

Remarks Prepared for Delivery

by

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(POW/Missing Personnel Affairs)

National League of POW-MIA Families  
Thirty-third Annual Meeting

Double Tree Hotel  
Arlington, Va.

June 20, 2002  
(2:00-3:00 pm)  
Interagency Policy Panel

THANK YOU LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

IT IS GOOD TO BE WITH YOU, THIS TIME AS THE SENIOR OFFICIAL OF THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE POW/MIA ISSUE.

I'M GRATEFUL FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK WITH YOU ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE'S EFFORTS TO ACCOUNT FOR OUR MISSING AMERICANS AND I BELIEVE WE'RE GOING TO GET GREAT THINGS DONE TOGETHER.

I LOOK FORWARD TO THE CHANCE TO TELL YOU ABOUT THE COMMITMENT OF OUR DOD TEAM, MILITARY AND CIVILIAN, - A TEAM THAT IS IN ACTION - RIGHT NOW - AROUND THE WORLD.

I'M ALSO PLEASED TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET, ONCE AGAIN, WITH THE NATIONAL LEAGUE, AN ORGANIZATION I'VE ADMIRERD AND WORKED CLOSELY WITH FOR MANY YEARS.

I FEEL AT HOME HERE, AND I'M ESPECIALLY HAPPY TO RENEW ACQUAINTANCES WITH MY FRIEND, ANN MILLS GRIFFITHS.

I REFER TO ANN AS A "FRIEND," WHICH SHE IS.

BUT GOOD FRIENDS DON'T REMAIN SILENT WHEN SOME OBJECTIVE INPUT IS NEEDED.

AND I DON'T NEED TO REMIND YOU THAT ANN IS A "GREAT FRIEND" - AND YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT SHE NEVER HESITATES TO OFFER ME HER INPUTS! I WELCOME HER CALLS, BECAUSE THE GOVERNMENT NEEDS HER SCRUTINY AND YOURS, TOO - TO HELP US OVERCOME PROBLEMS AND TO WORK CONSISTENTLY TO IMPROVE OUR EFFORTS.

MY COMMITMENT TO THE POW/MIA ISSUE GOES BACK MANY YEARS WHEN I WAS DIRECTOR OF THE SELECTIVE SERVICE, AND ANN ASKED THAT WE FLY THE POW/MIA FLAG OVER OUR HEADQUARTERS. DESPITE ADVICE TO THE

CONTRARY FROM THE LAWYERS AND OTHER KEEPERS OF THE BUREAUCRATIC NORMS, WE FLEW THE FLAG AT SELECTIVE SERVICE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 1987, AND I'M PROUD TO SAY IT HAS FLOWN THERE EVER SINCE.

MY PREVIOUS ASSOCIATION WITH THE LEAGUE HAS ALLOWED ME TO HIT THE GROUND RUNNING - AND I HAVE! I'VE NOW COMPLETED TEN MONTHS ON THE JOB AS THE DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY.

IN THAT TIME I'VE COME TO GREATLY RESPECT AND APPRECIATE THE PROFESSIONALS AT DPMO. THEY ARE AMONG THE FINEST GROUP OF PUBLIC SERVANTS I'VE EVER HAD THE HONOR TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH.

A FORMER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE CALLED OUR WORK A SACRED MISSION. I THINK THAT'S TRUE, AND THAT'S WHY DPMO AND OUR FIELD AND SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS VIEW OUR MISSION AS A CALLING.

WE'RE ARE ALL DEDICATED TO PROVIDING ANSWERS TO FAMILY MEMBERS - TO ALL OF YOU - WHO AWAIT WORD ON THE FATE OF MISSING LOVED ONES. AND THAT COMMITMENT COMES FROM THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT. EVEN THOUGH OUR COUNTRY IS FIGHTING A WORLDWIDE WAR, PRESIDENT BUSH AND HIS ADMINISTRATION ARE HOLDING TO THE EMPHASIS ON PURSUING OUR WORK AS A MATTER OF THE HIGHEST NATIONAL PRIORITY.

