO NOTE THE POSITIVE RECEPTION BY THE LAO GOVERNMENT TO THE LEAGUE DELEGATION IN SEPTEMBER, AND ARE VERY GRATEFUL TO THE LEAGUE FOR ITS MOST RESPONSIBLE ROLE IN AIDING THE DIALOGUE. THIS WAS FOLLOWED IN OCTOBER WITH A VISIT TO VIENTIANE BY A SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL. WE ARE HOPEFUL OF FURTHER SUBSTANTIVE PROGRESS, AND HAVE PROPOSED SPECIFIC, POSITIVE STEPS WE ARE PREPARED TO TAKE IN RESPONSE TO CONCRETE ACTION BY THE LAO GOVERNMENT. WE HAVE TOLD THEM WE ARE PREPARED TO MOVE TOWARD IMPROVED RELATIONS BUT THAT CONCRETE ACTION BY EACH SIDE IS

NECESSARY. THESE ACTIONS MUST INVOLVE A SUSTAINED PATTERN OF PROGRESS ON THE POW/MIA ISSUE.

STRENGTHENING THE INTERAGENCY GROUP. THE POW/MIA ISSUE CUTS ACROSS MANY AGENCIES OF GOVERNMENT, AND THUS REQUIRES CLOSE AND FULL INTERAGENCY COORDINATION. OUR REVIEW OF THE POW/MIA INTERAGENCY GROUP, WHICH INCLUDES STATE, DEFENSE, THE DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE AGENCY, THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF, CONGRESSIONAL, LEAGUE AND NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL REPRESENTATION, CONCLUDED THAT THE GROUP IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE FORUM FOR SUCH COORDINATION. YOUR LEAGUE REPRESENTATIVE IS A FULL PARTICIPANT IN ALL DISCUSSIONS. I ASSURE YOU THAT HER VIEWS ARE ACTIVELY SOLICITED, AND HER REPRESENTATION OF YOUR CONCERNS ACTS AS A CONSCIENCE FOR US ALL.

IN ADDITION TO THE LAO INITIATIVE, WE ARE PURSUING CONTACTS WITH THE VIETNAMESE. IN SEPTEMBER THE VIETNAMESE AGREED TO OUR LONGSTANDING REQUEST FOR REGULAR TECHNICAL DISCUSSIONS ON POW/MIA MATTERS. THEY HAVE AGREED TO FOUR SESSIONS A YEAR, THE FIRST OF WHICH WAS HELD IN HANOI IN DECEMBER.

ALTHOUGH NO MAJOR BREAKTHROUGHS OCCURRED, THE DISCUSSIONS WERE PRODUCTIVE AND THE US DELEGATION WAS TAKEN TO A REPORTED CRASH SITE. THE LEAGUE PROPOSAL TO BE INCLUDED IN THESE DISCUSSIONS WAS GIVEN SERIOUS CONSIDERATION BY THE INTERAGENCY GROUP AND WAS AGAIN REVIEWED AT THE WHITE HOUSE. WE ARE FIRMLY CONVINCED GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT CHANNELS ARE THE MOST

EFFECTIVE WAY TO RESOLVE THE ACCOUNTING ISSUE, BUT WE ARE ACUTELY AWARE OF THE NEED TO KEEP THE LEAGUE INFORMED ON OUR PROGRESS IN THESE SESSIONS. AS I PLEDGED IN A LETTER TO YOUR BOARD CHAIRMAN GEORGE BROOKS, WE HAVE CONSULTED AND WILL CONTINUE TO CONSULT WITH ANN GRIFFITHS, YOUR REPRESENTATIVE ON THE INTERAGENCY GROUP. THESE DISCUSSIONS WILL COVER OUR TALKING POINTS AND OBJECTIVES PRIOR TO THESE MEETINGS AND FULL AND CANDID DEBRIEFINGS AFTERWARDS. IF THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT PROCESS SLOWS, WE WILL EXPECT TO CALL ON THE LEAGUE TO AID IN RESTORING MOMENTUM.

WE HOPE THESE MEETINGS WILL MOVE US FORWARD. VIETNAMESE COOPERATION IN FULFILLING THE HUMANITARIAN OBLIGATION IS MANDATORY. THEIR PAST REFUSAL TO COOPERATE IS THE PRIMARY OBSTACLE TO PROGRESS ON THE ACCOUNTING ISSUE. THE IMPORTANCE WE ATTACH TO RESOLUTION OF THE POW/MIA ISSUE HAS BEEN REPEATEDLY IMPRESSED UPON THE VIETNAMESE -- THERE IS NO QUESTION THEY UNDERSTAND OUR PRIORITY AND COMMITMENT. IN AUGUST WE MET IN HAWAII WITH THE VIETNAMESE AND RENEWED OUR OFFERS TO ASSIST THEM IN SEARCHING FOR MISSING AMERICANS. WE WILL CONTINUOUSLY AND RELENTLESSLY PRESS FOR PROGRESS AND COOPERATION.

THE VIETNAMESE, WHILE PUBLICLY AGREEING THAT THIS IS A HUMANITARIAN ISSUE, UNCONNECTED WITH POLICY CONSIDERATIONS, CONSISTENTLY ATTEMPT LINKAGE TO QUESTIONS OF THEIR PERCEIVED NATIONAL INTEREST. WE CONSIDER SUCH TACTICS BRUTALLY CRUEL

AND UNFAIR TO OUR MISSING MEN AND TO YOU, THE FAMILIES. I SAY TO THEM TODAY THAT IT IS IN THEIR NATIONAL INTEREST TO RESPOND POSITIVELY AND FULLY ON THIS ISSUE. WITHOUT SUCH A RESPONSE, THE VIETNAMESE ARE ENGENDERING A PERCEPTION OF INCREDIBLE CRUELTY IN THE HEARTS OF THE FAMILIES OF OUR MISSING MEN AND THE AMERICAN PEOPLE. CONTINUED VIOLATIONS OF THIS MOST FUNDAMENTAL OF MORAL PRINCIPLES CAN LEAD THEM ONLY FURTHER INTO INTERNATIONAL ISOLATION. I APPEAL TO THEM TO BEGIN THE PROCESS OF REJOINING THE FAMILY OF MAN BY RESPONDING POSITIVELY ON THIS ISSUE. YOU ARE RUNNING OUT OF PATIENCE, THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ARE RUNNING OUT OF PATIENCE AND SO IS YOUR GOVERNMENT. THE TIME IS NOW HERE FOR THE GOVERNMENT IN HANOI TO RESPOND BEFORE THEY INFLICT UPON THEMSELVES THE LONG-TERM INDIGNATION OF THE TRADITIONALLY WARM AND CARING AMERICAN PEOPLE.

WE ARE ENCOURAGED TO SEE THE DEVELOPING CONSENSUS THAT WE ARE SERIOUS ABOUT OUR GOAL TO RESOLVE THE POW/MIA ISSUE. WELL INTENTIONED CITIZENS HAVE HERETOFORE MOUNTED PRIVATE OPERATIONS IN THE BELIEF GOVERNMENT INACTION DEMANDED SUCH ACTIVITY. WE WILLINGLY RECEIVE INFORMATION CONCERNING POW/MIAS FROM ANY SOURCE, BUT ARE RESOLUTELY OPPOSED TO PRIVATE CROSS-BORDER FORAYS. SUCH ACTIONS INTERFERE WITH AND DAMAGE LEGITIMATE EFFORTS ON A NUMBER OF FRONTS. OUR EXPERIENCE HAS BEEN THAT SUCH PRIVATE INITIATIVES OPERATE WITH FAULTY OR FABRICATED INTELLIGENCE AND LACK EVEN marginally ADEQUATE OPERATIONAL CAPABILITIES. WE ARE AWARE THAT IN MANY

INSTANCES, PRIVATE CITIZENS HAVE BEEN APPROACHED TO CONTRIBUTE FUNDS TO FINANCE THESE EFFORTS. SOME OF YOU MAY HAVE CONTRIBUTED EVEN LARGE SUMS, AND THIS HAS RESULTED ONLY IN INCREASED FRUSTRATION. WE MUST WORK TOGETHER TO ENSURE THAT THE CURRENT VISIBILITY OF THIS ISSUE, ACHIEVED BY OUR COLLECTIVE EFFORT TO GENERATE PUBLIC AWARENESS, DOES NOT BRING TO THE FORE IRRESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUALS WHOSE INTERESTS MAY LIE IN OTHER THAN VALID RESOLUTION OR BRING FORTH RECKLESS CLAIMS OF GUARANTEED RESULTS. WE APPEAL TO YOU, THE FAMILIES -- SHOULD YOU BE APPROACHED WITH POW/MIA INFORMATION -- TO PROVIDE THAT INFORMATION TO THE GOVERNMENT FOR EVALUATION AND FOLLOW UP. YOU HAVE BEEN ASSURED BY THE PRESIDENT AND THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE THAT UPON CONFIRMATION OF AMERICANS HELD IN CAPTIVITY, APPROPRIATE ACTION WILL BE TAKEN TO ENSURE THEIR RETURN. I ASSURE YOU THAT THIS PLEDGE WAS NOT MADE LIGHTLY.

I AM AS FORTHCOMING AS POSSIBLE WITH YOU TODAY, KNOWING YOU REALIZE THAT ALL OUR EFFORTS CANNOT BE REPORTED. HOPEFULLY, WHAT YOU HAVE HEARD TODAY AND WILL HEAR TOMORROW FROM THE PRESIDENT, WILL CONVINCE YOU THAT WE NOT ONLY CARE DEEPLY ABOUT OUR MISSING MEN AND YOU, THEIR FAMILIES, BUT THAT WE ARE DEVOTING HIGHEST PRIORITY RESOURCES TO THE TASK OF OBTAINING THE RELEASE OF ANY PRISONERS WHO MAY STILL BE HELD, THE FULLEST POSSIBLE ACCOUNTING OF THOSE STILL MISSING, AND THE REPATRIATION OF REMAINS OF THOSE WHO DIED SERVING OUR NATION. THE TOOLS WE NEED ARE ACTIVE AND IN-PLACE AND PUBLIC AWARENESS IS GROWING. LET US HOPE AND PRAY TOGETHER THAT THE NEW YEAR

WILL GIVE US THE RESULTS YOU HAVE WORKED FOR ALL THESE YEARS.
WHILE EACH DAY WE AWAIT RESULTS ADDS TO YOUR BURDEN, IT ALSO
ADDS TO OUR DETERMINATION TO SUCCEED.

