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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

October 20, 1976

ADMINISTRATIVELY CONFIDENTIAL

MEMORANDUM FOR: JOHN O. MARSH, JR.  
FROM: JAMES E. CONNOR *JEC*  
SUBJECT: Formation of a Presidential Task  
Force on the Missing in Action

The President reviewed your memorandum of October 12 and approved the following option:

Option 1 - Approval of the immediate establishment of a Presidential Task Force for the Missing in Action in Southeast Asia with general requirements outlined, and the selection of a chairman of stature.

The following notation was also made:

"Announce Senator Dole is in charge and immediately after election he will head the Task Force."

Please follow-up with appropriate action.

cc: Dick Cheney  
Robert Linder

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN....

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

October 18, 1976

MR PRESIDENT:

Formation of a Presidential Task Force  
on the Missing in Action

Staffing of the attached memorandum prepared by Jack Marsh on the above subject resulted in the following recommendations and comments:

Option 1 - Recommended by Messrs. Bennett, Buchen, Friedersdorf, and Seidman.

Additional comments were offered:

Doug Bennett - "Agree with Option 1 with indication that Senator Dole, a war veteran himself, will be heading the Task Force with representation from the appropriate Departments and Agencies (DOD, State, Veterans, etc.) as well as the VFW and American Legion and any other outside representation appropriate."

Bill Seidman - "Option 1 - Make Dole Chairman"

Art Quern - "I have not been able to discuss this with Jim Cannon but my judgement is that any action at this time will be viewed as purely, and perhaps cynically, political. I would recommend following up on Senator Dole's reference in his debate by simply referring when appropriate to the fact that Dole as Vice President will be charged with the responsibility of getting a full accounting of the MIA's."

Brent Scowcroft - "In attached memorandum Jack Marsh indicates that I believe we should hold off at least until the Montgomery Committee makes its final report, at the end of this year. Actually, I am opposed to the establishment of such a Presidential Task Force at any time, as I see the situation at present. The problem of the MIA's is a complex one to which there will never be a totally adequate solution. The Congress now has the responsibility to make recommendations on how we should finally settle it. Although, I recognize the pressures

Brent Scowcroft (comments continued)

on you, setting up a task force within the Executive Branch will remove this burden from the Congress and place it, once again, squarely on you. I fail to see any advantage in such a development. "

Jim Lynn (Ogilvie) - had no comments.

Jim Connor

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

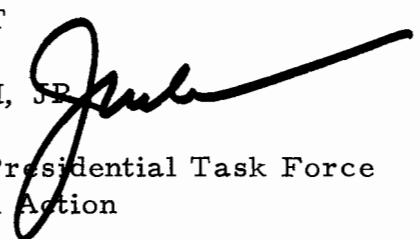
October 12, 1976

ACTION

MEMORANDUM FOR:

THE PRESIDENT

FROM:

JOHN O. MARSH, JR. 

SUBJECT:

Formation of a Presidential Task Force  
on the Missing in Action

I. BACKGROUND

The Republican Platform contains a plank calling for the establishment of a Presidential Task Force on the missing in action in Southeast Asia.

Accounting by the Vietnamese as well as the other Southeast Asia nations of those men who are still carried as missing in action and prisoners of war continues to be a matter of national concern. The National League of Families and the various veterans groups, who support your position on this, have been quite vocal concerning the need for an accounting.

In 1974/75 there seemed to be a growing agreement at the White House concerning the formation of a task force on MIA's. However, instead, the establishment of the House Select Committee on MIA's, headed by Congressman G. V. "Sonny" Montgomery (D-Miss), was thought to satisfy the need. That Committee had your support and that of the National League of Families. However, the League's support has eroded, particularly since "Sonny" Montgomery, in July, told the families that he expected the Committee's report to reflect a belief that there are no living American servicemen in Southeast Asia. The League also believes that the Committee accomplished nothing more than a cursory look into the problem.

There are currently approximately 800 men still listed as MIA's and POW's. Another 500 have been declared either killed in action or presumed to be dead. This has caused some concern for many of the families who believe that once the status of the individual has

been changed from MIA to killed in action or presumptive finding of death the need for an accounting will have been eliminated. Both the State and Defense Departments have assured the families that this isn't so and that regardless of the status of an individual, unless the remains have been returned, we will continue to seek an accounting.

The families have also pressed for an Executive Order which would stop all changes in status. However, they have been advised that the current moratorium at the Department of Defense, which requires that before a status review can be held on an MIA there must be a request from the immediate next of kin or unrefutable evidence must have surfaced, is satisfying that purpose. The families do not accept this rationale.