IN HIS CERTIFICATION REQUIRED BY CONGRESS ON VIETNAM'S COOPERATION, PRESIDENT BUSH WROTE, QUOTE: "AS WE LOOK TO FURTHER STRENGTHEN COOPERATION, VIETNAM'S UNILATERAL PROVISION OF POW/MIA-RELATED DOCUMENTS AND RECORDS SHOULD BE IMPROVED, FOCUSED INITIALLY ON ARCHIVAL DATA PERTAINING TO AMERICANS CAPTURED, MISSING, OR KILLED IN AREAS OF LAOS AND CAMBODIA UNDER WARTIME VIETNAMESE CONTROL. VIETNAM SHOULD ALSO FOCUS GREATER ATTENTION ON LOCATING AND PROVIDING INFORMATION ON DISCREPANCY CASES, WITH PRIORITY ON THOSE LAST KNOWN ALIVE IN CAPTIVITY OR IN IMMEDIATE PROXIMITY TO CAPTURE, AND TO LOCATING AND REPATRIATING THE REMAINS OF THOSE WHO DIED WHILE IN VIETNAMESE CONTROL THAT HAVE NOT YET BEEN RETURNED.

HE CONCLUDES BY WRITING "... IN MAKING THIS DETERMINATION, I WISH TO REAFFIRM MY CONTINUING PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO THE ENTIRE POW-MIA COMMUNITY, ESPECIALLY THE IMMEDIATE FAMILIES, RELATIVES, FRIENDS, AND SUPPORTERS OF THESE BRAVE INDIVIDUALS, AND TO RECONFIRM THAT THE CENTRAL, GUIDING PRINCIPLE OF MY VIETNAM POLICY IS TO ACHIEVE THE FULLEST POSSIBLE ACCOUNTING OF OUR PRISONERS OF WAR AND MISSING IN ACTION." END QUOTE.

PRESIDENT BUSH HAS DRAWN A CLEAR DEMARCATION, A CLEAR DIFFERENCE FROM THE PREVIOUS ADMINISTRATION.

HIS WHITE HOUSE HAS PUT A SHARP POINT TO THE PRESIDENTIAL CERTIFICATION FOR VIETNAM, AND I THINK YOU'RE GOING TO BE PLEASED AS THIS ADMINISTRATION MOVES OUR ISSUE FORWARD.

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MANY PEOPLE I SPEAK WITH MARVEL AT OUR NATION'S DETERMINED EFFORT - TO BRING THEM HOME, ALIVE OR DEAD - TO RETURN, RECOVER, REPATRIATE, AND IDENTIFY OUR NATION'S WAR HEROES. I'M PROUD OF THE

## WORK DONE BY OUR PEOPLE - DPMO'S AND OUR PARTNERS.

STARTING WITH PRESIDENT REAGAN WE SET A NEW STANDARD - TO PURSUE OUR MISSION A MATTER OF THE HIGHEST NATIONAL PRIORITY. THAT WAS NOT EMPTY RHETORIC; HE MEANT IT, AND SO DO WE! IN FACT, THE REST OF THE WORLD COMES TO US TO SEE HOW IT'S DONE. AND WITH GOOD REASON.

HAVE YOU HEARD THE WORDS THE SPARTANS SAID TO THEIR SONS, BEFORE THEY WENT OFF TO BATTLE?

"COME BACK WITH YOUR SHIELD, OR ON IT."

THOSE WORDS COULD BE VIEWED AS REFLECTING THE SPARTANS' BELLICOSE NATURE. BUT THE SPARTANS WERE TELLING THEIR SONS THAT THEY WANTED THEM BACK - ALIVE OR DEAD. WE'RE CARRYING ON AN ANCIENT TRADITION, THE RETURN OF WAR HEROES, BUT UPDATED TO KEEP PACE WITH THE SENTIMENTS AND TECHNOLOGY OF THE TIMES.

AS WE WAGE TODAY'S WAR SO VITAL TO OUR NATIONAL SECURITY, PRESIDENT BUSH IS DETERMINED TO RESTORE THE SERIOUSNESS THAT AN ISSUE OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE DEMANDS.

ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT INDICATIONS OF THIS ADMINISTRATION'S PRIORITY IS THE RECENT DESIGNATION OF A SUB-POLICY COORDINATION COMMITTEE ON POW/MIA AFFAIRS. THIS IS EQUIVALENT TO THE INTERAGENCY WORKING GROUP WHICH WAS SO EFFECTIVE IN THE REAGAN-BUSH YEARS AND WHICH YOU HAVE ADVOCATED THAT WE RE-ESTABLISH. NOW WE'VE DONE IT.