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

January 28, 1983

ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO THE NATIONAL LEAGUE OF FAMILIES
OF AMERICAN PRISONERS AND MISSING IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Hyatt Regency Hotel
Crystal City, Virginia

9:49 A.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. (Applause.) You've done that already. George Brooks, Ann Griffiths, members of the Board and family members and members of Congress, I think most of you know that during the course of any given day, we meet with an assortment of groups who represent a cross section of interests and causes.

None of those meetings are routine, but I must tell you that this meeting today is more than special. The anguish you've suffered, the families of brave men of listed prisoners of war or missing in action, the misery of anguish is unspeakable, something the rest of us can really never know even in a partial measure. Twelve years ago, I said something to a group of you in California that I believe is even more true today. If they could be here today, millions of Americans, from every corner of this land, who have only a glimmer of your pain, would say to you, "We want with all our hearts to share your burden."

And what a burden you've had to bear. You watched as we disengaged from Vietnam and many of our prisoners of war returned for an emotional homecoming. You've seen task forces and committees hold hearings and issue reports that attempted to foreclose hope. But as the tragic flow of refugees from Indochina began a few years ago, those columns of humanity who had suffered hunger and thirst and disease and piracy, brought with them firsthand, "live sighting" reports of American prisoners held captive after 1973. As this information was investigated, respected figures in the intelligence community reached personal conclusions that these reports were credible, even though the circumstances of the sightings prevented confirmation.

But with these refugees and the news they brought, another tragedy was unfolding here at home. You, the families of our missing men, were trying to be heard, and yet, you were sometimes unfairly and cruelly branded as emotionally distraught groups that ignored reality and simply hoped against hope.

Government and public attention began to wane. And instead of being a full partner with your government in attempts to learn the fates of loved ones, you were confronted with legal rulings that presumed the loved ones were dead. You found yourselves quite literally on the outside, driven in some cases to demonstrate for attention in front of the White House gates.

Well, today I want you to know that your vigil is over. Your government is attentive and intelligence assets of the United States are fully focused on this issue. (Applause.) Furthermore, I pledge to you, we will take decisive action on any live sighting report that can be confirmed.

We're also working to achieve the accounting of our missing men. I'm sure you understand that some of these approaches must be done quietly. As Judge Clark told you yesterday, despite the

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differences between our governments, we have followed up encouraging Lao response to the recent visit by the League's delegation. We are fully prepared to take additional, concrete steps with the Lao government to improve relations. I pledge to you that the progress on the POW/MIA issue will be the principle measure of their sincerity. I wish to recognize publicly their positive steps to date, and call upon them to continue with us in this humanitarian effort to end the years of uncertainty that you have endured.

I, also, called on the government in Hanoi to honor their pledges to the American people on the POW/MIA issue. Not for me, not for our government, but for our missing men and those of you that did nothing to deserve the terrible emotional ordeal that you have endured.

Now, these steps are an indication of how things are changing for the better, and how the work of those of you in the National League of Families has helped bring about this change.

You are the ones who have forged a partnership to realize our common quest -- the return of all POWs, the fullest possible accounting for the still missing, and the repatriation of the remains of those who died serving our nation. The myth that this effort is partisan or needlessly raises your hopes has now been dashed.

The government bureaucracy now understands that these goals are the highest national priority. And there is strong, bipartisan support in the Congress. (Applause.) Those Americans who attempted to discharge government responsibilities through private efforts should now understand that the full resources of our government are now committed to these goals.

Today is a time for remembering many -- the private donors, the Congressmen, and the government employees -- all those who are dedicated to organizing and supporting a variety of projects to achieve our goals. Because of the very nature of the work, they must shun publicity. But I want them to know that their quiet and responsible efforts represent the highest patriotic humanitarian values. I urge them to continue on with their work, regardless of the obstacles and frustrations, for the return home of only one of our men will be a personal reward of far greater value than any words spoken here today.

But beyond all this, I have mentioned that there are, of course, those of you here today. Today, this is room of heroes who kept a vigil of unprecedented faith and devotion. Through all the years of heartbreak and mistrust, you have been the ones who have cared. You are the ones who asked for justice -- for deeds, not words.

The membership of the National League of Families, past and present board members, and your national office staff deserve the gratitude and accolades of this nation. And I think I should mention other individuals who share our goals such as Fred Travelena, a returned POW Captain Jerry Coffee -- who have, also, given without regard to personal gain.

So all of us can be gratified that progress is being made, but never satisfied. We need greater public awareness from the American people. So I ask each American who hears or reads of this to find a way to help. No matter how small each individual effort may seem, it is needed.

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I ask too that you continue to provide us with positive suggestions through your Washington office. We welcome and solicit your help and cooperation as well as the criticism when you feel we deserve it. It's possible there will be differences from time to time on tactics and strategy, but I repeat: We are heartfelt allies and friends. Our goals are the same.

The government is large. It's possible sometimes you'll hear voices that will sound contradictory or insensitive, but we're doing what we can to eliminate that. So, please, don't let it shake our larger faith. Only if we're united, only if we have faith in each other, can we finally hope to end the tragic ordeal that you've endured with such steadfast and wondrous courage.

I know I've spoken before and told of when the POWs did return immediately after the agreement. Nancy and I were fortunate enough -- I was Governor then in Sacramento -- to have several hundred of them, not all at once, of course -- couldn't get them in -- but in groups, in our home. One who is here at this table this morning was one of those. We heard such stories. We saw then such courage. And one night afterward, I said to Nancy, "Where did we find such men?" And the answer came almost as quickly as I'd asked it. We found them where we've always found them -- on the farms, in the shops, in the offices, on the streets, in towns and cities in America and farms. They're just the product of the greatest, freest system man has ever known. (Applause.)

Speaking for Nancy and myself, you and they will be in our prayers. God bless you all. (Applause.)

END

10:00 A.M. EST

File - POW/min

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

March 10, 1983

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
TO THE
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MANUFACTURERS

Washington Hilton Hotel
Washington, D.C.

12:00 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. (Applause.) Thank you, Bernie, for your kind introduction and all of you for your warm welcome. And Madam Secretary and distinguished guests here at the head table and you ladies and gentlemen, I'm delighted to be here. I know that you and your President, Sandy Trowbridge, and the entire NAM organization have been an enormous help during the last two years, not only with advice and counsel but with a roll-up-your-sleeves effort to help pass the economic recovery programs that are ending this recession. And with your assistance we also were able to negotiate a bipartisan compromise solution to save our Social Security System. (Applause.)

You know, we didn't come to Washington at an ideal time, and we've -- (laughter) -- certainly had our share of problems. But the signs of recovery are springing up all around us. And there's no mistaking the fact that, at long last, America is on the mend -- and the courage and the vision of the people and institutions that are represented here today deserve a big share of the credit for this hard-earned but inflation-free recovery. So, on behalf of all your fellow citizens who have been freed from the ravages of runaway inflation and can look again to a future of better times and then new opportunity, I thank you. (Applause.)

America is meeting her challenge here at home. But there are other challenges, equally important, that we must face. And today I'd like to talk to you about one of them.

Late last year I visited Central America. Just a few weeks ago, our Ambassador, Jeane Kirkpatrick, also toured the area. And in the last few days, I have met with leaders of the Congress to discuss recent events in Central America and our policies in that troubled part of the world. So, today I'd like to report to you on these consultations, and why they're important to all of us.

The nations of Central America are among our nearest neighbors. El Salvador, for example, is nearer to Texas than Texas is to Massachusetts. Central America is simply too close, and the strategic stakes are too high, for us to ignore the danger of governments seizing power there with ideological and military ties to the Soviet Union.

Now, let me just show you how important Central America is. Here -- and you can't see it from over there because I'm in the way -- but here at the base

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of Central America is the Panama Canal. Half of all the foreign trade of the United States passes through either the Canal -- (laughter) -- I've been dying to give you all an economic lesson, and you show up for geography. (Laughter and applause.) But as I say, half of that trade passes either through the Canal or the other Caribbean sea lanes on its way to or from our ports.

And, of course, to the north, as you can see, is Mexico, a country of enormous human and material importance, with which we share 1,800 miles of peaceful frontier.

And between Mexico and the Canal lies Central America. As I speak to you today, its countries are in the midst of the gravest crisis in their history. Accumulated grievances, social and economic change are challenging traditional ways. New leaders with new aspirations have emerged who want a new and better deal for their peoples. And that is good.

The problem is that an aggressive minority has thrown in its lot with the Communists, looking to the Soviets and their own Cuban henchmen to help them pursue political change through violence. Nicaragua, right here, has become their base. And these extremists make no secret of their goal. They preach the doctrine of a quote "revolution without frontiers" unquote. Their first target is El Salvador.

Important? Well, to begin with, there's the sheer human tragedy. Thousands of people have already died, and unless the conflict is ended democratically, millions more could be affected throughout the hemisphere. The people of El Salvador have proved they want democracy. But if guerrilla violence succeeds, they won't get it. El Salvador will join Cuba and Nicaragua as a base for spreading violence to Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica -- probably the most democratic country in the world today. The killing will increase and so will the threat to Panama, the Canal, and ultimately Mexico. In the process, vast numbers of men, women and children will lose their homes, their countries and their lives.

Make no mistake. We want the same thing the people of Central America want -- an end to the killing. We want to see freedom preserved where it now exists and its rebirth where it does not. The Communist agenda, on the other hand, is to exploit human suffering in Central America to strike at the heart of the Western Hemisphere. By preventing reform and instilling their own brand of totalitarianism, they can threaten freedom and peace and weaken our national security.

I know a good many people wonder why we should care about whether Communist governments come into power in Nicaragua, El Salvador, or other such countries as Costa Rica and Honduras, Guatemala, and the islands of the Caribbean. One columnist argued last week that we shouldn't care because their products are not that vital to our economy.

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That's like the argument of another so-called expert that we shouldn't worry about Castro's control over the island of Granada -- their only important product is nutmeg.

Well, let me just interject right here. Granada, that tiny little island with Cuba at the west end of the Caribbean, Granada at the east end, that tiny little island is building now, or having built for it, on its soil and shores, a naval base, a superior air base, storage bases and facilities for the storage of munitions, barracks and training grounds for the military. I'm sure all of that is simply to encourage the export of nutmeg.

People who make these arguments haven't taken a good look at a map lately or followed the extraordinary buildup of Soviet and Cuban military power in the region or read the Soviets discussions about why the region is important to them and how they intend to use it.

It isn't nutmeg that's at stake in the Caribbean and Central America. It is the United States's national security.

Soviet military theorists want to destroy our capacity to resupply Western Europe in case of an emergency. They want to tie down our attention and forces on our own southern border and so limit our capacity to act in more distant places, such as Europe, the Persian Gulf, the Indian Ocean, the Sea of Japan.