A Presidential Task Force, headed by someone of stature such as the Vice President and containing among its members respected individuals, could help assure those concerned during this period that the Administration is doing more than just the normal activity through State Department procedure.

Since the Republican Platform did call for the formation of a task force, and since such formation can only have positive results in terms of showing Administration interest in this sensitive matter, it would seem appropriate to now move ahead and announce the formation of such a body.

A preliminary "in house" meeting was held on September 9, 1976. The results of that meeting and a polling of our senior staff indicates that there is general agreement on the formation of the task force. General Scowcroft, however, believes that we should hold off at least until after the House Select Committee makes its report, which should be at the end of the year.

Should a task force be formed, it should be given specific responsibilities with a mandate to review what has been done up to now at State, Defense, and within the Select Committee. It should be required to determine what steps can and should be taken toward securing the desired accounting; a reporting date; and to satisfy any further mandate of the President on this matter.

## II. OPTIONS

1. YES Approval of the immediate establishment of a Presidential Task Force for the Missing in Action in Southeast Asia with general requirements outlined, and the selection of a chairman of stature.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Approval of the need for a Presidential Task Force for the Missing in Action in Southeast Asia, but a delay on implementation until the House Select Committee report is received and evaluated.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Disapproval of the need of a Presidential Task Force on the Missing in Action in Southeast Asia.

## III. RECOMMENDATION

Decision at the earliest possible time. My preference is for Option 1.

Approve YES Disapprove \_\_\_\_\_

*Announce Sen. Dole is in charge & immediately after election he will head the Task Force.*

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

October 20, 1976

ADMINISTRATIVELY CONFIDENTIAL

MEMORANDUM FOR:

JOHN O. MARSH, JR.

FROM:

JAMES E. CONNOR *jet*

SUBJECT:

Formation of a Presidential Task  
Force on the Missing in Action

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Option 1 - Approval of the immediate establishment of a Presidential Task Force for the Missing in Action in Southeast Asia with general requirements outlined, and the selection of a chairman of stature.

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"Announce Senator Dole is in charge and immediately after election he will head the Task Force."

Please follow-up with appropriate action.

cc: Dick Cheney  
Robert Linder



October 18, 1976

MR PRESIDENT:

**Formation of a Presidential Task Force  
on the Missing in Action**

Staffing of the attached memorandum prepared by Jack Marsh on the above subject resulted in the following recommendations and comments:

Option 1 - Recommended by Messrs. Bennett, Buchen, Friedersdorf, and Seidman.

Additional comments were offered:

Doug Bennett - "Agree with Option 1 with indication that Senator Dole, a war veteran himself, will be heading the Task Force with representation from the appropriate Departments and Agencies (DOD, State, Veterans, etc.) as well as the VFW and American Legion and any other outside representation appropriate."

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Art Quern - "I have not been able to discuss this with Jim Cannon but my judgement is that any action at this time will be viewed as purely, and perhaps cynically, political. I would recommend following up on Senator Dole's reference in his debate by simply referring when appropriate to the fact that Dole as Vice President will be charged with the responsibility of getting a full accounting of the MIA's."

Brent Scowcroft - "In attached memorandum Jack Marsh indicates that I believe we should hold off at least until the Montgomery Committee makes its final report, at the end of this year. Actually, I am opposed to the establishment of such a Presidential Task Force at any time, as I see the situation at present. The problem of the MIA's is a complex one to which there will never be a totally adequate solution. The Congress now has the responsibility to make recommendations on how we should finally settle it. Although, I recognize the pressures

**Brent Scowcroft (comments continued)**

on you, setting up a task force within the Executive Branch will remove this burden from the Congress and place it, once again, squarely on you. I fail to see any advantage in such a development."

**Jim Lynn (Ogilvie) - had no comments.**

**Jim Connor**

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

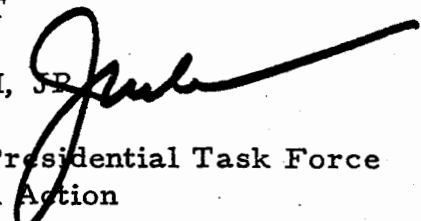
October 12, 1976

ACTION

MEMORANDUM FOR:

THE PRESIDENT

FROM:

JOHN O. MARSH, JR. 

SUBJECT:

Formation of a Presidential Task Force  
on the Missing in Action

I. BACKGROUND

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Accounting by the Vietnamese as well as the other Southeast Asia nations of those men who are still carried as missing in action and prisoners of war continues to be a matter of national concern. The National League of Families and the various veterans groups, who support your position on this, have been quite vocal concerning the need for an accounting.

