

**The original documents are located in Box 21, folder “MIA/POW - National League of Families Convention (1)” of the John Marsh Files at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.**

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INTERNATIONAL  
SECURITY AFFAIRS

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

APR 1 1976

29 MAR 1976

In reply refer to:  
I-3183/76

Mr. Earl P. Hopper, Sr.  
Executive Director  
National League of Families of  
Prisoners and Missing in  
Southeast Asia  
1608 K Street, NW  
Washington, D. C. 20006

Dear Earl:

This is in response to your letter of March 16, 1976 concerning your request for COIN ASSIST travel.

In keeping with past DoD practices, the Services are authorized to provide space available for all dependent wives, accompanying dependent children, and dependent parents of military personnel who are PW/MIA. This authorization extends to parents of married PW/MIA personnel whose wives elect not to attend the convention and to families of missing civilians. Excluded from the authorization are family members of individuals formerly in a missing status who have been declared deceased, and those of returned prisoners of war.

The Air Force will again act as the executive agent. Eligible PW/MIA family members should be advised to contact their respective service casualty officer regarding their travel plans as soon as possible, but no later than June 10, 1976. Families should also be advised that a maximum effort should be made to reduce the number of individuals who fail to show for scheduled transportation.

We will continue to provide whatever COIN ASSIST air travel support we can. The resultant scheduling information, following completion of Service arrangements based upon their receipt of eligible family travel intentions, will be forwarded to you for your convenience.

Sincerely,

ROGER E. SHIELDS  
Deputy Assistant Secretary



In last 1/2 hour.

Wiley may be

leaving our way-

~~It~~ ~~is~~ ~~some~~ ~~think~~ ~~state~~ Attys

doesn't apply, or

can be structured around - Sc 2112

Done for 6 YRS.



INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

Mr. Earl P. Roper, Sr.  
Executive Director  
National League of Families of  
Prisoners and Missing in  
Action  
1608 K Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20005

This is regarding the request for COA 2512 (rel)

This authorization extends to parents of PW/MIA personnel whose children, and dependent parents, are authorized to attend the convention and to families of missing individuals formerly in a military service who have been declared deceased and those of returned prisoners of war.

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Deputy Assistant Secretary



THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

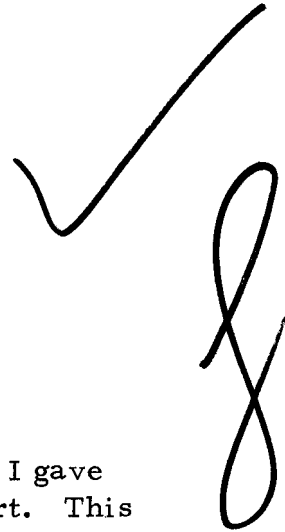
June 18, 1976

MEMORANDUM TO: JACK MARSH

FROM: RUSS ROURKE *Rour*

Jack, in Alan Wood's absence from the country, I gave Robin West the green light on the MIA air support. This will be a DOD initiative, and the President will be left totally out of the picture.

cc: TMarrs  
BGulley  
MMitler

A large handwritten checkmark is positioned above a stylized signature that appears to be 'Rourke'.

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

June 4, 1976

*Go  
leave it out  
of it*

MEMORANDUM TO: JACK MARSH

FROM: RUSS ROURKE *Russ*

Jack, Bill Gulley advises that DOD did, in fact, roll over on these MIA air support requests for the past five years. This year, however, the Air Force General Counsel has taken a particularly strong position, and has refused to budge in the absence of a change in the regulations prohibiting such travel support.

A Presidential directive would, indeed, cut across the entire dispute and authorize the requested aircraft. As I indicated, however, Gulley advises that the White House turns down approximately 25 such requests a year.

Bottom line... a political/humanitarian judgement will now have to be made as to whether or not the obvious upsides outweigh the equally obvious downsides.

You might want to discuss this with Cheney et al.

When you advise me of your final decision on the matter, I will get back with Alan Woods.

*D-R/m*

*Run By R/c*

*R* *↑* *R. Stum*

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

MIA's

Alan Woods -

a) outlegal, not against  
policy - space available  
space required. Only  
way we can do it is  
to: Army Montgomery  
to will be asked to try  
legislative route.

JUN 24 1976

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

June 23, 1976



MEMORANDUM FOR:            JACK MARSH  
   MILT MITLER

FROM:                            TED MARRS *JMS*

For your information, Hopper is pleased with this arrangement.

Enclosure



*copy to Alan  
Woods 6/25  
@ 10:45 by  
Special mess.*





NATIONAL LEAGUE OF FAMILIES  
OF AMERICAN PRISONERS AND MISSING IN SOUTHEAST ASIA  
1608 K STREET, N.W., WASHINGTON, D. C. 20006 (202) 628-6811

22 June 76

Mr. Morris

attached is Roger's  
letter authorizing  
Coin Assent travel  
for League members  
to our meeting in  
July which you  
requested.