Those Soviet theorists noticed what we failed to notice, that the Caribbean Sea and Central America constitute this nation's fourth border. If we must defend ourselves against large, hostile military presence on our border, our freedom to act elsewhere to help others and to protect strategically vital sea lanes and resources has been drastically diminished.

They know this. They've written about this.

We've been slow to understand that the defense of the Caribbean and Central America against Marxist-Leninist takeover is vital to our national security in ways we're not accustomed to thinking about.

For the past three years, under two Presidents, the United States has been engaged in an effort to stop the advance of communism in Central America by doing what we do best, by supporting democracy. For three years, our goal has been to support fundamental change in this region, to replace poverty with development and dictatorship with democracy.

These objectives are not easy to obtain. We're on the right track. Costa Rica continues to set a democratic example, even in the midst of economic crises and Nicaraguan intimidation. Honduras has gone from military rule to a freely-elected civilian government. Despite incredible obstacles, the democratic center is holding in El Salvador, implementing land reform and working to replace the politics of death with a life of democracy.

So the good news is that our new policies have begun to work. Democracy, with free elections, free labor unions, freedom of religion and respect for the integrity of the individual, is the clear choice of the overwhelming majority of Central Americans.

In fact, except for Cuba and its followers, no government and no significant sector of the public anywhere in this hemisphere wants to see the guerrillas seize power in El Salvador.

The bad news is that the

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struggle for democracy is still far from over. Despite their success in largely eliminating guerrilla political influence in populated areas and despite some improvements in military armaments and mobility, El Salvador's people remain under strong pressure from armed guerrillas controlled by extremists with Cuban-Soviet support.

The military capability of these guerrillas -- and I would like to stress "military" capability -- for these are not peasant irregulars. They are trained, military forces. This has kept political and economic progress from being turned into the peace the Salvadoran people so obviously want.

Part of the trouble is internal to El Salvador. But an important part is external: the availability of training, tactical guidance, and military supplies coming into El Salvador from Marxist Nicaragua. I am sure you have read about the guerrillas capturing rifles from government, national guard units. And recently, this has happened. But much more critical to guerrilla operations are the supplies and munitions that are infiltrated into El Salvador by land, sea, and air -- by pack mules, by small boats, and by small aircraft.

These pipelines fuel the guerrilla offensives and keep alive the conviction of their extremist leaders that power will ultimately come from the barrels of their guns. Now, all this is happening in El Salvador just as a constitution is being written, as open presidential elections are being prepared, and as a peace commission -- named last week -- has begun to work on amnesty and national reconciliation to bring all social and political groups into the democratic process.

It is the guerrilla militants who have, so far, refused to use democratic means, have ignored the voice of the people of El Salvador, and have resorted to terror, sabotage, and bullets instead of the ballot box. During the past week, we have discussed all of these issues and more with leaders and Members of the Congress. Their views have helped shape our own thinking. And I believe that we have developed a common course to follow.

Here are some of the questions that are raised most often. First, how bad is the military situation? It is not good. Salvadoran soldiers have proved that, when they are well trained, led, and supplied, they can protect the people from guerrilla attacks. But so far, U.S. trainers have been able to train only one soldier in ten. There is a shortage of experienced officers. Supplies are unsure. The guerrillas have taken advantage of these shortcomings. For the moment at least, they have taken the tactical initiative just when the sharply limited funding Congress has so far approved is running out.

A second vital question is: Are we going to send American soldiers into combat? And the answer

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to that is a flat no.

A third question: are we going to Americanize the war with a lot of U.S. combat advisors? And again, the answer is, no.

Only Salvadorans can fight this war, just as only Salvadorans can decide El Salvador's future. What we can do is help to give them the skills and supplies they need to do the job for themselves.

That mostly means training. Without playing a combat role themselves and without accompanying Salvadoran units into combat, American specialists can help the Salvadoran army improve its operations.

Over the last year, despite manifest needs for more training, we have scrupulously kept our training activities well below our self-imposed numerical limit on numbers of trainers. We are currently reviewing what we can do to provide the most effective training possible to determine the minimum level of trainers needed, and where the training should best take place. We think the best way is to provide training outside of El Salvador, in the United States or elsewhere, but that costs a lot more. So the number of U.S. trainers in El Salvador will depend upon the resources available.

Question four: are we seeking a political or a military solution? Despite all I and others have said, some people still seem to think that our concern for security assistance means that all we care about is a military solution. That's nonsense. Bullets are no answer to economic inequities, social tensions, or political disagreements. Democracy is what we want, and what we want is to enable Salvadorans to stop the killing and sabotage so that economic and political reforms can take root. The real solution can only be a political one. This reality leads directly to a fifth question.

Why not stop the killings and start talking? Why not negotiate? Well, negotiations are already a key part of our policy. We support negotiations among all the nations of the region to strengthen democracy, to halt subversion, to stop the flow of arms, to respect borders, and to remove all the foreign military advisors, the Soviets, the Cubans, the East Germans, the PLO, as well as our own from the region.

A regional peace initiative is now emerging. We have been in close touch with its sponsors and wish it well, and we support negotiations within nations aimed at expanding participation in democratic institutions, at getting all parties to participate in free, non-violent elections.

What we oppose are negotiations that would be used as a cynical device for dividing up power behind the people's back. We cannot support negotiations which instead of expanding democracy try to destroy it, negotiations which would simply distribute power among armed groups without the consent of the people of El Salvador.

We made that mistake some years ago in Laos when we pressed and pressured the Laotian government to form a government, a co-op with the Pathet Lao, the armed guerrillas who had been doing what the guerrillas are doing in El Salvador. And once they had that tripartite government they didn't rest until those

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guerrillas, the Pathet Lao had seized total control of the government of Laos. The thousands of Salvadorans who risked their lives to vote last year should not have their ballots thrown into the trash heap this year by letting a tiny minority on the fringe of a wide and diverse political spectrum shoot its way into power.

No, the only legitimate road to power, the only road we can support, is through the voting booth so that the people can choose for themselves; choose, as His Holiness the Pope said Sunday, "far from terror and in a climate of democratic conviviality." This is fundamental, and it is a moral as well as a practical belief that all free people of the Americas share.

Having consulted with the Congress, let me tell you where we are now and what we'll be doing in the days ahead. We welcome all the help we can get. We will be submitting a comprehensive, integrated economic and military assistance plan for Central America.

First, we will bridge the existing gap in military assistance. Our projections of the amount of military assistance needed for El Salvador have remained relatively stable over the past two years. However, the Continuing Resolution budget procedure in the Congress last December led to a level of U.S. security assistance for El Salvador in 1983 below what we'd requested, below that provided in 1982, and below that requested for 1984. I'm proposing that \$60 million of the monies already appropriated for our worldwide military assistance programs be immediately reallocated to El Salvador. Further, to build the kind of disciplined, skilled army that can take and hold the initiative while respecting the rights of its people, I will be amending my supplemental that is currently before the Congress to reallocate \$50 million to El Salvador. And these funds will be sought without increasing the overall amount of the supplemental that we have already presented to the Congress. And, as I've said, the focus of this assistance will remain the same: to train Salvadorans so that they can defend themselves. Because El Salvador's problems are not unique in this region, I will also be asking for an additional \$20 million for regional security assistance. These funds will be used to help neighboring states to maintain their national security, and will, of course, be subject to full Congressional review.

Secondly, we will work hard to support reform, human rights, and democracy in El Salvador. Last Thursday, the Salvadoran government extended the land reform program which has already distributed 20 percent of all the arable land in the country and transformed more than 65,000 farm workers into farm owners. What they ask is our continued economic support while the reform is completed. And we will provide it. With our support, we expect that the steady progress toward more equitable distribution of wealth and power in El Salvador will continue.

And, third, we will, I repeat, continue to work for human rights. Progress in this area has been slow, but sometimes -- sometimes disappointing. But human rights means working at problems, not walking away from them. To make more progress, we must continue our support, advice, and help to El Salvador's people and democratic leaders.

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Lawbreakers must be brought to justice, and the rule of law must supplant violence in settling disputes. The key to ending violations to human rights is to build a stable, working democracy. Democracies are accountable to their citizens. And when abuses occur in a democracy, they cannot be covered up. With our support, we expect the government of El Salvador to be able to move ahead in prosecuting the accused and in building a criminal justice system applicable to all and ultimately accountable to the elected representatives of the people.

And I hope you've noticed that I was speaking in millions, not billions. And that after two years in federal office is hard to do. (Laughter.) In fact, there are some areas of government where I think they spill as much as I've talked about here over a weekend.

But, fourth, the El Salvador government proposes to solve its problems the only way they can be solved fairly -- by having the people decide. President Magana has just announced nationwide elections moved up to this year, calling on all to participate, adversaries as well as friends. To help political adversaries participate in the elections, he has appointed a Peace Commission, including a Roman Catholic bishop and two independents. And he has called on the Organization of American States and the international community to help. We were proud to participate, along with representatives of other democratic nations, as observers in last March's Constituent Assembly elections. We would be equally pleased to contribute again to an international effort, perhaps in conjunction with the Organization of American States, to help the government ensure the broadest possible participation in the upcoming elections, with guarantees that all, including critics and adversaries, can be protected as they participate.

Let me just say a word about those elections last March. A great worldwide propaganda campaign had, for more than a year, portrayed the guerrillas as somehow representative of the people of El Salvador. We were told over and over again that the government was the oppressor of the people.

Came the elections, and suddenly it was the guerrilla force threatening death to any who would attempt to vote. More than 200 busses and trucks were attacked and burned and bombed in an effort to keep the people from going to the polls. But they went to the polls; they walked miles to do so. They stood in long lines for hours and hours. Our own Congressional observers came back and reported in one instance that they saw themselves -- of a woman who had been shot by the guerrillas for trying to get to the polls, standing in the line, refusing medical attention until she had had her opportunity to go in and vote.

More than 80 percent of the electorate voted. I don't believe here in our land, where voting is so easy, that we've had a turnout that great in the last half century. They elected the present government and they voted for order, peace and democratic rule.

Finally, we must continue to help the people of El Salvador and the rest of Central America and the Caribbean to make economic progress. More than three-quarters of our assistance to this region has been economic.

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Because of the importance of economic development to that region, I will ask the Congress for \$65 million in new monies and the re-programming of \$103 million from already appropriated worldwide funds for a total of \$168 million in increased economic assistance for Central America. And to make sure that this assistance is as productive as possible, I'll continue to work with the Congress for the urgent enactment of the long-term opportunities for trade and free initiative that are contained in the Caribbean Basin Initiative.