I WILL CHAIR THIS SUB-P.C.C. THAT HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED AND SANCTIONED BY THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WITH FULL WHITE HOUSE SUPPORT. IT WILL BRING TO BEAR ALL THE RESOURCES OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT TO THE ACCOUNTING MISSION AND COVER ALL WARS - THE WORLD OVER. I CAN'T OVERSTATE THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS INITIATIVE. YOUR ISSUE - OUR ISSUE - WILL ONCE AGAIN SIT CENTER-STAGE AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT.

I'M COMMITTED TO INVOLVING ALL OF DOD AND THE ENTIRE INTERAGENCY COMMUNITY TO HELP RESOLVE THE POW/MIA ISSUE - THIS IS A NATIONAL ISSUE. IN THAT REGARD, I'VE DIRECTED MY STAFF TO ORGANIZE A DOD-WIDE PERSONNEL ACCOUNTING CONFERENCE HERE IN WASHINGTON IN EARLY NOVEMBER. THE GOAL OF THE CONFERENCE IS TO CHART A COURSE FOR THE FUTURE OF OUR ACCOUNTING EFFORTS. IT WILL INCLUDE OUR COLLEAGUES IN THE OTHER RELEVANT AGENCIES AND DEPARTMENTS OF THE GOVERNMENT, AND ANN - I'M INVITING YOU TO BE A FULL PARTICIPANT IN THESE PROCEEDINGS SO THAT WE MIGHT TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE OF YOUR KNOWLEDGE AND YEARS OF EXPERIENCE.

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AS YOU KNOW, OUR MISSION EXTENDS FROM THE CURRENT BATTLEFIELD OF AFGHANISTAN, BACK THROUGH DESERT STORM, THE VIETNAM WAR, THE KOREAN WAR, THE COLD WAR, AND EVEN WORLD WAR II.

OUR HIGHEST PRIORITY IS RESOLVING QUESTIONS CONCERNING LIVE AMERICANS - POWS AND OTHERS WHO MIGHT HAVE BEEN LEFT BEHIND.

REMAINS RECOVERY IS CRITICAL TO OUR OVERALL ACCOUNTING MISSION. IT IS COMPLEMENTARY TO RESOLVING THE QUESTION OF LIVE AMERICANS, BUT IT IS NOT A SUBSTITUTE.

ON THE LIVE PRISONER ISSUE, WE FOLLOW A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH. THIS INCLUDES USING INTELLIGENCE COLLECTION, INVESTIGATING LIVE SIGHTING REPORTS AND CASES OF U.S. PERSONNEL LAST KNOWN ALIVE, NEGOTIATING WITH FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS, INTERVIEWING SOURCES AS PART OF OUR ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM, AND FINALLY, OUR EFFORT TO EXPAND RESEARCH INTO FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC ARCHIVES AND RECORDS.

OUR WORK IN OTHER COUNTRIES IS OFTEN EXTREMELY DIFFICULT, AND THE COOPERATION WE RECEIVE FROM THESE NATIONS HAS NOT ALWAYS BEEN CONSISTENT - IN FACT - IT IS NOT CONSISTENT TODAY.

IN VIETNAM I'VE ESTABLISHED SOME NEW INITIATIVES. WE'RE ACTUALLY SEEKING NEW WAYS TO ACHIEVE A GREATER OPENNESS FROM VIETNAM TO ANSWER CRITICAL, LOGICAL QUESTIONS THAT REMAIN.

ALTHOUGH REGULAR INVESTIGATION AND RECOVERY OPERATIONS ARE CONDUCTED IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, WE'RE LOOKING FOR MORE SERIOUS COOPERATION OVER WHAT WE HAVE SEEN IN THE PAST. THE VIETNAMESE, FOR EXAMPLE, NEED TO OPEN UP - TO GIVE US ACCESS TO ARCHIVES AND INFORMATION FROM HIGH RANKING OFFICIALS WHO HAVE WARTIME EXPERIENCE THAT LOGICALLY WOULD RELATE TO OUR POW-MIA ISSUE. I HAVE REQUESTED ACCESS TO POW-MIA-RELATED POLICY DOCUMENTS FROM THEIR CENTRAL ARCHIVES, BECAUSE THEY SIMPLY HAVE TO KNOW MUCH MORE CONCERNING LOSSES IN LAOS AND CAMBODIA THAN THEY HAVE THUS FAR BEEN WILLING TO PROVIDE.