Regards  
Earl

EARL P. HOPPER, Sr.  
Colonel, AUS-Ret.  
Executive Director





INTERNATIONAL  
SECURITY AFFAIRS

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Sincerely,

ROGER E. SHIELDS  
Deputy Assistant Secretary



[7/76]

PRESIDENT'S REMARKS TO NATIONAL  
LEAGUE OF FAMILIES

Ladies and gentlemen of the National League of Families,

I welcome this chance to meet with you again.

I met with some of you when I was a Congressman, here in Washington and at times in Grand Rapids. And I remember vividly my meeting with your Board of Directors just before I became President. That was one of my very last meetings as Vice President, and the memory of it has stayed with me during my time in the White House. I also recall my visit to this Convention just a year ago, and the meeting I had a few days later in the Cabinet Room with your Board of Directors.

So I know of your pain. I share it. The American people share it.

You have borne your tragic burden with incredible courage.

There is no one in this country who does not admire your bravery and the dignity and fortitude with which you have carried on your heartbreaking quest.

Many Americans sacrificed for the sake of freedom during the Indochina conflict. Hundreds of thousands served in the field and in this country. Tens of thousands gave their lives. Other thousands bear the scars and disabilities of combat. Hundreds endured long years of confinement as prisoners of war, with a steadfastness and gallantry which has inspired us all.

But the hundreds more who are missing or unaccounted for have also paid a cruel price. ~~Most of them have undoubtedly made the ultimate sacrifice.~~ Yet the compounded cruelty of this group is that you -- their loved ones -- must live with the special agony of uncertainty.

And so, in a very real sense you the families are casualties too. There is no way any of us can fully share your torment. But we can offer you our hearts and our unending dedication to your cause.

You have been sustained by love -- love of your men; love of your country. I am proud of you, as I am proud of your men. Indeed we should all be proud of all who served and sacrificed for their country in a difficult conflict. [ This nation fought for a good and noble cause -- to prevent a people from being overrun by force of arms. In pursuing that cause, this nation has nothing to apologize for, nothing to be ashamed of. ]

But we owe you not just admiration, not just gratitude, but also dedication to pressing to the limit for a full accounting for those who are still missing. Your country can never thank you

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But we owe you not just admiration, not just gratitude, but also dedication to pressing to the limit for a full accounting for those who are still missing. Your country can never thank you

adequately for your sacrifice. But we can and we will persist in our efforts to learn the fate of our men. International law condemns exploiting prisoners of war or missing in action for political or economic objectives. In the Paris Agreement, the North Vietnamese agreed unconditionally to fulfill this obligation.

A new provision on accounting for the missing in armed conflicts on which our government has been working in Geneva begins by declaring "The right of families to know the fate of their loved ones."

All of us in your government are determined to fulfill that right to the fullest extent it is possible.

The Vietnamese have spoken of agencies they have established to search for the missing. Earlier they said they had information on graves of our men who died when their planes went down. There can be no acceptable reason for withholding such information from us, and from you.

remains of three Americans. Two of them had been known to be dead but the return of the remains brought some comfort to all their families.

The efforts of this Government will continue. On Thursday, Secretary Kissinger declared publicly that there will be no progress toward improved relations with Hanoi until we have a wholly satisfactory accounting for the missing in action. We will not yield to cynical attempts to use the anguish of American families to extort concessions. If the Vietnamese meet our concerns for the MIA and show restraint toward their neighbors, they will find this nation ready to reciprocate and to join in the effort to turn a new page in our relations.

When that day comes, the Indochina War will be truly over.



I know, though, that for you the pain will never be finally over.

Many of you are concerned about reclassification of status.

I understand your feelings, and I want you to know there is no

intention at this time to initiate status reviews. [ It is my ultimate

responsibility to consider the views and circumstances of the

families of all of our missing, and I want to remove any question

in this regard. ] As you have suggested, and as recommended by

John Rhodes and Sonny Montgomery, I have directed the Secretary

of Defense not to initiate any status reviews except in cases where

the primary next of kin request such a review, or where new

definitive evidence of status is obtained. This policy will continue

until the Select Committee report has been issued. *and its funding reviewed.*

You have also expressed concern about the declassification

of materials concerning our missing. In May, I asked the



Secretary of Defense to look into this matter. He has informed me that the military services have assigned additional personnel to this effort and that declassification of documents in this area is proceeding at an accelerated pace.

Let me say, in conclusion, that as long as I am President, you will not be abandoned. Your loved ones will not be forgotten. I pledge to you without reservation that we will carry this effort through. This is a matter of conscience, of moral duty, for us all. The country is united on this principle.

I thank you for the example you have set. I honor your courage, on behalf of all Americans. I pray for the day when your quest, and our quest, will be over.

Thank you.

substitute for first two paragraphs of last page - Kilberg [7/76]

Many of you are concerned about status reclassifications. I am aware of your feelings, and I want you to know that status reviews are not being initiated by the government. Further, in line with my continuing responsibility to consider the views and circumstances of the families of all of our missing and in order to remove any possible policy question, I have <sup>personally</sup> ~~explicitly~~ directed the Secretary of Defense not to initiate any status reviews except in cases where new definitive and unquestionable evidence of status is obtained. Primary next of kin would continue to be permitted to initiate requests for status reviews. In addition, when the Select Committee has issued its report, I pledge to you that I will personally review and evaluate its content and recommendations.