In El Salvador and in the rest of Central America, there are today thousands of small businessmen, farmers and workers who have kept up their productivity as well as their spirits in the face of personal danger, guerrilla sabotage and adverse economic conditions. With them stand countless national and local officials, military and civic leaders and priests who have refused to give up on democracy. Their struggle for a better future deserves our help. We should be proud to offer it. For in the last analysis, they're fighting for us, too.

By acting responsibly and avoiding illusory shortcuts, we can be both loyal to our friends and true to our peaceful democratic principles. A nation's character is measured by the relations it has with its neighbors. We need strong, stable neighbors with whom we can cooperate. And we will not let them down.

Our neighbors are risking life and limb to better their lives, to improve their lands and to build democracy. All they ask is our help and understanding as they face dangerous armed enemies of liberty and that our help be as sustained as their own commitment.

Now, none of this will work if we tire or falter in our support. I don't think that's what the American people want or what our traditions and faith require. Our neighbors' struggle for a better future and that struggle deserves our help and we should be proud to offer it.

We would in truth be opening a two-way street. We have never, I believe, fully realized the great potential of this Western Hemisphere. Oh, yes, I know in the past we've talked of plans. We've gone down there every once in a while with a great plan somehow for our neighbors to the South. But it was always a plan in which we, the big colossus of the North would impose on them. It was our idea.

Well, on my trip to Central and South America, I asked for their ideas. I pointed out that we had a common heritage. We'd all come as pioneers to these two great continents. We worship the same God. And we'd lived at peace with each other longer than most people in other parts of the world.

There are more than 600 million of us calling ourselves Americans, North, Central and South. We haven't really begun to tap the vast resources of these two great continents.

Without sacrificing our national sovereignties, our own individual cultures or national pride, we could as neighbors make this Western Hemisphere, our hemisphere, a force for good

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such as the old world has never seen. But it starts with the word neighbor. And that is what I talked about down there and sought their partnership, their equal partnership in we, of the Western Hemisphere, coming together to truly develop fully the potential this hemisphere has.

Last Sunday, His Holiness Pope John Paul II prayed that the measures announced by President Magana would "contribute to orderly and peaceful progress" in El Salvador, progress "founded on the respect," he said, "for the rights of all, and that all have the possibility to cooperate in a climate of true democracy for the promotion of the common good."

My fellow Americans, we in the United States join in that prayer for democracy and peace in El Salvador, and we pledge our moral and material support to help the Salvadoran people achieve a more just and peaceful future. And in doing so, we stand true to both the highest values of our free society and our own vital interests.

Thank you and God bless you. (Applause.)

END

12:30 P.M. EST

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

May 28, 1984

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT MEMORIAL DAY CEREMONY
HONORING VIETNAM UNKNOWN SOLDIER

Arlington National Cemetery

2:15 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: My fellow Americans, Memorial Day is a day of ceremonies and speeches. Throughout America today, we honor the dead of our wars. We recall their valor and their sacrifices. We remember they gave their lives so that others might live.

We're also gathered here for a special event; the national funeral for an unknown soldier who will today join the heroes of three other wars.

When he spoke at a ceremony at Gettysburg in 1863, President Lincoln reminded us that through their deeds, the dead had spoken more eloquently for themselves than any of the living ever could, and that we living could only honor them by re-dedicating ourselves to the cause for which they so willingly gave a last full measure of devotion.

Well, this is especially so today, for in our minds and hearts is the memory of Vietnam and all that that conflict meant for those who sacrificed on the field of battle and for their loved ones who suffered here at home.

Not long ago when a memorial was dedicated here in Washington to our Vietnam veterans, the events surrounding that dedication were a stirring reminder of America's resilience, of how our nation could learn and grow and transcend the tragedies of the past.

During the dedication ceremonies, the rolls of those who died and are still missing were read for three days in a candle-light ceremony at the National Cathedral. And the veterans of Vietnam who were never welcomed home with speeches and bands, but who were never defeated in battle and were heroes as surely as any who have ever fought in a noble cause, staged their own parade on Constitution Avenue. As America watched them, some in wheelchairs, all of them proud, there was a feeling that this nation, as a nation, we were coming together again and that we had, at long last, welcomed the boys home.

"A lot of healing went on," said one combat veteran who helped organize support for the memorial.

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And, then, there was this newspaper account that appeared after the ceremonies. I'd like to read it to you. "Yesterday, crowds returned to the Memorial. Among them was Herbie Petit a machinist and former Marine from New Orleans. 'Last night,' he said, standing near the wall, 'I went out to dinner with some other ex-Marines. There was also a group of college students in the restaurant. We started talking to each other. And before we left, they stood up and cheered us. The whole week,' Petit said, his eyes red, 'it was worth it just for that.'"

It has been worth it. We Americans have learned to listen to each other and to trust each other again. We've learned that government owes the people an explanation and needs their support for its actions at home and abroad. And we have learned, and I pray this time for good, the most valuable lesson of all -- the preciousness of human freedom.

It has been a lesson relearned not just by Americans but by all the people of the world. Yet, while the experience of Vietnam has given us a stark lesson that ultimately must move the conscience of the world, we must remember that we cannot today, as much as some might want to, close this chapter in our history, for the war in Southeast Asia still haunts a small but brave group of Americans -- the families of those still missing in the Vietnam conflict.

They live day and night with uncertainty, with an emptiness, with a void that we cannot fathom. Today, some sit among you. Their feelings are a mixture of pride and fear. They're proud of their sons or husbands, fathers or brothers who bravely and nobly answered the call of their country. But some of them fear that this ceremony writes a final chapter, leaving those they love forgotten.

Well, today, then, one way to honor those who served or may still be serving in Vietnam is to gather here and rededicate ourselves to securing the answers for the families of those missing in action. I ask the members of Congress, the leaders of veterans' groups and the citizens of an entire nation present or listening to give these families your help and your support, for they still sacrifice and suffer.

Vietnam is not over for them. They cannot rest until they know the fate of those they loved and watched march off to serve their country. Our dedication to their cause must be strengthened with these events today. 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. (Applause.)

This can only happen when their families know with certainty that this nation discharged her duty to those who served nobly and well. Today, a united people call upon Hanoi with one voice: Heal the sorest wound of this conflict, return our sons to America, end the grief of those who are innocent and undeserving of any retribution. The Unknown Soldier who is returned to us today and whom we lay to rest is symbolic of all our missing sons.

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and we will present him with the Congressional Medal of Honor, the highest military decoration that we can bestow.

About him we may well wonder, as others have. As a child, did he play on some street in a great American city? Or did he work beside his father on a farm out in America's heartland? Did he marry? Did he have children? Did he look expectantly to return to a bride?

We'll never know the answer to these questions about his life. We do know, though, why he died. He saw the horrors of war, but bravely faced them -- certain his cause, and his country's cause was a noble one. That he was fighting for human dignity, for free men everywhere. Today we pause to embrace him and all who served us so well in a war whose end offered no parades, no flags, and so little thanks.

We can be worthy of the values and ideals for which our sons sacrificed -- worthy of their courage in the face of a fear that few of us will ever experience -- by honoring their commitment and devotion to duty and country. Many veterans of Vietnam still serve in the armed forces, work in our offices, on our farms, and in our factories. Most have kept their experiences private. But most have been strengthened by their call to duty.

A grateful nation opens her heart today in gratitude for their sacrifice, for their courage, and for their noble service. Let us, if we must, debate the lessons learned at some other time. Today, we simply say with pride, thank you dear son. May God cradle you in His loving arms.

We present to you our nation's highest award, the Congressional Medal of Honor, for service above and beyond the call of duty -- in action with the enemy during the Vietnam era.

Thank you.

END

2:25 P.M. EDT

REMARKS TO VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA
BY RICHARD T. CHILDRESS
MAY 12, 1983
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

I VERY MUCH APPRECIATE THE INVITATION TO SPEAK WITH YOU TONIGHT ON A SUBJECT THAT OCCUPIES NOT ONLY A LARGE PORTION OF MY OFFICIAL TIME, BUT MY PRIVATE THOUGHTS.

THE VIETNAM WAR CAN NEVER BE OVER FOR AMERICA UNTIL WE SATISFACTORILY RESOLVE THE POW/MIA ISSUE. I AM EXPRESSING A SENTIMENT THAT EXTENDS FROM THE OVAL OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE TO INTERVIEWERS IN REFUGEE CAMPS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA.

PRESIDENT REAGAN IS DEEPLY COMMITTED TO A RESOLUTION AND HAS BEEN LONG BEFORE HE ASSUMED OFFICE. I HAVE SEEN LETTERS WRITTEN IN THE EARLY 1960s BY THE PRESIDENT WHICH EXPRESSED HIS DEEP PERSONAL CONCERN FOR THE MISSING FROM THE KOREAN CONFLICT.

WHEN HE ASSUMED OFFICE, HE WAS DETERMINED TO MAKE RESOLUTION OF THE ISSUE A MATTER OF HIGHEST NATIONAL PRIORITY. OUR STRATEGY FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS COMMITMENT CONSISTED OF TRANSLATING THE PRIORITY THROUGHOUT THE RELEVANT GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS, STATE, DEFENSE AND THE INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES, ESTABLISHING A CLOSE AND CONTINUOUS DIALOGUE WITH THE NATIONAL LEAGUE OF FAMILIES, THE PREEMINENT ORGANIZATION

REPRESENTING THE FAMILY MEMBERS, AND SOLICITING THE ACTIVE SUPPORT OF VETERANS GROUPS AND OTHER POW/MIA ORGANIZATIONS.

TODAY, THE DEPARTMENTS OF STATE AND DEFENSE AND OUR INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES ARE IMPLEMENTING THE PRESIDENT'S PROGRAM CONSCIENTIOUSLY AND WITH PRIORITY. RATHER THAN THE LEAGUE DEMONSTRATING IN FRONT OF THE WHITE HOUSE, THEIR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ANN GRIFFITHS, IS A FULL PARTICIPATING MEMBER OF THE OFFICIAL POW/MIA INTERAGENCY GROUP. SHE BRINGS WITH HER UNEQUALED KNOWLEDGE OF THE HISTORY OF THE ISSUE, SUBSTANTIVE SUGGESTIONS AND ACTS AS OUR CONSCIENCE. THE MAJOR VETERANS GROUPS HAVE PUBLICLY STATED THEIR COMMITMENT TO THE NEW GOVERNMENT PRIORITY, COVERED IT IN THEIR NATIONAL MAGAZINES AND DEVELOPED ACTIVE PUBLIC AWARENESS PROGRAMS.

