The original documents are located in Box 36, “7/24/76 - Remarks at 7th Annual Convention of the League of Families of Missing in Action” of the President’s Speeches and Statements: Reading Copies at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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THANK YOU, BUS (Mills is Ch of Bd)

COLONEL EARL HOPPER (Incoming Ch of Bd)

CAROL BATES

CONGRESSMAN SONNY MONTEGOMERY?

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS/LADIES AND GENTLEMEN
THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN...
I am honored to meet once again with this courageous assembly of Americans whose loved ones remain unaccounted for in Southeast Asia.

You have borne a heavy burden with incredible courage. Every citizen in this country admires your bravery, your dignity and your persistence.
THROUGH LONG MONTHS AND YEARS OF TRIAL, YOU HAVE BEEN SUSTAINED BY THE LOVE OF YOUR MISSING MEN AND BY YOUR LOVE OF THE COUNTRY THOSE MEN HAVE DEFENDED.

I AM PROUD OF YOU, AND PROUD OF YOUR MEN.

BUT MY ADMIRATION IS NOT ENOUGH. THE GRATITUDE OF THIS NATION IS NOT ENOUGH.
YOU AND YOUR LOVED ONES MUST BE ASSURED OF A CONTINUING COMMITMENT FROM YOUR GOVERNMENT TO OBTAIN A FULL ACCOUNTING OF THOSE MISSING IN ACTION OR STILL LISTED AS PRISONERS OF WAR.

YOU HAVE THAT COMMITMENT FROM THIS ADMINISTRATION.

IT IS A LONGSTANDING COMMITMENT; IT IS STILL AN ACTIVE COMMITMENT; AND FOR ME IT IS A VERY PERSONAL COMMITMENT.

AND THAT IS WHY I'M HERE TONIGHT.
WHEN I CAME HOME FROM THE PACIFIC THIRTY YEARS AGO, I JOINED SEVERAL VETERANS ORGANIZATIONS AND A SHORT TIME LATER BECAME A MEMBER OF CONGRESS. DURING MY SERVICE AS A MEMBER OF THE HOUSE, I WORKED ON M.I.A. PROBLEMS ON AN INDIVIDUAL, CASE-BY-CASE BASIS, DURING BOTH THE KOREAN AND VIETNAM CONFLICTS.
AS A CONGRESSMAN, I MET WITH MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL LEAGUE OF FAMILIES HERE IN WASHINGTON AND BACK HOME IN GRAND RAPIDS.

I DID NOT FORGET YOU THEN, AND I HAVE NOT FORGOTTEN YOU NOW.

ONE OF MY VERY LAST MEETINGS AS VICE PRESIDENT WAS WITH YOUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS.
A YEAR AGO, AS PRESIDENT I ATTENDED THIS CONVENTION,

AND SHORTLY THEREAFTER MET AGAIN WITH YOUR BOARD OF

DIRECTORS IN THE CABINET ROOM AT THE WHITE HOUSE.

WE ARE EMPLOYING EVERY EFFECTIVE MEANS TO ACCOUNT

FOR YOUR LOVED ONES. LET ME ASSURE YOU TONIGHT THAT

I WILL CONTINUE THAT EFFORT.
WE MUST BE HONEST WITH OURSELVES. THIS IS A Frustrating and painstaking process.

It is a tragic fact that information on every missing man may never be available, regardless of what is done.

Furthermore, we are dealing with a government that has demonstrated little concern for your feelings.
THE VIETNAMESE CLAIM TO HAVE ESTABLISHED AGENCIES TO SEARCH FOR THE MISSING. BUT THUS FAR THEY HAVE WITHHELD THIS INFORMATION TOTALLY WITHOUT JUSTIFICATION. WE HAVE OFFERED TO CARRY OUT THE SEARCHES OURSELVES, OR TO ENLIST A NEUTRAL GOVERNMENT OR THE RED CROSS IN THIS HUMANITARIAN SEARCH.
THUS FAR, NONE OF THESE OFFERS HAS BEEN ACCEPTED.

BUT WE WILL PERSIST; WE WILL KEEP TRYING.

WE ARE WILLING TO TALK WITH THE VIETNAMESE.

AT MY DIRECTION, WE HAVE EXCHANGED MESSAGES WITH THEM

INDICATING OUR WILLINGNESS TO DISCUSS OUTSTANDING ISSUES

BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES.
WE HAVE MADE CLEAR THAT OUR PRIMARY CONCERN IS TO OBTAIN AN ACCOUNTING FOR OUR SERVICEMEN WHO ARE MISSING IN ACTION.

WITHOUT A SATISFACTORY RESOLUTION OF THE M.I.A. ISSUE, NO FURTHER PROGRESS IN OUR RELATIONS IS POSSIBLE.
I know that many of you are concerned about declassification of information related to M.I.A.'s.

Several months ago, I discussed this problem with members of my staff and directed that progress be made in that regard. I am informed that progress has been made, and more progress will be made.
EVERY ONE IN THIS ROOM HAS DEMONSTRATED A STRENGTH AND A RESOLVE WHICH MAKE YOU EQUAL TO THE BURDENS YOU ARE CARRYING. YOUR COURAGE HAS BEEN AN INSPIRATION TO ME AND TO MILLIONS OF YOUR FELLOW CITIZENS.
YOUR LOVED ONES HAVE NOT BEEN FORGOTTEN.

YOU HAVE NOT BEEN ABANDONED.

I PROMISE YOU I WILL NOT REST UNTIL THE FULLEST POSSIBLE ACCOUNTING OF YOUR LOVED ONES HAS BEEN MADE.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.