Did Dept

MANY OF YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT STATUS RECLASSIFICATIONS, I AM AWARE OF YOUR FEELINGS, AND I WANT YOU TO KNOW THERE IS NO CURRENT INTENTION TO INITIATE STATUS REVIEWS, JUST AS SUGGESTED BY YOUR LEADERSHIP, AND BY MY VALUED CONGRESSIONAL COLLEAGUES REPS. JOHN RHODES AND SONNY MONTGOMERY.

I LINE WITH MY RESPONSIBILITY TO CONSIDER THE VIEWS AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE FAMILIES OF ALL OF OUR MISSING, AND TO REMOVE ANY QUESTION IN THIS REGARD I HAVE DIRECTED THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE NOT TO INITIATE ANY STATUS REVIEWS EXCEPT IN THOSE CASES WHERE THE PRIMARY NEXT OF KIN REQUEST SUCH A REVIEW OR WHERE NEW DEFINITIVE EVIDENCE OF STATUS IS OBTAINED. THIS POLICY WILL CONTINUE UNTIL THE SELECT COMMITTEE REPORT HAS BEEN ISSUED, THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE HAS REVIEWED IT, AND HE HAS REPORTED TO ME PERSONALLY CONCERNING THE VIEWS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE.

YOU HAVE ALSO EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT THE DECLASSIFICATION OF MATERIALS CONCERNING OUR MISSING. IN MAY I ASKED THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE TO LOOK INTO THE CURRENT STATE OF THIS MATTER. HE HAS INFORMED ME THAT THE MILITARY SERVICES HAVE ALLOCATED ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL TO THIS EFFORT AND THAT DECLASSIFICATION OF DOCUMENTS IN THIS AREA IS PROCEEDING AT AN ACCELERATED PACE.

WE RECOGNIZE OUR OBLIGATION TO OUR MISSING AND TO YOU THEIR FAMILIES. THE PATH BEFORE US IS HARD AND DIFFICULT, BUT I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT YOU WILL NOT BE ABANDONED. I RENEW MY PLEDGE TO YOU TO CONTINUE OUR EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE THE MOST COMPLETE ACCOUNTING POSSIBLE FOR OUR MISSING.

HANOI COMMENTARY ON FORD'S MIA TALK

"GERALD FORD'S UNSUCCESSFUL PSYCHOLOGICAL ATTACK"

(TEXT) On Sunday U. S. President Gerald Ford summoned the representatives of 800 families of Americans registered as Missing in Southeast Asia to the White House to hear his words of sympathy.

While talking nineteen to the dozen, the U. S. President did not mention a word about the reason for the deaths or Missing in Action of hundreds of thousands of American youths in a region half a world away from the states. He also went to lengths making slanders against the people of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia with regard to the Missing in Action problem. By so doing, Gerald Ford probably wanted to incite the chauvinistic feelings among Americans to buy votes in the November Presidential elections.

However, Ford's psychological blow has missed the target because he uttered ambiguities and failed to provide any concrete evidence. At this White House meeting, Gerald Ford also missed his mark when he said that there is no normalization of relations between the United States and Vietnam so long as the Missing in Action problem has not been settled.

Ford's blackmail is too obvious to take anybody in. Everybody in the world knows that he is eating the U. S. promise to contribute to the healing of the wounds of war and reconstruction in Vietnam. The question is how the United States could break its solemn promise to contribute to healing the wounds of war and to the rebuilding of Vietnam, which is the responsibility and obligation and a point of honor for America.

It is certain that the compatriots of Mr. Gerald Ford, the Vietnamese people and the world public will not let him do what he likes.

[7/76]

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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

July 8, 1976

MEMORANDUM TO: JACK MARSH

FROM: RUSS ROURKE *Rourke*

Jack, I have covered the waterfront again today on the MIA transportation issue. Alan Woods has agreed to render a final DOD judgement by Monday morning at the latest. Quite understandably I am leaning very hard on Alan and DOD. I have spoken today with the offices of Congressmen Sonny Montgomery and Ben Gilman and with Earl Hopper. In the event a decision is not reached on this issue until Monday, I have briefed Milt Mitler in great detail on the entire matter. I have also advised Milt where to contact me at Quantico, if necessary, on Monday.

I am presently optimistic about our chances for putting this transportation request together.



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RAR:cb





To Russ

Date 7-8-76 Time 1:47

**WHILE YOU WERE OUT**

M Jack Vance ✓

of \_\_\_\_\_

Phone 225-5031

Area Code

Number

Extension

TELEPHONED	<input type="checkbox"/>	PLEASE CALL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
CALLED TO SEE YOU	<input type="checkbox"/>	WILL CALL AGAIN	<input type="checkbox"/>
WANTS TO SEE YOU	<input type="checkbox"/>	URGENT	<input type="checkbox"/>

RETURNED YOUR CALL

Message \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

df  
Operator

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

This P.M. of Monday

① Earl Hopper

a) Contact point in AF  
to Earl Hopper

"Home"  
— 703 —

→ 354-4744

① Woods: MEA's / Walt

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON



THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

Memorandum  
Woods to AF  
understand & send  
No letters in when the  
quest of the laws &  
lets AF is prepared to  
do it.

