The original documents are located in Box C10, folder "Presidential Handwriting, 1/22/1975" of the Presidential Handwriting File at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

ACTION

January 22, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: KEN COLE

SUBJECT: Designation of Presidential Board
                         for MIA Matters

Attached at Tab A is a memorandum from General Lawson
advocating three items:

-- (1) Issuance of a Presidential proclamation declaring
       January 27, 1975 (the second anniversary of the
       signing of the Paris Peace Accords), to be "National
       MIA Awareness Day."

-- (2) Issuance of an Executive Order designating a
       Presidential MIA Board to investigate and recommend
       actions in this area.

-- (3) An Oval Office meeting with the Board of Governors
       of the National League of Families this Saturday,
       January 25, when you would sign both the Proclamation
       and the Executive Order.

Neither the proposed Proclamation nor the proposed meeting
with sixteen representative families are particularly controversial.
The Proclamation is an appropriate and reasonable designation
and provides a convenient reason for meeting with MIA representa-
tives if you have not already done so.

There is, however, a great deal of controversy over the wisdom
of the Executive Order creating a Presidential Board for MIA

matters. General Lawson indicates that the families favor one and that Congressional interest is growing. However, such a Board runs the substantial risk of thrusting you personally into an area of past controversy which you bore no responsibility for creating and for which there is absolutely no hope of solution. Moreover, OMB is concerned that there may not be sufficient funds remaining (because both the Amnesty Commission and the CIA Commission draw on your Unanticipated Personnel Needs Fund) to fund such a group from the White House.

Clearly, the expectations of the group have been raised--but this alone should not force you further into a very emotional and difficult situation. One viable alternative might be to direct the Secretaries of Defense and State to create such a Board with both public and private members and report to you upon its recommendations. This would show some action, but would insulate the White House from the known unpredictabilities of Commissions.

If not at the White House, the Department of Defense would prefer the Board to be at State, and the Department of State would prefer that it be at Defense.

OPTIONS:

1. Create the Presidential Board by Executive Order. [N. B. In any event, the Executive Order cannot be prepared and funded by this Saturday, so that it will have to follow the Proclamation by a week.]

2. Direct the Secretaries of Defense and State to establish a Board and report to you upon its recommendations.

3. Postpone the creation of any such Board pending possible Congressional action in this area.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

    Option 1 - Lawson

    Option 2 - Scowcroft, Buchen, Marsh, Cole, Ash, Baroody

    Option 3 - None

DECISION:

I.   Creation of Board for MIA matters:

        _____ Option 1 (Presidential Board)

        DRF Option 2 (Joint DoD/State Board)

        _____ Option 3 (No Board, pending Congressional action)

II.   Prepare Proclamation designating January 27th to be "National MIA Awareness Day."

        DRF Approve   _____ Disapprove

III.   Schedule Oval Office meeting with Board of Governors of National League of Families to sign Proclamation.

        _____ Approve   _____ Disapprove