PART OF OUR STRATEGY AS SUGGESTED BY THE NATIONAL LEAGUE OF FAMILIES WAS TO ADOPT AN OFFICIAL PUBLIC AWARENESS PROGRAM. THE PURPOSE BEING TO EDUCATE THE AMERICAN PEOPLE THAT WE HAVE 2,494 MEN STILL MISSING AND SIGNAL THE INDOCHINESE GOVERNMENTS THAT THIS GOVERNMENT AND THE AMERICAN PEOPLE WILL NOT ALLOW THIS ISSUE TO BE FORGOTTEN.

WE DO DETECT SOME CONFUSION FROM TIME TO TIME BETWEEN EFFORTS TO RESOLVE THE ACCOUNTING ISSUE AND THE LIVE PRISONER ISSUE. WE PURSUE THE ACCOUNTING OF OUR MEN THROUGH GOVERNMENT TO GOVERNMENT TALKS WHICH FOCUS ON THE RETURN OF REMAINS OF OUR MEN WHO HAVE DIED. AS A RESULT OF OUR

PRIORITY, WE HAVE MADE SOME PROGRESS IN THIS AREA IN OUR DIALOGUE WITH THE VIETNAMESE AND LAOTIAN GOVERNMENTS. I SHOULD EMPHASIZE AS THE PRESIDENT HAS SAID, WE CAN BE GRATIFIED THAT PROGRESS IS BEING MADE, BUT NEVER SATISFIED. ALTHOUGH THE VIETNAMESE CONTINUE TO BE MOST INTRANSIGENT AND ATTEMPT TO LINK ACCOUNTING OF OUR SERVICEMEN TO LARGER POLICY ISSUES, SUCH AS KAMPUCHEA AND THE SINO-VIETNAMESE HOSTILITY, THEY HAVE AGREED TO QUARTERLY TECHNICAL MEETINGS WITH OUR JOINT CASUALTY RESOLUTION CENTER AND AT THE LAST MEETING INDICATED THEY WOULD TURN OVER INFORMATION ON 12 AMERICANS AT OUR NEXT MEETING. WE EXPECT THIS MEETING TO TAKE PLACE IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS.

WE ARE CONVINCED THAT THE HANOI GOVERNMENT RETAINS SUBSTANTIAL INFORMATION ON OUR MISSING MEN WHICH THEY HAVE NOT PROVIDED. WE ALSO HAVE CREDIBLE INTELLIGENCE THAT THEY HOLD THE REMAINS OF APPROXIMATELY 400 AMERICAN SERVICEMEN. WE VIEW THIS WITHHOLDING OF INFORMATION AS INCREDIBLY CRUEL AND INSENSITIVE TO THE FAMILIES OF OUR MEN WHO HAVE WAITED SO LONG TO LEARN THE FATE OF THEIR LOVED ONES. WE WILL CONTINUE TO PRESS VIETNAM FOR AN ACCOUNTING AND SEND A CLEAR MESSAGE THAT THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AND GOVERNMENT WILL NOT REST UNTIL THEY FULFILL SUCH BASIC HUMANITARIAN OBLIGATIONS.

LAOS PRESENTS A DIFFERENT SITUATION. THE LAO GOVERNMENT HAS INDICATED A WILLINGNESS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH US AND WE HAVE RECIPROCATED. THE LAO GOVERNMENT RECEIVED A DELEGATION

FROM THE NATIONAL LEAGUE OF FAMILIES AND ESCORTED THEM TO TWO CRASH SITE LOCATIONS. IN ADDITION, FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE END OF THE WAR, THEY HAVE RECEIVED A JOINT CASUALTY RESOLUTION CENTER TECHNICAL TEAM IN VIENTIANE FOR DISCUSSIONS. WE APPRECIATE THE LAO ATTITUDE AND PRESIDENT REAGAN PUBLICLY RECOGNIZED IT IN HIS JANUARY SPEECH TO THE NATIONAL LEAGUE OF FAMILIES' SPECIAL MEETING. WE HAVE TAKEN RECIPROCAL CONCRETE STEPS TO DEMONSTRATE OUR SERIOUSNESS AND HAVE TOLD THE LAO THAT DESPITE OUR DIFFERENCES IN OTHER MATTERS, PROGRESS ON THE POW/MIA ISSUE REPRESENTS OUR PRIMARY MEASURE OF THEIR SINCERITY.

PROGRESS WITH THE LAO IS ENCOURAGING TO ALL OF US, BUT THE MUCH PUBLICIZED AND INCREDIBLY IRRESPONSIBLE ACTIONS OF RETIRED LTC GRITZ SET US BACK MONTHS. OUR DISCUSSIONS INDICATE THAT HE IS DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR STOPPING, AND WE PRAY ONLY TEMPORARILY, JOINT CRASH SITE SEARCHES IN LAOS. RELYING ON HEARSAY INFORMATION, NO CREDIBLE OPERATIONAL CAPABILITY AND MONEY COLLECTED FROM A VARIETY OF WELL-INTENTIONED INDIVIDUALS TO INCLUDE FAMILY MEMBERS, HE MANAGED TO DO THE GREATEST DAMAGE TO THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS YET ENCOUNTERED DURING THIS ADMINISTRATION.

DESPITE HIS CLAIMS, HE HAD NO OFFICIAL BACKING AND WILL NEVER RECEIVE ANY. HE SAYS NO ONE ASKED HIM TO STOP -- TONIGHT I'M OFFICIALLY ASKING HIM TO STOP. IF HE IS INTERESTED IN THE WELFARE OF OUR MISSING MEN AND THEIR

FAMILIES, HE WILL. IF HE ONLY CRAVES A TICKER-TYPE PARADE OR THE RECAPTURE OF PAST DREAMS, THEN HE WON'T.

THE TRULY INFORMED ASIAN HANDS WHO HAD THE DESIRE TO TAKE MATTERS IN THEIR OWN HANDS WHEN THERE WAS A NOTICEABLE LACK OF GOVERNMENT PRIORITY NOW REALIZE THAT THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT IS SERIOUS AND HAVE EXPRESSED THEIR PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SUPPORT FOR OUR EFFORTS. THEY REALIZE THAT THE FULLEST POSSIBLE ACCOUNTING CAN ONLY BE ACHIEVED THROUGH GOVERNMENT TO GOVERNMENT EFFORTS.

CONCERNING THE POSSIBILITY OF LIVE PRISONERS BEING HELD IN CAPTIVITY, WE HAVE RAISED OUR INTELLIGENCE PRIORITIES ONCE AGAIN LATE LAST YEAR TO PURSUE ANSWERS TO THIS LOOMING QUESTION. LIVE-SIGHTING REPORTS BY REFUGEES CONTINUE TO FLOW IN AND THEY ARE INVESTIGATED WITH PRIORITY TO INCLUDE POLYGRAPH TESTS. EVIDENCE IN OUR POSSESSION PRECLUDES RULING OUT THE POSSIBILITY OF LIVE AMERICANS BEING HELD CAPTIVE IN INDOCHINA, THEREFORE WE OPERATE UNDER THE ASSUMPTION THAT AT LEAST SOME ARE NOW BEING HELD AGAINST THEIR WILL.

OUR INVESTIGATIONS ARE CAREFUL, THOROUGH AND PROFESSIONAL. THE PRESIDENT AND THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE HAVE PUBLICLY STATED THAT WE ARE PREPARED TO TAKE DECISIVE ACTION ON ANY CONFIRMED REPORT. ANY ACTION, HOWEVER, WILL NOT BE TAKEN ON

THE BASIS OF HEARSAY INFORMATION OR FABRICATED SOURCES SUCH AS MR. GRITZ USED.

IT MUST ALSO BE POINTED OUT THAT OUR GOVERNMENT TO GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ARE MADE MORE DIFFICULT IF HANOI BELIEVES THEY CAN SPLIT THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AND WHIPSAW US ON POLICY ISSUES. SOME GULLIBLE INDIVIDUALS, EITHER FROM A NAIVE BELIEF IN ALL THAT HANOI SAYS OR AN UNRESOLVED GUILT OVER THE VIETNAM WAR, HAVE PROVIDED HANOI WITH OPPORTUNITIES TO USE THIS BASIC HUMANITARIAN ISSUE AS A PROPAGANDA TOOL. WE HOPE THAT THESE WELL-INTENTIONED AMERICANS CAN BE CONVINCED THAT THEY ARE BEING EXPLOITED BY HANOI AND THAT THEIR ACTIONS PROVIDE AVENUES FOR VIETNAM TO USE TO THE DETRIMENT OF THE ACCOUNTING PROCESS.

FINALLY, I WOULD LIKE TO EMPHASIZE THAT THIS IS A NONPARTISAN ISSUE THAT ENJOYS THE SUPPORT OF DEMOCRATIC AND REPUBLICAN MEMBERS OF CONGRESS. IT IS ONE THAT WE CAN, AS AMERICANS, AGREE THAT NEEDS TO BE RESOLVED. TO A GREAT EXTENT, WE ARE RELIANT UPON THE COOPERATION OF THE INDOCHINESE GOVERNMENTS. IF, HOWEVER, A UNITED AMERICA, PEOPLE AND GOVERNMENT, DEMONSTRATES A SOLIDARITY OF RESPONSIBLE PURPOSE, WE CAN MAKE PROGRESS. IT REQUIRES HELP FROM EACH OF YOU TO RECOGNIZE AND HELP NEUTRALIZE THE IRRESPONSIBLE AMONG US. BE SUSPICIOUS OF THOSE THAT SCREAM THE GOVERNMENT IS NOT DOING ANYTHING, THAT ONLY THEY HAVE A

MONOPOLY ON VIRTUE AND ONLY THEY CARE. WE NEED YOUR INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE SUPPORT TO HELP SOLVE ONE OF THE MOST INTRACTABLE PROBLEMS IMAGINABLE. PRESIDENT REAGAN ASKED THE AMERICAN PEOPLE DURING HIS ADDRESS IN JANUARY TO THE NATIONAL LEAGUE OF FAMILIES THAT EACH AMERICAN WHO HEARS OR READS OF HIS MESSAGE TO FIND A WAY TO HELP, THAT NO MATTER HOW SMALL EACH INDIVIDUAL EFFORT MAY SEEM, IT IS NEEDED. WE DO NOT ARBITRARILY PROMISE RESULTS, ONLY THE HIGHEST PRIORITY, DEDICATION AND DETERMINATION THAT WE CAN MUSTER. WE BELIEVE WE CAN PROMISE NO MORE AND WE WOULD BE IRRESPONSIBLE TO DO ANY LESS.

THANK YOU.