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

- a) Peice
- b) MONTGOMERY
- c) STANIS

① Proymire

2) Shields, Roger :  
a) advise Alan Woods

3)

Ermy. Montgomery

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

KARL

ROGER.

AF Gen. Counsel

Senior A/C

: I & L

: statute which prohibits  
it; thinks they have

: space available; spirit  
of law might be bent, but  
it is an extraordinary;

Have been doing it  
for . . . . .

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

Shields suggests we  
check it out preliminarily  
w/ a few key H/S M.C.'s  
to determine degree of  
opposition; if no  
problem, go; if problem,  
fall back to real  
standby stuff, using  
AF resources at  
information center.

To Russ

Date 6/30 Time 3:20

**WHILE YOU WERE OUT**

M Alan Woods

of \_\_\_\_\_

Phone 047-8388

Area Code                      Number                      Extension

TELEPHONED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	PLEASE CALL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
CALLED TO SEE YOU	<input type="checkbox"/>	WILL CALL AGAIN	<input type="checkbox"/>
WANTS TO SEE YOU	<input type="checkbox"/>	URGENT	<input type="checkbox"/>

RETURNED YOUR CALL

Message \_\_\_\_\_

716-4490  
754-9791  
297-K

Operator



MILT. MITLER

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

A/C

Roger Shields:

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

1) Roger Shields <sup>with</sup>

2) Alan Woods  
(Robin West)

379-2548

To

Russ

Date

7/2

Time

4:34

**WHILE YOU WERE OUT**

M

Jack Vance

of

~~Sony Montgomery~~

Phone

225-5031

Area Code

Number

Extension

TELEPHONED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	PLEASE CALL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
CALLED TO SEE YOU	<input type="checkbox"/>	WILL CALL AGAIN	<input type="checkbox"/>
WANTS TO SEE YOU	<input type="checkbox"/>	URGENT	<input type="checkbox"/>

RETURNED YOUR CALL

Message

Sony Montgomery

→ COINASSIST

Rosa

Operator

EARL

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

Earl Hopper  
Sunny Montgomery  
Transportation

1970

9

22-28 JULY  
WASHINGTON

APRIL: Lopez, Shields  
Newsletter: to people

"COMMUNIST HAS NOT  
BEEN APPROVED"



THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

Sony Blueberry  
in total deapre-  
ment of Fambel-

W

Flying in -  
Sec. AF

are available

T re m e d d o w n -

January

Army Montgomery

Roger Shields .....

since determined ...

will provide real you available

DOD rep's  
No / are  
checking to  
get shields  
letter



all odds and the predictions of all the experts, that's just what the colonists had done.

Well, we can turn the world right side up; the world of the family and the neighborhood and the America we love.

It may take a struggle and some sacrifice, but isn't it worth it? We can do it for ourselves, for our children and in repayment for all those who did the back-breaking jobs that built this nation. They worked their hearts out to give us a country where the right to be left alone, to pursue happiness as we defined it, would be respected by men and by the law.

We ask nothing of freedom but freedom itself and that means the right to control our own destiny without undue interference by an arrogant officialdom.

There are those who no longer have faith in our ability to do this. They still believe in government for the people, but of and by themselves; that, given freedom of choice, we'll choose unwisely; that ours is a sick society, salvageable only by their omnipotence.

Well, let them explain how a sick society produced the men who journeyed out into space and set foot on the moon; or those other men, the ones we waited for a few years ago, who came back to us proud and unbroken after enduring torture at the hands of savage captors for a longer period than any men in our history.

Have we forgotten how we waited in front of our TV sets through the long night hours for that first plane to land at Clark Field in the Philippines? We were filled with hope and fear; fear of what we might see; of what the years of torture might have done to those we called the P.O.W.s.

Finally, the moment arrived. The plane was on the ground and we waited—it seemed forever—for the door to open and the first man to appear.

(More)

Then, with some difficulty--but on his own--Jeremiah Denton, now Rear Admiral Jeremiah Denton, made his way down the ramp. He saluted our country's flag, thanked us for bringing them all home and then asked God's blessing on America.

As the planes continued to bring our men home, Nancy and I were to share an experience that will live in our hearts forever. We were permitted to officially welcome the more than 250 who were Californians by having them as guests in our home. Not all together, but in groups, on four such occasions in all, until we had been privileged to meet and know all of them. It was an unforgettable and inspiring experience. On one of those evenings, we watched two of our guests come together in our living room, apparently strangers until they heard each other's names. Then they threw their arms around each other. They were the closest of friends, knew the most intimate details of each other's lives and families. Their friendship had been built over the years of imprisonment by tapping coded messages on the mud and bamboo wall that separated their cells. They had never seen each other until they came face-to-face there in our living room.

On those four occasions, we heard tales of indescribable torture told without any attempt at dramatics, with no rancor or bitterness and definitely no attempt to beg sympathy. One man, for trying to escape, had been buried up to his neck and left for weeks, his food thrown on the ground before his face.