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There are currently approximately 800 men still listed as MIA's and POW's. Another 500 have been declared either killed in action or presumed to be dead. This has caused some concern for many of the families who believe that once the status of the individual has

been changed from MIA to killed in action or presumptive finding of death the need for an accounting will have been eliminated. Both the State and Defense Departments have assured the families that this isn't so and that regardless of the status of an individual, unless the remains have been returned, we will continue to seek an accounting.

The families have also pressed for an Executive Order which would stop all changes in status. However, they have been advised that the current moratorium at the Department of Defense, which requires that before a status review can be held on an MIA there must be a request from the immediate next of kin or unrefutable evidence must have surfaced, is satisfying that purpose. The families do not accept this rationale.

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Should a task force be formed, it should be given specific responsibilities with a mandate to review what has been done up to now at State, Defense, and within the Select Committee. It should be required to determine what steps can and should be taken toward securing the desired accounting; a reporting date; and to satisfy any further mandate of the President on this matter.

## II. OPTIONS

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Approval of the immediate establishment of a Presidential Task Force for the Missing in Action in Southeast Asia with general requirements outlined, and the selection of a chairman of stature.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Approval of the need for a Presidential Task Force for the Missing in Action in Southeast Asia, but a delay on implementation until the House Select Committee report is received and evaluated.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Disapproval of the need of a Presidential Task Force on the Missing in Action in Southeast Asia.

## III. RECOMMENDATION

Decision at the earliest possible time. My preference is for Option 1.

Approve \_\_\_\_\_

Disapprove \_\_\_\_\_

STAFFING



## THE WHITE HOUSE

ACTION MEMORANDUM

WASHINGTON

LOG NO.:

Date: October 15, 1976

Time:

## FOR ACTION:

cc (for information):

✓ Douglas Bennett ✓ Jim Lynn  
✓ Phil Buchen Brent Scowcroft  
✓ Jim Cannon ✓ Bill Seidman  
✓ Max Friedersdorf

FROM THE STAFF SECRETARY

DUE: Date:

Time:

Saturday, October 16, 1976

10:00 A.M.

SUBJECT:

John Marsh memo, 10/12 concerning the Formation  
of a Presidential Task Force on the Missing in  
Action.

## ACTION REQUESTED:

☐ For Necessary Action☒ For Your Recommendations☐ Prepare Agenda and Brief☐ Draft Reply☒ For Your Comments☐ Draft Remarks

## REMARKS:

Lynn (Ogilvie) no comment  
Friedersdorf - option 1  
Bennett - option<sup>x</sup> (plus comments)  
Buchen - option 1  
Cannon - comment  
Seidman - option 1 - make Dale chairman

PLEASE ATTACH THIS COPY TO MATERIAL SUBMITTED.

If you have any questions or if you anticipate a  
delay in submitting the required material, please  
telephone the Staff Secretary immediately.

Jim Connor  
For the President

Date: October 15, 1976

Time:

## FOR ACTION:

cc (for information):

Douglas Bennett

Jim Lynn

Phil Buchen

Brent Scowcroft

Jim Cannon

Bill Seidman

Max Friedersdorf

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## REMARKS:

10-16-76

Counsel's office recommends Option 1.

*B. Roth*PLEASE ATTACH THIS COPY TO MATERIAL SUBMITTED.

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delay in submitting the required material, please  
telephone the Staff Secretary immediately.

Jim Connor  
For the President

9/1



Date: October 15, 1976

Time:

## FOR ACTION:

cc (for information):

Douglas Bennett

Jim Lynn

Phil Buchen

Brent Scowcroft

Jim Cannon

Bill Seidman

Max Friedersdorf

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Action.

## ACTION REQUESTED:

☐ For Necessary Action☒ For Your Recommendations☐ Prepare Agenda and Brief☐ Draft Reply☒ For Your Comments☐ Draft Remarks

## REMARKS:

*Max Friedersdorf Recommends Option I*  
*RKW*

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telephone the Staff Secretary immediately.

Jim Connor  
For the President

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

October 15, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR: JAMES CONNOR

FROM: DOUGLAS P. BENNETT ~~DPB~~

SUBJECT: Memo concerning the  
Formation of Presidential Task  
Force on the Missing in Action

Agree with Option 1 with indication that Senator Dole, a war veteran himself, will be heading the Task Force with representation from the appropriate Departments and Agencies (DOD, State, Veterans, etc.) as well as the VFW and American Legion and any other outside representation appropriate.

