

## **STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR PETERSON ON HELICOPTER ACCIDENT IN VIETNAM**

*April 8, 2001*

**The terrible helicopter accident last Saturday in Quang Binh province took the lives of nine Vietnamese and seven Americans. They were engaged in the continuing joint mission to account for those Americans who are still listed as missing in action. This mission is a cornerstone of U.S.-Vietnam relations, and our cooperation on MIA search and recovery has developed over the years into a true partnership.**

**The families and friends of those who perished in the crash have suffered a huge loss, and we in the American Embassy also feel that loss very deeply. The Americans and Vietnamese engaged in the mission of the Joint Task Force -- Full Accounting have brought peace to the hearts of hundreds of American families through their dedicated work in sometimes dangerous and difficult conditions.**

**I especially appreciate and am grateful for the impressive work of local officials in Quang Binh and the Vietnamese involved in Hanoi since the accident. The quick recovery of the bodies of those aboard and the careful protection of the crash site for the purpose of a thorough investigation have helped enormously in these first few days. Together with our specialists from JTF-FA and the Central Identification Laboratory in Honolulu, Vietnamese forensic specialists are working to identify positively all the victims so their bodies may be released to their families as soon as possible.**

**The spirit of cooperation shown by our Vietnamese partners in this time of grief is as admirable as it has been in all our MIA operations together. We thank you most sincerely for your support, as we honor your countrymen who sacrificed their lives in this task. The effort will continue, sustained by bonds of partnership made even stronger by this shared tragedy.**