Specs *1/17*

Homily
Interdenominational Prayer Service for POW/MIA Families
Most Reverend Eugene A. Marino, S.S.J., D.D.
Auxiliary Bishop of Washington

Washington Cathedral
Sunday, July 17th, 1983

Homily-Washington Cathedral
Sunday, July 17th, 1983
Interdenominational Prayer Service for
POW/MIA Families
Most Rev. Eugene A. Marino, S.S.J., D.D.

MY DEAR FRIENDS:

I AM HONORED TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE WITH YOU TODAY, TO SHARE YOUR HOPES AND TO SHARE YOUR COURAGE. I AM HAPPY TO HAVE THE PRIVILEGE OF PRAYING WITH YOU TO THE LORD, WHO IS THE GIVER AND SUSTAINER OF LIFE. ANYONE WHO KNOWS YOUR STRUGGLE AND YOUR ANGUISH OVER THE PAST DECADE AND A HALF, ANYONE WHO UNDERSTANDS WHAT IT MEANS TO BE SEPARATED FROM LOVED ONES, WILL WANT TO SHARE BOTH YOUR STRUGGLE AND YOUR HOPES. I COME TO YOU WITH FAITH, WITH HOPE AND WITH LOVE. BUT I BELIEVE YOUR FAITH, YOUR HOPE AND YOUR LOVE--WHICH HAS ^{not} NOT WAVERED THROUGHOUT THESE YEARS OF UNCERTAINTY--STRENGTHEN ME AS WELL AS YOUR FRIENDS, ACQUAINTANCES AND CO-WORKERS; YOUR PERSEVERANCE EMBOLDENS THE NATION, THE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE OF GOOD WILL TO WORK FOR JUSTICE.

FOR MANY YEARS, YOU HAVE COURAGEOUSLY AND PERSISTENTLY PLEADED THE CAUSE OF THE PRISONERS OF WAR AND THOSE WHO ARE MISSING IN ACTION. YOU HAVE TRULY CARED FOR THOSE WHO LEFT THEIR FAMILIES, THEIR HOMES, THEIR JOBS AND EDUCATION, THEIR SAFETY--IN ANSWER TO THE CALL OF THEIR COUNTRY. YOU HAVE DARED TO BELIEVE, WHEN SO MANY SAID THAT FAITH WAS POINTLESS; YOU HAVE DARED TO HOPE, WHEN SO MANY SAID THERE WAS NOTHING FOR WHICH TO HOPE; YOU HAVE DARED TO LOVE, WHEN SO MANY SAID LOVE IS ONLY A MEMORY. YOUR LOVE FOR

THESE MEN HAS BEGUN TO PENETRATE THE CLOUD OF UNCERTAINTY WHICH
EVEN TO THIS DAY HAS NOT BEEN COMPLETELY LIFTED.

YOUR STRUGGLE IS NOT OVER. BUT NOW IT IS NO LONGER THE
PRIVATE STRUGGLE OF A FEW. THE FAMILIES OF THE POW'S AND MIA'S
HAVE BANDED TOGETHER IN UNPRECEDENTED NUMBERS TO BRING THIS
MATTER TO THE ATTENTION OF THE GOVERNMENT AND THE NATION. PLEASE
GOD, THE TIME OF APATHY IS OVER. PLEASE GOD, YOUR QUEST HAS NOW
BECOME OUR QUEST; YOUR STRUGGLE HAS BECOME THE NATION'S STRUGGLE.
WE PRAY THAT THERE WILL BE AN INCREASING AWARENESS OF THE PLIGHT
OF THE POW'S AND MIA'S; WE PRAY THAT EVERY POSSIBLE EFFORT WILL BE
MADE (DIPLOMATIC AND GOVERNMENTAL CHANNEL WILL BE USED) TO FULLY
ANSWER THE QUESTIONS YOU HAVE SO JUSTLY ASKED. WE SEEK AN END TO
THE LONG NIGHT OF DOUBT AND UNCERTAINTY WHICH HAS FOLLOWED IN THE
WAKE OF A TRAGIC WAR.

THE STRUGGLE WE ARE WAGING IS NOT ABOUT STATISTICS; IT
IS NOT A QUESTION OF ONE GOVERNMENT SETTLING AN OLD CLAIM WITH
ANOTHER GOVERNMENT; NOR IS IT SIMPLY A QUESTION OF NATIONAL HONOR.
IT IS MORE THAN A QUESTION OF NATIONAL HONOR. WE ARE CONCERNED
ABOUT THE LIFE AND DIGNITY OF INDIVIDUAL HUMAN BEINGS, 'WHO ARE
FLESH OF OUR FLESH AND BONE OF OUR BONES'. IT IS NOT UNCOMMON
FOR PEOPLE OF DIFFERING FAITHS TO COME TOGETHER TO WORK TO IMPROVE
CONDITIONS IN SOCIETY AND TO PROMOTE THE RIGHTS AND DIGNITY WHICH
BELONG TO EVERY MEMBER OF THE HUMAN FAMILY WITHOUT EXCEPTION. WE

BEAR WITNESS TO THE GOD-GIVEN DIGNITY OF THESE MEN TODAY. IN ASKING THE LORD TO RETURN THEM TO THE LAND OF THEIR BIRTH, WE ARE PROCLAIMING THAT THEY ARE PRECIOUS IN HIS SIGHT; THEY ARE LOVED BY GOD WITH AN EVERLASTING LOVE. WE BEAR WITNESS TO A DIGNITY THAT DOES NOT DISAPPEAR EVEN WHEN HUMAN BEINGS ARE DEGRADED OR OPPRESSED. THIS IS NOT A THEORY ABOUT HUMAN LIFE IN GENERAL. IT IS A DEEP BELIEF ABOUT EACH AND EVERY PERSON. EACH ONE OF US IS CALLED TO BE A RECIPIENT OF GOD'S PERSONAL LOVE, EVEN AS WE STRUGGLE WITH PERSONAL SIN AND THE SIN OF HUMANITY WHICH IS MAGNIFIED IN THE SPECTER OF WAR. FAITH IN GOD WHO MADE US AND WHO WILL NEVER ABANDON US MAKES IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR US TO ABANDON ONE ANOTHER, AND TO ABANDON THE STRUGGLE FOR JUSTICE.

IN A VERY REAL WAY, WE BELIEVE THAT THE LORD HAS TAKEN THE SIDE OF THOSE WHO ARE IMPRISONED, OR HELD CAPTIVE, OR WHO ARE THE VICTIMS OF THAT INJUSTICE WHICH IS ALWAYS THE ROOT OF WAR. HE HEARS THE CRY OF THE POOR. HE JOINS HIMSELF WITH THOSE WHO SEARCH FOR JUSTICE. EVEN IF THE LORD IS UNSEEN, HE WALKS WITH US THROUGHOUT THE DARK NIGHT OF DOUBT AND UNCERTAINTY AND HEARTBREAK. THE OBJECT OF OUR HOPES IS NOT YET SEEN. BUT WE ARE DETERMINED THAT WE SHALL NOT REST UNTIL THIS SINGLE-MINDED QUEST IS COMPLETED. WE ARE DETERMINED BECAUSE WE ARE CONVINCED THAT THE GOD OF HOPE AND SALVATION IS WITH US.

I DO NOT THINK THAT OUR HOPE IS UNREALISTIC. PERHAPS THE MOST DIFFICULT PART OF THIS LONG EPISODE HAS NOT BEEN WHAT WE KNOW;

IT HAS BEEN WHAT WE DO NOT KNOW. IT HAS BEEN THE AGONY OF NOT KNOWING WHETHER OUR LOVED ONES ARE DEAD OR ALIVE. "LIVE SIGHTING" REPORTS HAVE KINDLED YOUR HOPES AND YET THEY HAVE MADE THE PASSAGE OF TIME ALL THE HARDER TO BEAR. EVIDENCE OF SURVIVORS REMAINS; EFFORTS TO WIN THE RELEASE OF PRISONERS OF WAR ARE BEING INTENSIFIED. ALL OF THIS BRINGS RENEWED FAITH AND FRESH HOPE. BUT OUR FAITH AND HOPE MUST CONTINUALLY BE TEMPERED BY REALISM. WE CANNOT UNDERESTIMATE HOW MANY OBSTACLES MUST STILL BE OVERCOME BEFORE THERE IS FULL DISCLOSURE CONCERNING EACH AND EVERY POW AND MIA. NOR CAN WE AFFORD TO IGNORE THE POSSIBILITY THAT OUR LOVED ONES WILL BE AMONG THOSE WHO HAVE DIED IN THE SERVICE OF THEIR COUNTRY.

I BEG YOU NOT TO ABANDON THE FAITH, AND HOPE WHICH HAS CHARACTERIZED YOUR LONG AND PERSEVERING EFFORTS. CONTINUE TO PRAY FOR JUSTICE. CONTINUE TO HAVE FAITH IN THE LORD WHOSE LOVE IS STRONGER THAN SIN AND MORE POWERFUL THAN DEATH. FAITH IN GOD DOES NOT SEEK TO MAKE US FORGET HUMAN SUFFERING, PAIN AND INJUSTICE; IT DEMANDS THAT WE FACE THESE THINGS; IT DEMANDS THAT WE WORK UNTIRINGLY TO OVERCOME THEM.

FAITH IN GOD DEMANDS THAT WE TAKE RISKS. AGAIN AND AGAIN YOU HAVE HAD TO TAKE RISKS TO MAKE YOUR CASE HEARD, TO BRING THIS MATTER TO THE ATTENTION OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AND THEIR LEADERS. I CAN ONLY ENCOURAGE YOU IN THE LORD'S NAME TO STAY ON THIS COURSE.

ALL OF US KNOW THAT MANY OBSTACLES REMAIN TO BE CONQUERED; THERE IS MUCH TO DO BOTH HERE AND ABROAD. THIS QUEST FOR JUSTICE, THIS QUEST FOR COMMON DECENCY AND HUMANITY, IS NOT A QUEST FOR SHORT DISTANCE RUNNERS. THE GOAL OF ENDING A TRAGEDY WHICH HAS GONE ON TOO LONG IS NOT A GOAL WHICH CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED ONLY WITH SHORT BURSTS OF ENTHUSIASM, NO MATTER HOW WELL INTENTIONED. YOUR QUEST, OUR QUEST, THE NATION'S QUEST FOR JUSTICE IS FOR THOSE WHO ARE PREPARED TO GO THE WHOLE DISTANCE; FOR THOSE WHO ARE READY TO VOW THAT THEY WILL NOT GIVE UP, EVEN WHEN THEIR BEST EFFORTS ARE FRUSTRATED.