Date: October 15, 1976

Time:

## FOR ACTION:

cc (for information):

Douglas Bennett

Jim Lynn

Phil Buchen

Brent Scowcroft

Jim Cannon

Bill Seidman

Max Friedersdorf

FROM THE STAFF SECRETARY

DUE: Date:

Time:

Saturday, October 16, 1976

10:00 A.M.

## SUBJECT:

John Marsh memo, 10/12 concerning the Formation  
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## ACTION REQUESTED:

☐ For Necessary Action☒ For Your Recommendations☐ Prepare Agenda and Brief☐ Draft Reply☒ For Your Comments☐ Draft Remarks

## REMARKS:



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10/15/76

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telephone the Staff Secretary immediately.

Jim Connor  
For the President

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

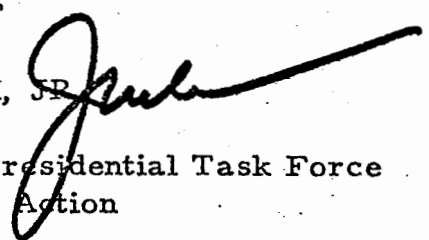
October 12, 1976

ACTION

MEMORANDUM FOR:

THE PRESIDENT

FROM:

JOHN O. MARSH, JR. 

SUBJECT:

Formation of a Presidential Task Force  
on the Missing in Action

I. BACKGROUND

The Republican Platform contains a plank calling for the establishment of a Presidential Task Force on the missing in action in Southeast Asia.

Accounting by the Vietnamese as well as the other Southeast Asia nations of those men who are still carried as missing in action and prisoners of war continues to be a matter of national concern. The National League of Families and the various veterans groups, who support your position on this, have been quite vocal concerning the need for an accounting.

In 1974/75 there seemed to be a growing agreement at the White House concerning the formation of a task force on MIA's. However, instead, the establishment of the House Select Committee on MIA's, headed by Congressman G. V. "Sonny" Montgomery (D-Miss), was thought to satisfy the need. That Committee had your support and that of the National League of Families. However, the League's support has eroded, particularly since "Sonny" Montgomery, in July, told the families that he expected the Committee's report to reflect a belief that there are no living American servicemen in Southeast Asia. The League also believes that the Committee accomplished nothing more than a cursory look into the problem.

There are currently approximately 800 men still listed as MIA's and POW's. Another 500 have been declared either killed in action or presumed to be dead. This has caused some concern for many of the families who believe that once the status of the individual has

been changed from MIA to killed in action or presumptive finding of death the need for an accounting will have been eliminated. Both the State and Defense Departments have assured the families that this isn't so and that regardless of the status of an individual, unless the remains have been returned, we will continue to seek an accounting.

The families have also pressed for an Executive Order which would stop all changes in status. However, they have been advised that the current moratorium at the Department of Defense, which requires that before a status review can be held on an MIA there must be a request from the immediate next of kin or unrefutable evidence must have surfaced, is satisfying that purpose. The families do not accept this rationale.

A Presidential Task Force, headed by someone of stature such as the Vice President and containing among its members respected individuals, could help assure those concerned during this period that the Administration is doing more than just the normal activity through State Department procedure.

Since the Republican Platform did call for the formation of a task force, and since such formation can only have positive results in terms of showing Administration interest in this sensitive matter, it would seem appropriate to now move ahead and announce the formation of such a body.

A preliminary "in house" meeting was held on September 9, 1976. The results of that meeting and a polling of our senior staff indicates that there is general agreement on the formation of the task force. General Scowcroft, however, believes that we should hold off at least until after the House Select Committee makes its report, which should be at the end of the year.

Should a task force be formed, it should be given specific responsibilities with a mandate to review what has been done up to now at State, Defense, and within the Select Committee. It should be required to determine what steps can and should be taken toward securing the desired accounting; a reporting date; and to satisfy any further mandate of the President on this matter.

## II. OPTIONS

1.            Approval of the immediate establishment of a Presidential Task Force for the Missing in Action in Southeast Asia with general requirements outlined, and the selection of a chairman of stature.
2.            Approval of the need for a Presidential Task Force for the Missing in Action in Southeast Asia, but a delay on implementation until the House Select Committee report is received and evaluated.
3.            Disapproval of the need of a Presidential Task Force on the Missing in Action in Southeast Asia.

## III. RECOMMENDATION

Decision at the earliest possible time. My preference is for Option 1.