We heard of men tortured beyond the breaking point until lying on their cell floors, they wanted to die because they had eventually told their

(More)



captors some of what they wanted to know. But in the adjoining cells, others who had the same experience at one time or another took turns hour after hour just tapping on the wall to let them know they understood and to hang in there and not give up.

When they were asked why, if they knew they'd eventually break, why they didn't give their captors the information they wanted without undergoing the torture, they seemed surprised. They said, "We were prisoners. The only way we had left to fight the enemy was to hold out as long as we could."

One young man (a fighter pilot who looked as if he should be a cheer leader, maybe on a college campus) had shattered his arm and shoulder when he bailed out after his plane was hit by anti-aircraft fire. They wanted him to talk to two of our anti-war protesters who were guests in Hanoi. He refused. They stood him on a stool, tied his shattered arm to a hook in the wall and then kicked the stool from beneath his feet—not once, but time after time until he gave in. In the meeting that followed, knowing his words were being carefully monitored, he said he tried in every way he could to indicate to these fellow Americans they weren't hearing the truth, but he said, "I spoke to ears that refused to hear".

One night after our guests had gone and Nancy and I were alone, I asked, "where did we find them, where did we find such men?" The answer came to me almost as quickly as I'd asked the question. We found them where we've always found them when such men are needed—on Main Street, on our farms, in shops and stores, in offices, oil stations and factories. They are simply the product of the freest society man has ever known.

(More)

In the darks days following World War II, when we alone, with our industrial power and military might, stood between the world and a return to the dark ages, Pope Pius the XII said, "The American people have a genius for great and unselfish deeds. Into the hands of America God has placed the destiny of an afflicted mankind."

God Bless America.

# # # # #

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

SCHEDULE PROPOSAL FOR THE PRESIDENT

DATE: July 14, 1976

FROM: Milton E. Mitler *Mitler*

THRU: John O. Marsh, Jr. *John*

VIA: William W. Nicholson

DROP BY: Annual Meeting, National League of Families, Washington Hilton Hotel, ~~to give short remarks at Banquet~~ expressing continued interest of administration in Missing In Action matters.

DATE: Saturday, July 24, 1976 at approximately 8:30 pm.

PURPOSE: To reassure members of the National League of Families that the administration continues to have concern about those who are designated as Missing In Action from the Southeast Asian conflict; to emphasize the importance the President attaches to this problem; and to reiterate the pledge that the administration will continue efforts toward obtaining as full an accounting as possible for all our missing men.

FORMAT: - location: Presidential Ballroom, Statler-Hilton Hotel, Washington, D.C.

- participants: Members of the National League of Families and their guests - approximately 550

- expected length: 10-15 minutes.

CABINET PARTICIPATION: None

SPEECH MATERIAL: To be supplied by NSC

PRESS COVERAGE: Full Press

STAFF: John O. Marsh, Jr.  
Milton E. Mitler

RECOMMEND: John O. Marsh, Jr.  
Milton E. Mitler  
Kenneth Quinn

OPPOSED: None

PREVIOUS  
PARTICIPATION:

Last summer, the President dropped-by the hotel where the National League was meeting and had a short, somewhat impromptu session with many of their members. On July 22, 1976, the President met with League leaders in the Cabinet Room.

BACKGROUND:

This organization, which is composed primarily of wives and parents of those military men who have been designated as Missing In Action in the Southeast Asia conflict, has indicated satisfaction with the response they have been receiving from this administration in context with their concerns.

A willingness to open dialogue with North Vietnam, cooperation with the Congressional Select Committee headed by Congressman G.V. Montgomery (D-MS), and recent references to the problem in speeches have favorably impressed most of the members.

There are some members of the organization who are pressing for an Executive Order instructing the Department of Defense to halt changing the status of some of the men from missing to dead. They have also requested the release of all information in the dossiers of these men.

The Department of Defense, at this point, has slowed down its status change program and does not believe an Executive Order is needed. They are also making available as much information as is possible, trying to satisfy the requests which they are receiving.

The obvious emotional factors involved with this, the length of time which has now passed since the designations were established, and the difficulty which exists in securing sufficient information from North Vietnam, all indicate the importance of the President addressing the League.

During this annual meeting, the League will meet with the Congressional Select Committee and will receive briefings from State and Defense.

An alternative to the annual banquet on Saturday, July 24th, would be their general meeting on Friday, July 23rd from 1:30-2:30 p.m. The League, however, would much prefer the Saturday night participation.

APPROVE

DISAPPROVE

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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

July 14, 1976

TO: MILT MITLER

FROM: KEN QUINN

Presidential Meeting with National League of Families

Last Meeting: You last met with the representatives of the National League when you dropped in on their 1975 annual convention in Washington last summer.

Purpose: To emphasize the importance which you continue to attach to this problem and to reiterate your pledge that we will continue efforts to obtain full accounting as possible for all our missing men.

Background: The National League of Families' members are extremely pleased with the attention you have given this issue and your efforts to resolve it. Your willingness to open a dialogue with North Vietnam, cooperation with the Montgomery Committee, and recent references to the problem in speeches have all favorably impressed the League. Nevertheless, some of the members and the League leadership are pressing for an Executive Order instructing the Defense Department to halt changing the status of some of them from missing to dead and for release of all information in the dossiers of these men. Defense has slowed down its status changes and does not believe an Executive Order is needed. It is also moving to make available as much information as possible.