TODAY OURS IS A CELEBRATION OF FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE. WE THANK THE LORD THAT IN SPITE OF EVERY DIFFICULTY, WE CAN STAND HERE TODAY IN HIS PRESENCE, READ HIS WORD AND RAISE OUR VOICES IN SONG. WE THANK HIM, FOR HE HAS GIVEN US TO EACH OTHER; HE HAS BROUGHT US TOGETHER AND HAS MADE US ONE IN MIND AND HEART. MAY HE ALWAYS GIVE US FAITH AND TRUST IN ONE ANOTHER, IN OUR FAMILIES, OUR FRIENDS, IN THOSE IN GOVERNMENT WHO ARE CHARGED WITH WORKING FOR THE RELEASE AND RETURN OF OUR LOVED ONES. MAY THE LOVE OF GOD WHICH WE SHARE IN THIS MOMENT OF GRACE, OPEN OUR HEARTS TO THE LOVE, THE GOOD WILL, THE SOLIDARITY THAT SURROUNDS US THIS MORNING.

+ + + + +



OFFICE OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE PUBLIC AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

PLEASE NOTE DATE

REMARKS BY

THE HONORABLE CASPAR W. WEINBERGER

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

POW/MIA CORRIDOR DEDICATION

AT THE PENTAGON

FRIDAY, JANUARY, 27, 1984

Speech

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. It's with a very deep sense of pride and also a deep sense of sadness that I join all of you in this dedication of this Prisoner of War/Missing in Action display. Of course, we're very proud because the prisoners and missing served their country so very well in times of very great adversity, and sadness because 2,490 of our fellow Americans are still missing as a result of the Vietnam War.

We built this display to honor and pay tribute to all of the prisoners of war and missing in action who unselfishly have made, and still may be making, great personal sacrifices to defend our freedom. We know here at the Pentagon, as Noel says, so that those who work and visit here, those who fought alongside our prisoners of war and missing in action, may know that America never forgets its heroes.

We especially dedicate this display to the Americans who are still missing in Indochina. And this is a fitting occasion because today marks the 11th anniversary of the signing of the Paris Agreements that ended the direct United States involvement in that Vietnam War. Those accords, some of you remember, called for the repatriation of all POWs from all sides and a full exchange of information about the missing; and yet 11 years later, there is still almost 2,500 Americans missing and unaccounted for in Indochina.

Today, with the dedication of this display, we reaffirm our total commitment to achieving the fullest possible accounting for our countrymen. We cannot, and we will not, accept anything less than that. Until then, the resolution of the prisoner of war/missing in action issue will remain a matter of the very highest national priority.

With our commitment goes the responsibility for concrete action to end this very tragic situation. This Administration has taken that action and we will continue to do so.

There are a number of things that offers some measure of hope. We maintain regular contact with the Governments of Laos and Vietnam to seek greater cooperation in resolving this humanitarian issue. In addition to our efforts with the Indochinese, we are determined to keep the issue of our POWs and MIAs before the international community, constantly discussing our concerns with the governments whom we feel can aid us in achieving our goals. And here in the United States, we intend to continue our public awareness efforts to inform the American people about our missing and prisoners and our efforts to determine their fate.

MORE

Of course, the greatest concern to us is the possibility that some of our men may still be detained against their will. We continue to receive reports to this effect. We have not as yet been able to confirm it, but we do not rule out the possibility, and we of course continue to devote every resource to investigate every report on the assumption that some Americans may still be held captive in Indochina.

We pursued many avenues to account for our countrymen and have made some limited progress. We're not satisfied in any sense with the pace of cooperation that we have received from the Indochina governments. We are encouraged by recent developments in Laos, where almost 600 Americans are missing. In December, at the request of the our government, a U.S. technical team accompanied by Lao authorities visited the crash site of a U.S. C-130 aircraft that was shot down during the war. The purpose of that visit was to conduct a preliminary survey to determine the feasibility and the requirements really of a full scale excavation to recover as many of the crew's remains as possible. This visit was the first of its kind since 1975 and it is, I suppose, symbolic of the problems we had that we consider it a major step forward, a step that we hope will be to a joint excavation of that site in the very near future.

Also, even the Vietnamese have begun showing their willingness to cooperate with us in the search for the missing men. They have agreed that this issue is a humanitarian matter rather than one that has to be linked to whether or not they start getting aid from us and things of that kind. And at the same time, we continue to believe that the only promising way to resolve this accounting issue is by government-to-government channels.

In this regard, the regularly scheduled U.S./Vietnamese POW/MIA technical meetings are an important part of the cooperation between our two governments. While the technical talks are certainly not an end in and of themselves, they do provide an important avenue for a Vietnamese response and cooperation if they ever wish to extend it fully.

Indeed, our government-to-government discussions are beginning to show results, although extremely limited. In June of last year the Vietnamese repatriated the remains of nine individuals and provided us with material evidence of three others. This is the largest number of remains returned since 1978. And then recently Foreign Minister Thach said that he would soon turn over to us information that they obtained out of respect to some of our missing men, remember 11 years after the agreement to do so.

No matter how long it takes or how many obstacles we encounter, we mean to honor our sacred commitment to resolve this issue. And now I'm going to unveil the center panel of the nine panel commemorative display.

(Panel unveiled)

We will soon light the electronic flame on the display as whole and we pledge that this eternal flame will that we are going to light will indeed be a symbol of our commitment to determine the fate of our missing men. It will remain lighted until we have achieved the fullest possible accounting. And it will convey the message to all who visit the Pentagon that "America does remember!" We will not forget our missing men, their sacrifices, or our obligations to them and to their families.

END

Childress

WHITE HOUSE STAFFING MEMORANDUM

URGENT

34 FEB 29 1984
DATE: 2/28/84

ACTION/CONCURRENCE/COMMENT DUE BY: 10:00 a.m. WEDNESDAY, 2/29

SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: RECEPTION FOR VIETNAM VETERANS LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

THURSDAY, MARCH 1, 1984

	ACTION FYI			ACTION FYI	
VICE PRESIDENT	☐	☐	McFARLANE	☒	☐
MEESE	☐	☒	McMANUS	☐	☒
BAKER	☐	☒	MURPHY	☐	☒
DEAVER	☐	☒	OGLESBY	☒	☐
STOCKMAN	☐	☐	ROGERS	☐	☒
DARMAN	☒	☒	SPEAKES	☐	☐
FELDSTEIN	☐	☐	SVAHN	☒	☐
FIELDING	☒	☐	VERSTANDIG	☒	☐
FULLER	☒	☐	WHITTLESEY	☒	☐
HERRINGTON	☐	☐	TUTWILER	☒	☐
HICKEY	☐	☐	WIRTHLIN	☒	☐
JENKINS	☐	☐	HENKEL	☒	☐
			ROSEBUSH	☒	☐
			FISCHER	☒	☐
			ELLIOTT	☒	☒

REMARKS:

Please forward any comments/edits directly to Ben Elliott in room 100 EOB by 10:00 a.m. TOMORROW, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 29, with an information copy to my office.

Thank you.

February 29, 1984

RESPONSE: Recommend addition of phrase in last paragraph after word commitment, "that would make your fallen comrades and those missing very proud." (Comment: VVLP has been active in POW/MIA and is aware of the President's commitment.)

Robert M. Kimmitt
Robert M. Kimmitt

Richard G. Darman
Assistant to the President
Ext. 2702

Received S S
1984 FEB 28 PM 3:52

(Dolan/BE)
February 28, 1984
4:00 p.m.

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: RECEPTION FOR VIETNAM VETERANS
LEADERSHIP PROGRAM
THURSDAY, MARCH 1, 1984

First of all I want to say we're delighted to have you here at the White House and to thank you for your efforts in the Vietnam Veterans Leadership Program. You know, this is the third time I've addressed you and each time your numbers have grown. That's just one of the signs of success brought about by your dedication and selflessness.

Forgive me if I sound a little proud, but you know we started with little more than an idea nearly 3 years ago. And now I'm proud to note that there are 50 Vietnam Veterans Leadership Programs with more than 4,500 V.V.L.P. volunteers who have donated more than 250,000 hours to helping their fellow veterans. The V.V.L.P.'s have directly placed over 2,000 veterans in jobs, counseled thousands more, and developed close to 7,000 job opportunities. In addition, the programs have counseled hundreds of veterans on small business opportunities, helping many of them realize the American dream of owning and operating their own business.

Now as you know, this is a pivotal conference for the Vietnam Veterans Leadership Program. You're focusing on your role after the end of this fiscal year when the Federal Government's involvement will end. Through ACTION, the Federal volunteer agency, we sought to play only a catalytic role; the idea was to develop a network of programs independent of bureaucracy that would realize successful veterans as volunteers.

In 3 years, this goal has been accomplished, and now this fall your programs will be on their own. You should be immensely proud of this; it's a testimony to your energy, resourcefulness, and spirit of independence. Please be assured you will have my support in urging all Americans to support the Leadership Program's initiatives in the years ahead.

Through service to the Nation during the Vietnam War and through ongoing volunteer efforts like this one, you are, as Vietnam veterans, working to build a stronger America. Believe me, your ideal of service, of giving of one's self for the good of all, is both respected and encouraged.

In closing, I'd like to return to something I said when this program was inaugurated in November of 1981. At that time I said, "A Nation's future is only as certain as the dedication of its defenders, and the Nation must be loyal to them as they are to the Nation."

Over a decade ago when battle raged across Vietnam, many of you here in this room were fighting -- steadfast and loyal -- for your country and the principles for which it stands. Today, once again, you have stepped forward when your country ^{that would make} called, ^{and missing proud,} demonstrating that same loyalty and sense of commitment, ^{as the fallen comrades could} On behalf of your fellow veterans and all Americans, I want to thank you.

God bless you all.

MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

February 29, 1984

ACTION

MEMORANDUM FOR BOB KIMMITT

FROM: DICK CHILDRESS 

SUBJECT: Presidential Remarks Re: VVLP

Recommend you sign the response block at Tab I.

Approve 1C Disapprove _____

Gaston Sigur (telephonically) concurs.

Attachments

Tab I Response
A Incoming Correspondence

cc: Gaston Sigur

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

May 28, 1984

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT MEMORIAL DAY CEREMONY
HONORING VIETNAM UNKNOWN SOLDIER

Arlington National Cemetery

2:15 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: My fellow Americans, Memorial Day is a day of ceremonies and speeches. Throughout America today, we honor the dead of our wars. We recall their valor and their sacrifices. We remember they gave their lives so that others might live.

We're also gathered here for a special event; the national funeral for an unknown soldier who will today join the heroes of three other wars.

