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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS:	President Ford Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
	Congressman G. V. (Sonny) Montgomery (D. Miss.) Congressman Benjamin Gilman (R New York) Congressman Paul N. (Pete) McCloskey (R Calif.)
DATE AND TIME:	Thursday, December 17, 1975 12:00 p.m.
PLACE:	The White House The Oval Office

<u>The President:</u> I understand you had a good trip to Paris and that you are planning to go to Hanoi to pick up the bodies and talk to the North Vietnamese.

Montgomery: Yes, but we have heard there is a change. They want us to get the bodies to Bangkok.

The President: [Reads the cable.]

<u>Montgomery:</u> When we said we would accept the remains, we said we would do it in Hanoi -- then they said Bangkok. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees today called and said they would do it in Hanoi, but in a UNHCR plane. We would go from Bangkok into Hanoi Saturday night. At noon Sunday we will receive the bodies in a ceremony. They asked for an expert to identify the bodies. We would hope to talk to the Vietnamese about other MIA's. We have good files of people we knew were alive.

They will want to talk about the development of our relations.

<u>Gilman:</u> The MIA families reacted very favorably to what you brought back from China. They think things may be gearing up. We would hope we would indicate that our government is considering a further gesture. We think that would be helpful -- perhaps oil drilling.

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<u>The President:</u> I would remind them of my Hawaii speech [Dec. 7]. we will look to the future. But I think we need to see that they deliver -if they do it as a gesture. But I don't think I can say ahead of time that we will open up on oil, trade or something. Let's get some performance. We know their performance heretofore has been damned little.

 $\frac{McCloskey:}{Our \text{ committee ends in September, so we are in a bigger hurry than State.}$

<u>Montgomery:</u> We will wrap it up in a report. It may be a sad one, but we will try to ease it off.

<u>McCloskey</u>: They clearly know the difference between words and actions. I told them I would try to get the trade embargo lifted. They released the nine Americans last October. They said they would return the three, the two Marines, and search for MIA's. I think that our success will depend on simultaneity. I know State is preparing a list. I would like you to announce beforehand -- a strong step -- that if they do what they promise you will lift the embargo. There is a Bingham bill to do it, but I think it should be your initiative, not the Congresses. Brent is worried about the political effect, but I think it would be a good decision now.

<u>The President:</u> Without seeing the NSC list, I would think oil might be more beneficial.

<u>Gilman:</u> I heartily agree. They have been probing oil companies and I think this is the right move. I think it is our move.

<u>The President:</u> My quick reaction is that you go over and get the bodies, get a promise of what they will do and what quid pro quo they want.

McCloskey: Could you make some sort of statement between now and Saturday?

The President: I would want to think of that.

<u>Scowcroft:</u> Why can't you refer to the Hawaii speech and say the President stands behind it? We want to start a new relationship, not on the basis of suspicion.

<u>The President:</u> Tell them to forget performance; start from scratch. "You don't have any performance either." Let them show what they will do; then we can act.

<u>Montgomery:</u> I don't have any trouble with what you are saying. Your Hawaii speech was right on track. Pete would like to offer something, but if we could tell them you are favorably disposed.

We are hoping to get an aircraft to get us out there.

<u>Gilman</u>: The North Vietnamese Ambassador said if their actions remain unilateral and we don't reciprocate, they would have a problem with their public opinion.

The President: How many sites did you say you had?

<u>Montgomery:</u> When we narrow it down we will have only about 14-15 good alive cases, and maybe 250 bodies.

McCloskey: We could perhaps get 100-200 bodies they have buried.

<u>Gilman:</u> Kissinger left 80 case files out there in '73. If we could just get information on cases like that.

<u>The President:</u> I hope you will shoot down the Fat Man. Grivas is the name. He is a fraud and a crook. [Described the cases].

<u>Montgomery:</u> We will have a problem with some of the families, but I think most of them will accept it if we do a good job. Some of them get edgy when we say North Vietnam says it has no more prisoners, but we can handle them. Your China trip helps, because some of the families think they may have marched them over into China.

<u>McCloskey</u>: We have to be more friendly than you, to get results. I hope if we get something you could respond quickly.

<u>The President:</u> I will be here after 30 December. Let me think out loud. Maybe I could give you a letter.

Montgomery: That would be great.

The President: Or I will call you. When do you leave?

Montgomery: Thursday night at the latest.

Gilman: Can we say when we are talking to them that there is interest in sil

The President: I would like to think about that and see the NSC list of things we could do.

<u>Montgomery:</u> I think the Vietnam thing has quieted down some and even in my conservative district there won't be an outcry.

Can we tell the press you stand by your Hawaii speech and you support efforts on MIA's?

The President: Yes.

Montgomery: Is it fair to say that you will match their actions?

The President: There must be reciprocity.

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