81 for Drophy at Boaguet  
of Matt League of Families  
at Statler Hotel

SCHEDULING ROUTING MEMO

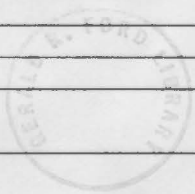
7/15/76

Subject: July 23 1:30-2:00 Mitter  
+ March

To Individual	Processed	Comments
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> W. Nicholson		
<input type="checkbox"/> W. Hendriks		
<input type="checkbox"/> Staff to:		
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<input type="checkbox"/> H. Donaldson		
<input type="checkbox"/> M. Widner		
<input type="checkbox"/> M. Rawlins		
<input type="checkbox"/> N. Gemmell		
<input type="checkbox"/> L. Goltra		
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Return to: \_\_\_\_\_

Action: \_\_\_\_\_





THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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Milton E. Mitler

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Milton E. Mitler

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Page 3

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APPROVE \_\_\_\_\_ DISAPPROVE \_\_\_\_\_

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

---

July 14, 1976

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MIAS

July 15, 1976

ADMINISTRATIVELY CONFIDENTIAL

MEMORANDUM TO:                   DICK CHENEY  
FROM:                               JACK MARSH

Dick, there is a Schedule Proposal on its way over in reference to a drop by at the forthcoming National League of Families Convention next week in Washington.

I believe there is some flexibility as to the time when the President might do this.

However, I think that in considering whether he does or does not attend, there should be considered the fact that Reagan, in his last statement, placed rather significant emphasis on the POWs' return. Although the POW return is not directly related to the MIA situation, nevertheless, there is a relationship between the two which I think should be taken into account in preparing his schedule.

In the event the President does decide to do a drop by, I have asked Brent to begin drafting appropriate remarks for him.

You should also be aware that we were able to work out with Defense an arrangement for transportation for the eligible participants to attend the Convention.

(Dictated over phone - not read)



July 15, 1976

MEMORANDUM TO: BRENT SCOWCROFT  
FROM: JACK MARSH

Brent, it has been proposed but not approved that the President make a drop by at the National League of Families Convention to be held in Washington next weekend. The drop by is for Saturday evening, but I believe this may be flexible.

In all events should a drop by be occurring, it would be helpful if we could have prepared some appropriate remarks for the President dealing with the MIA matter.

(Dictated but not read)

JOM:cb



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

6 JUL 16 PM 6 07

*R*

LDX MESSAGE RECEIPT  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

76 JUL 16 PM 6 11

SITUATION ROOM

*DN*

SITE

**B**

S/S #

LDX MESSAGE NO. 0927 CLASSIFICATION UNCLASSIFIED No. Pages 7

FROM: J.D. ROSENTHAL EA/VLC 23132 5206  
(Officer name) (Office symbol) (Extension) (Room number)

MESSAGE DESCRIPTION DRAFT

LDX TO: (Agency)	DELIVER TO:	Extension	Room No.
NSC	<u>KEN QUINN</u>	395-5628	369

REMARKS: DRAFT REQUESTED BY MR. QUINN.  
S/S Officer: *[Signature]*

RECEIVED  
JUL 16 6 21 PM '76  
NATIONAL SECURITY  
COUNCIL





IT IS A PLEASURE TO BE HERE THIS EVENING TO JOIN WITH FRIENDS OLD AND NEW TO TALK ABOUT OUR BRAVE MEN WHO REMAIN UNACCOUNTED FOR IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. I MET WITH SOME OF YOU WHEN I WAS A CONGRESSMAN FROM MICHIGAN, HERE IN WASHINGTON AS WELL AS IN GRAND RAPIDS. FROM THOSE EARLY CONTACTS YOU KNOW MY INTEREST IN OUR MISSING MEN IS OF LONG STANDING.

AND I REMEMBER MY MEETING WITH YOUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS JUST BEFORE I BECAME PRESIDENT. THIS WAS ONE OF MY VERY LAST MEETINGS AS VICE PRESIDENT, AND THE MEMORY OF IT HAS STAYED WITH ME DURING MY TIME IN THE WHITE HOUSE. I ALSO RECALL MY VISIT TO THIS CONVENTION JUST A YEAR AGO, AND THE MEETING I HAD A FEW DAYS LATER IN THE CABINET ROOM WITH YOUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS. THOSE MEETINGS WERE HELPFUL TO ME IN KEEPING UP TO DATE ON YOUR CONCERNS, AND THEY CONFIRMED MY RESOLVE TO CONTINUE OUR BEST EFFORTS TO OBTAIN THE FULLEST POSSIBLE ACCOUNTING FOR OUR MEN.

MANY AMERICANS SACRIFICED MUCH FOR THE SAKE OF FREEDOM DURING THE INDOCHINA CONFLICT. HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS SERVED OUR COUNTRY IN THE FIELD AND AT HOME. THOUSANDS GAVE THEIR LIVES OR BEAR THE SCARS OF INJURIES. HUNDREDS ENDURED LONG YEARS OF CONFINEMENT AS PRISONERS OF WAR, WITH A STEADFASTNESS AND GALLANTRY WHICH HAS INSPIRED US ALL.