When he spoke at a ceremony at Gettysburg in 1863, President Lincoln reminded us that through their deeds, the dead had spoken more eloquently for themselves than any of the living ever could, and that we living could only honor them by re-dedicating ourselves to the cause for which they so willingly gave a last full measure of devotion.

Well, this is especially so today, for in our minds and hearts is the memory of Vietnam and all that that conflict meant for those who sacrificed on the field of battle and for their loved ones who suffered here at home.

Not long ago when a memorial was dedicated here in Washington to our Vietnam veterans, the events surrounding that dedication were a stirring reminder of America's resilience, of how our nation could learn and grow and transcend the tragedies of the past.

During the dedication ceremonies, the rolls of those who died and are still missing were read for three days in a candle-light ceremony at the National Cathedral. And the veterans of Vietnam who were never welcomed home with speeches and bands, but who were never defeated in battle and were heroes as surely as any who have ever fought in a noble cause, staged their own parade on Constitution Avenue. As America watched them, some in wheelchairs, all of them proud, there was a feeling that this nation, as a nation, we were coming together again and that we had, at long last, welcomed the boys home.

"A lot of healing went on", said one combat veteran who helped organize support for the memorial.

MORE

And, then, there was this newspaper account that appeared after the ceremonies. I'd like to read it to you. "Yesterday, crowds returned to the Memorial. Among them was Herbie Petit a machinist and former Marine from New Orleans. 'Last night,' he said, standing near the wall, 'I went out to dinner with some other ex-Marines. There was also a group of college students in the restaurant. We started talking to each other. And before we left, they stood up and cheered us. The whole week,' Petit said, his eyes red, 'it was worth it just for that.'"

It has been worth it. We Americans have learned to listen to each other and to trust each other again. We've learned that government owes the people an explanation and needs their support for its actions at home and abroad. And we have learned, and I pray this time for good, the most valuable lesson of all -- the preciousness of human freedom.

It has been a lesson relearned not just by Americans but by all the people of the world. Yet, while the experience of Vietnam has given us a stark lesson that ultimately must move the conscience of the world, we must remember that we cannot today, as much as some might want to, close this chapter in our history, for the war in Southeast Asia still haunts a small but brave group of Americans -- the families of those still missing in the Vietnam conflict.

They live day and night with uncertainty, with an emptiness, with a void that we cannot fathom. Today, some sit among you. Their feelings are a mixture of pride and fear. They're proud of their sons or husbands, fathers or brothers who bravely and nobly answered the call of their country. But some of them fear that this ceremony writes a final chapter, leaving those they love forgotten.

Well, today, then, one way to honor those who served or may still be serving in Vietnam is to gather here and rededicate ourselves to securing the answers for the families of those missing in action. I ask the members of Congress, the leaders of veterans' groups and the citizens of an entire nation present or listening to give these families your help and your support, for they still sacrifice and suffer.

Vietnam is not over for them. They cannot rest until they know the fate of those they loved and watched march off to serve their country. Our dedication to their cause must be strengthened with these events today. 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. (Applause.)

This can only happen when their families know with certainty that this nation discharged her duty to those who served nobly and well. Today, a united people call upon Hanoi with one voice: Heal the sorest wound of this conflict, return our sons to America, end the grief of those who are innocent and undeserving of any retribution. The Unknown Soldier who is returned to us today and whom we lay to rest is symbolic of all our missing sons.

MORE

and we will present him with the Congressional Medal of Honor, the highest military decoration that we can bestow.

About him we may well wonder, as others have. As a child, did he play on some street in a great American city? Or did he work beside his father on a farm out in America's heartland? Did he marry? Did he have children? Did he look expectantly to return to a bride?

We'll never know the answer to these questions about his life. We do know, though, why he died. He saw the horrors of war, but bravely faced them -- certain his cause, and his country's cause was a noble one. That he was fighting for human dignity, for free men everywhere. Today we pause to embrace him and all who served us so well in a war whose end offered no parades, no flags, and so little thanks.

We can be worthy of the values and ideals for which our sons sacrificed -- worthy of their courage in the face of a fear that few of us will ever experience -- by honoring their commitment and devotion to duty and country. Many veterans of Vietnam still serve in the armed forces, work in our offices, on our farms, and in our factories. Most have kept their experiences private. But most have been strengthened by their call to duty.

A grateful nation opens her heart today in gratitude for their sacrifice, for their courage, and for their noble service. Let us, if we must, debate the lessons learned at some other time. Today, we simply say with pride, thank you dear son. May God cradle you in His loving arms.

We present to you our nation's highest award, the Congressional Medal of Honor, for service above and beyond the call of duty -- in action with the enemy during the Vietnam era.

Thank you.

END

2:25 P.M. EDT

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

July 20, 1984

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT CEREMONY FOR NATIONAL POW/MIA RECOGNITION DAY

The South Grounds

10:01 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests. Welcome. We are here today to recognize and honor a small, but very special group of Americans: our former prisoners of war and those who are still missing.

Four times in this century we have been forced painfully and reluctantly to send our men and women to fight in wars on foreign shores. Some of them made the supreme sacrifice of their lives. Some others made sacrifices in many ways equally grave -- they were imprisoned by the enemy.

Their incarceration often included beatings and torture, starvation and all forms of emotional and psychological abuse. It also entailed the terrible loneliness of living through lost years, of seeing the days tick away without friends, without loved ones, without family and community.

What has sustained such men and women in their isolation is a question I think all of us have asked ourselves many times. What kept them going when faith waned, as it must have, and questions began to haunt and doubts began to accumulate. We hear the stories of the returned prisoners of World War II, and Korea, and Vietnam, and we marvel at how they kept going.

I recall that when many of our prisoners returned from Vietnam eleven years ago, a number of them said there were three things that helped them survive captivity and return with honor: faith in God, faith in their fellow prisoners, and faith in their country.

By faith, they didn't mean only love -- though they demonstrated that in abundance. They meant a heartfelt belief that they would not be abandoned, that we at home would move mountains to return them safely to us after the war.

Our prisoners of war have been, and are, the bravest of the brave. They kept a trusting heart, they retained their spirit and their will, and they kept the faith. They trusted us, and that trust did us great honor.

Among us here today are some American prisoners of war. May I say that you are, as the great always are, more than the sum total of yourselves. You're a testament to the strength and the character of the American people. You are a symbol of our spirit.

MORE

You're an expression of American trust. Your heroism is as old as war itself, as old as names like Andersonville, and Los Banos, and Camp 5, and the Hanoi Hilton.

Most of those places are gone now or empty, but the silent left in their place surely echoes with the quiet, unheard valor of those who suffered there and clung to the belief that their government and their loved ones would be semper fi -- always faithful.

We honor you and that honor is unending. There are others to whom we must be semper fi: Those who are still missing -- the men who went across the sea, who never returned and whose fate is unknown.

Along with us today are some of the relatives and friends of those still missing -- from Korea and Vietnam. They, too, have shown more than their share of heroism, holding the standard for those who went away and are not yet returned to us, insisting that the world remember and respond, asking all of us to help them in their great effort, never giving up or abandoning hope.

Our administration inherited the challenge of accounting for the missing in January of 1981, two decades after the first man was placed on the missing list in Vietnam and almost three decades after the armistice in Korea. There'd been many obstacles and excuses in that time as to why progress could not be made. We found three years ago that the greatest obstacle that we could face and would continue to face was the passage of time.

Despite the daunting specter of 31 years since the end of the Korean War, we have pressed the government of North Korea for an accounting. We will continue to do so. But I want you to know that we've received some valuable information from some dedicated veterans of that war on possible grave locations of some of their fellow soldiers. And we're acting on this information. If it is confirmed, we will return their remains to their homes and to their loved ones.

We're in regular dialogue with the government with Laos. And through reciprocal actions, that government seems to have gained a greater understanding of the importance to us of the POW/MIA issue. We in return have gained a greater understanding of their feelings and problems. This process has led us to discussions of joint crash site searches. And in this regard, I want to pass on some good news to you. Late last night, we were informed by the government of Laos of official agreement in principle to excavation of a U.S. crash site. We're working out the details now. (Applause.) We welcome this cooperative gesture.

In Vietnam, the government turned over the remains of several more U.S. servicemen three days ago. The Vietnamese also offered to resume technical-level meetings in August,

MORE

and we appreciate these actions. We look forward to an acceleration of the process, an acceleration that was pledged to our delegation that traveled to Hanoi in February.

Ann Griffiths helped to arrange those negotiations. And, Ann, we appreciate your help and all that you've given to this process. (Applause.)

It's important to note that 30 years ago today, July 20, 1954, the Geneva Accords were signed. It was hoped that the truce agreement would bring peace to the Vietnamese people. Instead, they have been at war ever since. And those wars have caused untold human suffering. Today, Vietnam continues to fight in Kampuchea and on its northern border. Nearly ten years after the end of hostilities, the United States and the government of Vietnam still have major differences.

But we're encouraged that Vietnam has agreed in principle that our two countries should cooperate on the POW-MIA issue as a separate humanitarian effort. Peaceful cooperation, negotiations, with its neighbors in Kampuchea and a resolution of the POW-MIA issue provide the key for ending Vietnam's isolation. Normal relations with the international community can bring an end to the long suffering of the people of Vietnam. And I believe it to be in Vietnam's own interest to choose this path. It's a decision that we would truly welcome.

I'm mindful that I stand here before the families of many of the missing. I'm mindful that you gave your sons and husbands and fathers into the care of our government when they left to fight for our nation. You knew they might die in battle. But you had, and will always have, every right to expect that your government will not abandon those who failed to return. (Applause.)

In this, you, too, showed trust, and I tell you again, your trust will not be in vain. For many years, you stood alone in your quest for answers. Well, today, you're not alone. (Applause.) And I tell you from my heart, you will never be alone again.

Across the nation this week, hundreds of ceremonies are taking place in an outpouring of concern and understanding and solidarity. Balloons are being released across the country, a prayer ministry is ongoing, and the small black and white flag you see over this house flies proudly. All of this is good and fitting.

In January of last year, I said to you that we must fulfill our obligations as a matter of highest national priority.

Much has happened since then to give us some hope of progress. It's agonizingly slow for you and for us. But we must not lose faith in each other because of lack of action from the other side.

Two months ago I received the remains of the unknown serviceman of Vietnam. And I said to all the nation, and most especially to all of you, that we write no last chapters, we close no books, we put away no final memories until your questions are answered. (Applause.)

Your husbands, fathers, and sons and brothers did their duty by this nation and this nation will do its duty by them. Today we stand together. And soon we will look up and see, as a symbol of our longing, a Missing Man Flyover.

And today I pledge -- and we will not rest until that formation is complete. May God bless you always. (Applause.)