Approve                     

Disapprove

Date: October 15, 1976

Time:

## FOR ACTION:

cc (for information):

Douglas Bennett

Jim Lynn

Phil Buchen

Brent Scowcroft

Jim Cannon

Bill Seidman

Max Friedersdorf

FROM THE STAFF SECRETARY

DUE: Date:

Saturday, October 16, 1976

Time:

10:00 A.M.

## SUBJECT:

John Marsh memo, 10/12 concerning the Formation  
of a Presidential Task Force on the Missing in  
Action.

## ACTION REQUESTED:

☐ For Necessary Action☒ For Your Recommendations☐ Prepare Agenda and Brief☐ Draft Reply☒ For Your Comments☐ Draft Remarks

## REMARKS:

OPTION 1 - MAKE DOLE CHAIRMAN.  
LWS

*Phoned 12/16 - 11:15 am*

**PLEASE ATTACH THIS COPY TO MATERIAL SUBMITTED.**

If you have any questions or if you anticipate a  
delay in submitting the required material, please  
telephone the Staff Secretary immediately.

Jim Connor  
For the President

## II. OPTIONS

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Approval of the immediate establishment of a Presidential Task Force for the Missing in Action in Southeast Asia with general requirements outlined, and the selection of a chairman of stature.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Approval of the need for a Presidential Task Force for the Missing in Action in Southeast Asia, but a delay on implementation until the House Select Committee report is received and evaluated.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Disapproval of the need of a Presidential Task Force on the Missing in Action in Southeast Asia.

## III. RECOMMENDATION

Decision at the earliest possible time. My preference is for Option 1.

Approve \_\_\_\_\_

Disapprove \_\_\_\_\_

*Make Dale Chairman.*



THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

October 16, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR: JIM CONNOR  
FROM: ART QUERN  
SUBJECT: Task Force on the Missing in Action

I have not been able to discuss this with Jim Cannon but my judgement is that any action at this time will be viewed as purely, and perhaps cynically, political.

I would recommend following up on Senator Dole's reference in last night's debate by simply referring when appropriate to the fact that Dole as Vice President will be charged with the responsibility of getting a full accounting of the MIA's.



Date: October 15, 1976

Time:

## FOR ACTION:

cc (for information):

Douglas Bennett

Jim Lynn

Phil Buchen

Brent Scowcroft

Jim Cannon

Bill Seidman

Max Friedersdorf

FROM THE STAFF SECRETARY

1976 OCT 15 PM 1 13

DUE: Date:

Time:

Saturday, October 16, 1976

10:00 A.M.

## SUBJECT:

John Marsh memo, 10/12 concerning the Formation  
of a Presidential Task Force on the Missing in  
Action.

*Sarah to  
Queen*

## ACTION REQUESTED:

☐ For Necessary Action☒ For Your Recommendations☐ Prepare Agenda and Brief☐ Draft Reply☒ For Your Comments☐ Draft Remarks

## REMARKS:

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Jim Connor  
For the President

*10/15/76*

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

October 18, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT  
FROM: BRENT SCOWCROFT *BS*  
SUBJECT: Presidential Task Force on MIA's

Jack Marsh has recommended (Tab A) that you immediately approve the establishment of a Presidential Task Force for the missing in action in Southeast Asia. In his memorandum to you, he indicates that I believe we should hold off at least until the Montgomery Committee makes its final report, at the end of this year.

Actually, I am opposed to the establishment of such a Presidential Task Force at any time, as I see the situation at present. The problem of the MIA's is a complex one to which there will never be a totally adequate solution. The Congress now has the responsibility to make recommendations on how we should finally settle it. Although I recognize the pressures on you, setting up a task force within the Executive Branch will remove this burden from the Congress and place it, once again, squarely on you. I fail to see any advantage in such a development.

RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that you not at this time approve establishing an MIA task force.

Approve \_\_\_\_\_ Disapprove \_\_\_\_\_

*incorporated into  
cover memo to  
the President with  
other comments. BS*



THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

October 12, 1976

ACTION

MEMORANDUM FOR:

THE PRESIDENT

FROM:

JOHN O. MARSH, JR. 

SUBJECT:

Formation of a Presidential Task Force  
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I. BACKGROUND

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## II. OPTIONS

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3. \_\_\_\_\_ Disapproval of the need of a Presidential Task Force on the Missing in Action in Southeast Asia.

## III. RECOMMENDATION

Decision at the earliest possible time. My preference is for Option 1.

Approve \_\_\_\_\_ Disapprove \_\_\_\_\_