AND THERE ARE THE HUNDREDS MORE WHO HAVE BEEN LISTED AS MISSING OR UNACCOUNTED FOR. IN A SENSE THEIR FATE IS THE CRUELEST OF ALL. I AM SURE THAT IF THOSE MEN KNEW THE FRUSTRATION AND SUFFERING THAT THE LACK OF INFORMATION ABOUT THEM HAS CAUSED, THEY WOULD HAVE PREFERRED THAT THEIR FATE BE OTHERWISE. FOR THE SUFFERING IS NOT THEIRS SO MUCH AS YOURS -- THEIR LOVED ONES WHO HAVE WAITED THROUGH THE YEARS FOR THE WORD THAT WOULD ANSWER THE QUESTIONS -- WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO HIM, WHERE IS HE NOW?

A NEW PROVISION ON ACCOUNTING FOR THE MISSING IN ARMED CONFLICTS ON WHICH OUR GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN WORKING IN GENEVA BEGINS BY STATING "THE RIGHT OF FAMILIES TO KNOW THE FATE OF THEIR LOVED ONES." I KNOW THAT ALL OF YOU HERE TODAY CAN ATTEST FROM YOUR HEARTS AS TO THE IMPORTANCE OF THAT RIGHT. AND ALL OF US IN YOUR GOVERNMENT ARE DETERMINED TO FULFILL IT TO THE FULLEST POSSIBLE EXTENT.

AT THE SAME TIME, WE RECOGNIZE THAT INFORMATION ON EVERY MISSING MAN MAY NEVER BE AVAILABLE. SOME WERE LOST OVER WATER, OR IN FORESTS AND MOUNTAINS WHERE SEARCH IS PRACTICALLY IMPOSSIBLE. WE KNOW OF CASES WHERE AIRCRAFT HAVE BEEN LOST WITH NO TRACE, WITH WRECKAGE SOMETIMES FOUND MANY YEARS LATER. AND WE UNDERSTAND SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES ALSO EXIST IN SOUTHEAST ASIA.

BUT THE FACT THAT THE SEARCH MAY BE DIFFICULT IS NOT A REASON NOT TO TRY. WE HAVE OFFERED TO CARRY OUT THE SEARCHES OURSELF, OR TO ENLIST ANOTHER GOVERNMENT, OR THE RED CROSS, FOR THIS PURPOSE. ANY OF THESE POSSIBILITIES WOULD HELP ACCOUNT FOR OUR MEN.

THE VIETNAMESE AUTHORITIES HAVE SPOKEN OF AGENCIES THEY HAVE ESTABLISHED TO SEARCH FOR THE MISSING. EARLIER THEY SAID THEY HAVE INFORMATION ON GRAVES OF OUR MEN WHO DIED WHEN THEIR PLANES WENT DOWN. THERE CAN BE NO VALID REASON TO KEEP SUCH INFORMATION FROM THE FAMILIES IN THE MISTAKEN BELIEF THAT IT CAN BE USED FOR BARGAINING PURPOSES.

WE RECALL HOW THE AUTHORITIES OF NORTH VIETNAM SOUGHT TO EXPLOIT OUR PRISONERS OF WAR IN PURSUIT OF NEGOTIATING ADVANTAGE. WE RESISTED THAT AND TOOK STEPS TO INSURE THAT THE RELEASE OF OUR MEN WOULD TAKE PLACE WITHOUT DELAY AS PART OF THE INDOCHINA SETTLEMENT.

ATTEMPTS TO USE A HUMANITARIAN SUBJECT LIKE PRISONERS OF WAR AND THE MISSING IN ACTION TO GAIN POLITICAL OBJECTIVES FLY IN THE FACE OF BASIC CONCEPTS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW. THE GENEVA CONVENTIONS OF 1949, WHICH VIETNAM HAS SIGNED, SHOULD BE IMPLEMENTED WITHOUT RESORT TO BARGAINING OR UNRELATED RECIPROCITY. I FIND IT SERIOUSLY DISTURBING

THAT THE NEW AUTHORITIES IN INDOCHINA SHOULD TRY TO USE THIS HUMANITARIAN SUBJECT TO PRESS FOR POLITICAL OR ECONOMIC ADVANTAGE.

I HAVE SAID BEFORE THAT WE ARE PREPARED TO RESPOND TO GESTURES OF GOOD WILL IN THE ACCOUNTING FOR THE MISSING AND THE RETURN OF THE REMAINS OF THE DEAD. SAD TO REPORT, DESPITE THE LARGE NUMBERS OF MEN WHO REMAIN UNACCOUNTED FOR IN INDOCHINA, VIRTUALLY NO INFORMATION HAS BEEN RECEIVED SINCE I MADE THAT STATEMENT, AND THE SMALL NUMBER OF REMAINS THAT HAVE BEEN RETURNED WERE OF MEN ON WHOM INFORMATION HAD EARLIER BEEN MADE AVAILABLE.