OUR GOAL IS TO BUILD UPON THE SUCCESS OF THE PAST WHILE CONTINUING TO IDENTIFY AND REMEDY GAPS IN THE INFORMATION WE ALREADY HAVE ON MISSING AMERICANS.

TO THAT END, I PLAN TO VISIT HANOI IN AUGUST TO MEET WITH SEVERAL SENIOR LEADERS, INCLUDING DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER NGUYEN TAN DUNG ("WIN - TUN - ZOONG"), TO ASK THEM TO FOLLOW THROUGH ON THEIR PRIOR COMMITMENTS AND TO SOLICIT THEIR IDEAS AS WELL. AND, AGAIN, I WILL LOOK TO THE LEAGUE AS WE BUILD OUR POLICY POSITIONS FOR THIS TRIP.

LATER, IN OCTOBER, I PLAN TO VISIT LAOS TO EXPLORE WAYS TO IMPROVE OUR EFFORTS AND INCREASE RESULTS. WE INTEND TO COMBINE OUR EFFORTS WITH OTHER AGENCIES TO GET BETTER RESULTS OUT OF LAOS.

I APPLAUD THE ACTIVE ROLE THE LEAGUE HAS PLAYED IN ENCOURAGING NEW INITIATIVES SUCH AS LAST FALL'S PROVINCIAL GOVERNORS' SEMINAR IN SAVANNAKHET ( "SAVANNAH - KET" ). WE EXPECT THE GOVERNMENT OF LAOS TO WORK WITH US TO INCREASE THE PACE AND SCOPE OF OUR ACTIVITY IN THEIR COUNTRY.

THEY NEED TO OPEN THEIR RECORDS, LIMITED THOUGH THEY MAY BE, AND TO IMPLEMENT AN EFFECTIVE ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM, EITHER WORKING WITH OUR PEOPLE OR ON THEIR OWN, TO OBTAIN INFORMATION FROM THEIR WARTIME VETERAN WITNESSES.

CERTAINLY THE LAO CAN FIND WAR VETERANS SO THAT OUR ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM CAN SEE THE WAR AS THE LAO SAW IT AND HELP OUR ACCOUNTING EFFORTS.

CERTAINLY THE LAO CAN HELP US INVESTIGATE OUR REGULAR CASES AND OUR LAST KNOWN ALIVE CASES WITHOUT REGARD TO THE NORTH - SOUTH PROTOCOLS, AND WITH THE HELP OF STONY BEACH INVESTIGATORS, GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THESE CASES.

OUR EFFORTS IN LAOS HAVE MADE PROGRESS DURING RECENT YEARS, AND I AM HOPEFUL THAT STEPS SUCH AS THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNORS' SEMINAR WILL CONTINUE TO EXPAND OUR ACCESS IN THAT COUNTRY.

NOW LET ME TALK ABOUT CAMBODIA. THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT WE AGAIN HAVE PLACED A FULL TIME POW/MIA INVESTIGATOR THERE WORKING CONTINUOUSLY ON CASES.

THIS YEAR THE CAMBODIANS HAVE VOLUNTEERED TO DO SOME UNILATERAL INVESTIGATIONS, AND WE WELCOME THAT INITIATIVE. THE JOINT TASK FORCE AND STONY BEACH HAVE WORKED CLOSELY TO FOCUS THEIR WORK, AND WE LOOK FORWARD TO INCREASED RESULTS FROM THIS INITIATIVE.

WHILE OUR ANALYSTS ARE STILL ASSESSING THE PRODUCT OF CAMBODIA'S FIRST UNILATERAL INVESTIGATION EFFORT, I CONTINUE TO BE IMPRESSED BY THE EAGERNESS WITH WHICH SENIOR LEADERS THERE HAVE EMBRACED THIS MISSION.

DURING MY VISIT WITH PRIME MINISTER HUN SEN ( "HUN SIN" ) LAST OCTOBER, HE INDICATED A WILLINGNESS TO INCREASE THE PACE OF OPERATIONS.

OUR NEW FULL-TIME STONY BEACH INVESTIGATOR IS A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION TOWARD THAT GOAL. OUR HOPE IS THAT THIS WILL BE A MODEL FOR STONY BEACH PRESENCE IN VIETNAM AND LAOS IN THE FUTURE. I'M GOING BACK IN NOVEMBER TO MEASURE THE PROGRESS MADE IN CAMBODIA OVER THE PAST YEAR.

FINALLY, I PLAN TO VISIT CHINA IN SEPTEMBER TO HELP REESTABLISH TIES AFTER LAST YEAR'S EP-3 INCIDENT.

ALTHOUGH MOST OF OUR DIFFICULTIES WITH CHINA OVER ACCOUNTING FOR MISSING SERVICEMEMBERS CONCERN THE KOREAN WAR, I INTEND TO MAKE IT CLEAR THAT WE EXPECT TO ACCOUNT FOR ALL MISSING AMERICANS FROM ALL OUR PAST WARS, AND THAT THEIR COOPERATION - ESPECIALLY WITH INFORMATION THEY HAVE ON OUR CHINA CASES, OR ANY INFORMATION THEY HAVE ON CASES IN INDOCHINA - IS NECESSARY TO ATTAIN BETTER RELATIONS WITH THE U.S.

IN SUMMARY, I'VE BEGUN A NEW TYPE OF FOCUSED NEGOTIATION WITH EACH COUNTRY WHOSE COOPERATION WE SEEK. I INTEND TO MAKE EACH VISIT TO ONE OF THESE COUNTRIES AS EFFECTIVE AS HUMANLY POSSIBLE. I SEND A TEAM IN FIRST, AND THEN I GO TO COLLECT THE RESULTS TO EVALUATE OUR EFFECTIVENESS, AND TO PRESS FOR GREATER ACTION IF THAT'S REQUIRED.

IN RUSSIA - WHERE WE SEARCH FOR INFORMATION RELATED TO REPORTS OF AMERICANS FROM ALL PAST CONFLICTS - OUR TEAMS DON'T ALWAYS GET THE SUPPORT WE'D LIKE TO SEE.

I STRONGLY ADVOCATE GIVING OUR RESEARCHERS GREATER ACCESS TO THE HISTORICAL RECORDS OF THE FORMER SOVIET UNION'S SECURITY AND INTELLIGENCE SERVICES.

SO FAR, THE RUSSIAN ARCHIVES HAVE PROVIDED US WITH FAIRLY DETAILED INFORMATION ABOUT MOSTLY AIR COMBAT LOSSES FROM THE KOREAN WAR. SEVERAL HUNDRED KOREAN WAR INCIDENTS OF LOSS HAVE BEEN CLARIFIED BY SOVIET ARCHIVAL MATERIALS. WE REMAIN CONVINCED THAT RUSSIAN ARCHIVES HOLD SIMILAR MATERIALS FROM THE VIETNAM WAR ERA.

AT OUR URGING, SENIOR U.S. GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS HAVE PRODDED THE RUSSIANS TO SHARE THESE MATERIALS, AND THE ISSUE IS ROUTINELY ADDRESSED WITHIN THE U.S. - RUSSIA JOINT COMMISSION ON POW - MIAS. IN ADDITION, OUR RESEARCHERS BOTH HERE AND IN MOSCOW ARE ACTIVELY LOOKING INTO HUNDREDS OF REPORTED SIGHTINGS OF AMERICANS IN STALIN-ERA SOVIET LABOR CAMPS - WHAT'S FREQUENTLY CALLED THE GULAG.

WE'VE TRAVELED TO MANY OF THESE CAMPS AND INTERVIEWED NUMEROUS FORMER INMATES. I REMAIN COMMITTED TO ENSURING THAT WE PURSUE EVERY POSSIBLE LEAD SO THAT WE LEARN WHAT RUSSIA KNOWS ABOUT THE FATES OF OUR MISSING.

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AS YOU'RE AWARE, OUR MISSION COVERS NOT ONLY THE VIETNAM WAR, BUT ALL OUR NATION'S WARS FROM WORLD WAR II TO THE PRESENT. WE ARE ENGAGED IN MANY IMPORTANT ACTIVITIES, SUCH AS AN ALL-OUT EFFORT TO SOLVE THE CASE OF THE ONE SERVICEMAN STILL MISSING IN ACTION FROM DESERT STORM - NAVY COMMANDER MICHAEL SCOTT SPEICHER.