I WANT TO PAY TRIBUTE TO THE WORK OF THE HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE ON MISSING PERSONS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, AND TO ITS DISTINGUISHED CHAIRMAN, G.V. "SONNY" MONTGOMERY, MY COLLEAGUE AND CLOSE FRIEND DURING MANY YEARS IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES. CONGRESSMAN MONTGOMERY WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN ESTABLISHING THIS COMMITTEE, AND UNDER HIS LEADERSHIP IT HAS DONE MUCH TO ENCOURAGE PROGRESS TOWARDS RESOLUTION OF THIS HUMANITARIAN PROBLEM.

THIS COMMITTEE TOOK THE INITIATIVE TO OPEN CONTACT WITH THE AUTHORITIES OF NORTH VIETNAM, AT A TIME WHEN OUR OWN EFFORTS TO OBTAIN AN ACCOUNTING WERE LARGELY FRUSTRATED. MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE MET WITH NORTH VIETNAMESE OFFICIALS IN PARIS

AND HANOI, AND WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF THE U.N. HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, ARRANGED FOR THE RETURN OF THE REMAINS OF THREE AMERICANS FROM NORTH VIETNAM. ALTHOUGH TWO OF THOSE THREE HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN DECLARED DEAD, THE RETURN OF THE REMAINS BROUGHT COMFORT TO ALL THEIR FAMILIES.

THE SELECT COMMITTEE HAS CONTINUED ITS EFFORTS TO PRESS THE COMMUNIST AUTHORITIES ON ACCOUNTING FOR THE MISSING, AND ON THE DEPARTURE OF AMERICANS STILL STRANDED IN SOUTH VIETNAM. SONNY MONTGOMERY AND HIS COLLEAGUES HAVE KEPT ME INFORMED ABOUT THEIR EFFORTS, AND I WANT TO TAKE THIS MOMENT TO THANK THEM FOR THE SKILL AND DEDICATION THEY HAVE BROUGHT TO BEAR ON THIS DIFFICULT PROBLEM.

OUR OWN EFFORTS ARE CONTINUING. WE HAVE SENT MESSAGES TO THE VIETNAMESE INDICATING OUR WILLINGNESS TO DISCUSS OUTSTANDING ISSUES. IN THIS ONGOING EXCHANGE WE HAVE MADE CLEAR THAT OUR PRIMARY CONCERN IS OBTAINING AN ACCOUNTING FOR OUR MISSING-IN-ACTION AND THE RETURN OF OUR SERVICEMEN WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES FOR OUR COUNTRY. WE ARE WILLING TO TALK WITH THE VIETNAMESE, BUT WITHOUT A SATISFACTORY RESOLUTION OF THE MIA ISSUE, NO FURTHER PROGRESS IN OUR RELATIONS IS POSSIBLE. THERE ARE OTHER PROBLEMS AS WELL, BUT SURELY PROGRESS ON THIS HUMANITARIAN SUBJECT IS THE ESSENTIAL FIRST STEP.

*EXCEPT in cases where the primary next  
of kin requests a status review or where new  
definitive evidence is obtained*

MANY OF YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT STATUS RECLASSIFICATIONS. I AM AWARE OF YOUR FEELINGS, AND I WANT YOU TO KNOW THERE IS NO CURRENT INTENTION TO INITIATE STATUS REVIEWS, AS SUGGESTED BY YOUR LEADERSHIP, AND BY MY VALUED CONGRESSIONAL COLLEAGUES REPS. JOHN RHODES AND SONNY MONTGOMERY, WE WILL WAIT BEFORE CONSIDERING THIS QUESTION UNTIL THE FINAL REPORT OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE HAS BEEN PUBLISHED. ~~MY ASSURANCE TO YOU ON THIS ACCOMPLISHES THE PURPOSE OF THE EXECUTIVE ORDER THAT SOME OF YOU HAVE SUGGESTED.~~ IT PROVIDES ADDITIONAL TIME FOR REFLECTION AND CONSIDERATION OF THE DIFFICULT QUESTIONS INVOLVED.

AT THE SAME TIME YOU HAVE MY ASSURANCE WE WILL CONTINUE TO USE ALL AVAILABLE MEANS TO PRESS FORWARD ON THIS SUBJECT. FOR WE RECOGNIZE OUR OBLIGATION TO OUR MEN, AND TO THEIR FAMILIES WHO CONTINUE TO WAIT. THEIR COURAGE IS MATCHED BY YOURS, AND WE HONOR YOU FOR IT.

IN A SENSE THOSE WHO REMAIN UNACCOUNTED FOR ARE THE TRUE UNKOWN SOLDIERS OF THIS CONFLICT, SINCE THEY ARE THE ONES WHOSE REMAINS HAVE NOT FOUND A SAFE RESTING PLACE IN OUR HOMELAND.

*Change kind over*

*POW/MIA*  
GERALD R. FORD LIBRARY

WE WILL REMAIN TRUE TO THEIR MEMORY BY CONTINUING  
OUR EFFORTS TO SEEK INFORMATION ABOUT THEM UNTIL WE ARE  
SATISFIED THAT THE FULLEST POSSIBLE ACCOUNTING HAS BEEN  
ACHIEVED.