SIMILAR TO WHAT WE EXPERIENCED DURING THE VIETNAM WAR, IRAQ IS YET TO BE FORTHCOMING WITH ANY CREDIBLE INFORMATION ON HIS FATE. WE'RE PRESSING TO GET A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF COMMANDER SPEICHER'S STATUS.

BUT WITH ALL THESE MISSIONS WE MUST WORK MORE EFFECTIVELY WITH THE RESOURCES WE HAVE. I INITIATED A FEASIBILITY STUDY TO LOOK TOWARD FORMING A LARGER AND MORE INTEGRATED JOINT PERSONNEL ACCOUNTING ORGANIZATION, MADE UP OF THE BEST ELEMENTS OF JOINT TASK FORCE - FULL ACCOUNTING AND THE CENTRAL IDENTIFICATION LABORATORY IN HAWAII - OR AS WE CALL IT, "CILHI."

OUR INITIAL ASSESSMENT SUGGESTED A SINGLE ORGANIZATION WOULD FACE FEWER OBSTACLES IN COORDINATING OUR ACCOUNTING EFFORTS AND RESOURCES THAN THOSE FACED BY THE PRESENT TWO SEPARATE ORGANIZATIONS.

A SINGLE, NEW ORGANIZATION WOULD ALSO BE ABLE TO EXPAND THE STRONG COMMAND OVERSIGHT AND FOCUS NOW ENJOYED BY MISSIONS IN

SOUTHEAST ASIA, TO MISSIONS IN NORTH KOREA, PAPUA NEW GUINEA, AND OTHER LOCATIONS AROUND THE GLOBE.

ON MAY 12<sup>TH</sup> THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF PACIFIC, ADMIRAL THOMAS FARGO, ENDORSED THE CONCEPT OF A MERGER AND SET INTO MOTION THE PLANNING AND PREPARATIONS PROCESS TO IMPLEMENT THE PLAN BY OCTOBER 2003.

THE NEWLY FORMED ORGANIZATION WILL HAVE A WORLDWIDE MISSION TO ACCOUNT FOR AMERICANS MISSING SINCE THE CONCLUSION OF OUR NATION'S WARS, FROM WORLD WAR II FORWARD.

WE WILL WORK CLOSELY WITH THE PACIFIC COMMAND TO BUILD AN ORGANIZATION THAT ENHANCES OUR ABILITY TO GET ANSWERS. THE SCOPE OF THIS EFFORT WILL NOT - I REPEAT - WILL NOT - DIMINISH IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AS A RESULT OF THIS MERGER, BUT WILL IMPROVE THE ACCOUNTING EFFORT.

IN ADDITION, THIS SPRING, I REORGANIZED DPMO TO ADDRESS SOME INHERITED CHALLENGES AND INCREASE OUR EFFECTIVENESS INTERNALLY.

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LET ME TAKE A MOMENT TO FURTHER EXPLAIN SOME SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF OUR EFFORT TO ACCOUNT FOR AMERICA'S POWS AND MIAS. OUR FIRST AND FOREMOST COMMITMENT IS TO GET TO THE TRUTH OF REPORTS OF AMERICANS BEING HELD AGAINST THEIR WILL IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, NORTH KOREA, CHINA, AND RUSSIA.

WE EMPLOY ALL AVAILABLE MEANS - TO INCLUDE USING INTELLIGENCE ASSETS AND SENDING TEAMS TO INVESTIGATE SUCH REPORTS ON SITE, WHEN POSSIBLE. WE HAVE YET TO CONFIRM ANY REPORTS OF AMERICANS CURRENTLY IN CAPTIVITY, BUT WE OPERATE ON THAT ASSUMPTION AND WILL KEEP UP THE PURSUIT.

IN SOUTHEAST ASIA WE HAVE RECEIVED MORE THAN 21,000 REPORTS OF ALL KINDS - FIRSTHAND LIVE SIGHTING, HEARSAY, CRASH AND GRAVE SITE, AND DOGTAG REPORTS. TO DATE, WE HAVE CARRIED OUT 119 ON-SITE INVESTIGATIONS OF REPORTED LIVE SIGHTINGS IN VIETNAM, LAOS, AND CAMBODIA - NOT TO MENTION YEARS OF FOCUSED INTELLIGENCE COLLECTION EFFORTS DURING AND AFTER THE WAR - BUT UNFORTUNATELY WE HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO VERIFY A SINGLE REPORT OF A LIVE AMERICAN POW STILL BEING HELD. BUT LET ME ADD, HOWEVER, THAT WHILE WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO PROVE THAT THERE ARE NONE, WE CONTINUE TO TREAT EACH AND EVERY REPORT SERIOUSLY AND WITH GREAT URGENCY IN TERMS OF RESOURCE PRIORITY, UNDER THE ASSUMPTION THAT IT IS POSSIBLE.

THE MANNER IN WHICH WE MOST OFTEN ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS LIES IN THE RECOVERY AND IDENTIFICATION OF REMAINS. IN EACH OF THE COUNTRIES IN WHICH WE CARRY OUT OUR MISSION, DOORS ARE NOT ALWAYS EASILY OPENED.

BUT WITH THE LEAGUE'S STRONG SUPPORT, AND THAT OF VETERANS' SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS, WE WILL SUCCEED.

TODAY, IN OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM, ALTHOUGH WE HAVE NO

SERVICE PERSONNEL UNACCOUNTED-FOR, THE EFFORT TO BRING BACK ONE SERVICEMAN HAS ALREADY LED TO THE LOSS OF AMERICAN LIVES - MEN AND WOMEN DETERMINED NOT TO LEAVE THEIR COMRADES BEHIND ON THE BATTLEFIELD.

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EVEN NOW, WHILE I SPEAK, YOUNG AMERICAN HEROES ARE PUTTING THEIR LIVES ON THE LINE FOR US AND FOR OUR FREEDOM - IN AFGHANISTAN, IN PAKISTAN, IN THE PHILIPPINES, IN FORWARD BASES IN SOUTHWEST ASIA, AND ON SHIPS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN.

IT'S MOST UNFORTUNATE THESE YOUNG AMERICANS ARE IN HARM'S WAY, BUT AS PRESIDENT REAGAN ONCE SAID ABOUT DEFENDING FREEDOM, "IN ORDER TO KEEP IT, WE HAVE TO KEEP WORKING FOR IT AND SACRIFICING FOR IT JUST AS LONG AS WE LIVE.

"IF WE DO NOT, OUR CHILDREN MAY NOT KNOW THE PLEASURE OF WORKING TO KEEP IT, FOR IT MAY NOT BE THEIRS TO KEEP." OUR MEN AND WOMEN IN UNIFORM UNDERSTAND WHY THEY SERVE. THEY CHERISH OUR NATION, OUR AMERICAN WAY OF LIFE, OUR FREEDOM AND OUR VALUES. THAT'S WHY THEY PUT THEIR LIVES ON THE LINE EVERY DAY, FOR AMERICA AND ITS PEOPLE.

AND THAT IS WHY WE HONOR THE TRUE AMERICAN HERO - WE KNOW THE REAL MEANING OF THE WORD.

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IN CLOSING, LET ME THANK YOU, THE MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL LEAGUE OF POW-MIA FAMILIES FOR YOUR TIRELESS EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE THE FULLEST POSSIBLE ACCOUNTING.

AS YOU KNOW, THE SUN NEVER SETS ON OUR MISSION.

WE HAVE PEOPLE SPREAD OUT ACROSS THE GLOBE ... PERFORMING A VARIETY OF TASKS TO ACCOUNT FOR MISSING AMERICANS. NO MATTER WHAT TIME IT IS HERE IN WASHINGTON, SOMEWHERE IN THE WORLD, SOMEONE IS WORKING TO FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED TO MISSING AMERICANS AND TO BRING THEM HOME.

AND WE WILL INTENSIFY THE SEARCH TO ACCOMPLISH THIS MISSION! I PLEDGE TO WORK WITH THE LEAGUE, OTHER FAMILY AND VETERANS' SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS, AND WITH THE INDIVIDUAL FAMILIES - ALL OF YOU AND OTHERS ... WHO HOLD THE GREATEST STAKE IN OUR EFFORTS, AS WE PROCEED TO ACCOUNT FOR MISSING SERVICEMEN AND CIVILIANS.

OUR COMMITMENT IS STEADFAST AND WE LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING TOGETHER WITH YOU UNTIL THIS ISSUE IS HONORABLY RESOLVED. THANK YOU.