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Statement of

Lieutenant General Vernon A. Walters, USA
Deputy Director, Central Intelligence Agency

Before the

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Select Committee on Missing Persons in
Southeast Asia

of the

U.S. House of Representatives

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Mr. Chairman, Honorable Members:

The Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, Mr. George Bush, in answer to your request has asked me to appear before the Select Committee today, and represent the Director as spokesman for the intelligence community on the subject of intelligence efforts to determine the status of men still carried as Prisoner of War (PW) and Missing in Action (MIA) in Southeast Asia.

The Central Intelligence Agency and the intelligence community recognize the importance of the Select Committee's vigorous efforts to complete the accounting for Americans missing in Southeast Asia. In response to the Committee's invitation, the intelligence community has prepared an unclassified report on various efforts that the intelligence community has made to account for the missing persons, PWs, MIAs and those killed in action whose bodies have not been recovered. The Select Committee has already heard expert testimony on many aspects of this problem; I will not dwell at length on any one aspect of any one case.

You are already in touch with the experts in Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), Department of State and elsewhere, the offices with the details on any particular case. I will present several additional items of information declassified for the first time, but this will not directly resolve any of the outstanding cases. I hope that my testimony today and the written report that I will submit on behalf of the intelligence community will help the Committee to resolve the outstanding issues for the brave families who have borne the pain of uncertainty for these many years.

Normally, members of the intelligence community prefer there be no questions in open session, since any line of questioning leads so easily to discussion of sources and methods. In the statement which follows I will refer to sources and methods only in a very general way, to give a picture of the intelligence community's effort. Mr. Chairman, I am prepared to discuss in closed session further details should the Committee desire, and I will answer questions in open session to the extent possible.

We hope that this bird's-eye-view of the problem will be of use to the Select Committee and to the families involved. I would like to add, on behalf of the thousands of dedicated persons who have been involved in this effort over the years, that the many thousands of man-hours of effort and the tens of millions of dollars spent have not been wasted - even though more than 800 MIA cases remain unresolved. We have the satisfaction of feeling that, within the limits of national policy and human ability, everything that could be done has been done.

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Director Bush, in discussing my appearance, recalled with pleasure an informal meeting with your Committee on September 17th of last year. As you will recall, he was then still Chief of the U.S. Liaison Office to the People's Republic of China, in Peking. The Director has asked me to extend to you his personal and official assurances that he will cooperate with the Select Committee, both in his role as spokesman for the intelligence community, and in his role as Director of the CIA.

Mr. Chairman, with your permission I would like to submit, for the record, more detailed remarks than time will allow me to present in this brief oral summary. These remarks, which have been coordinated with responsible elements of the intelligence community, summarize in a factual and realistic manner, all of the reliable, substantive and pertinent information bearing on the current PW/MIA problem.

There is no easy way to recount the intelligence effort of the past several years. The war in Indochina was immensely complex, and the problem of missing persons reflected that complexity. Americans still carried as PWs and MIAs were lost not only in close ground combat actions, but also in aerial combat. They were lost in four markedly different geographical areas -- North Vietnam, South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. They were lost in combat with four related but distinct enemy organizations -- the North Vietnamese nation state, the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam, the Pathet Lao faction, and the Khmer Rouge guerrillas. This confusion of factors complicated the intelligence problem to an inordinate degree. On the other hand, the presence of American forces gave us an opportunity to expand our intelligence gathering capability.

During the early phases of American involvement in the Vietnamese war, very few Americans were captured and detained by Vietnamese and Pathet Lao Communist forces. Intelligence efforts to locate these few PWs and to lay the groundwork for their rescue or release were coordinated by the U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, located in Saigon. Intelligence collection directives which governed the activities of American intelligence assets in Southeast Asia gave high priority to acquisition of information on captured or missing Americans, but through 1964 our intelligence collection capability was relatively limited. In step with the build-up of U.S. forces in 1965, intelligence acquisition capabilities also increased substantially. In April 1966 the intelligence community assigned top priority to collection of information on PWs and MIAs. All U.S. installations and organizations world-wide were tasked, as a matter of priority, to obtain information about the missing.

Subject: The French Experience in Recovering POWs, Obtaining Accounting for MIAs and Recovering Remains

On 7 April 1976, the House Select Committee on MIAs heard the testimony of Ms. Anita Lauve on the subject of the French experience with POWs/MIAs following their war in Indochina. Ms. Lauve is a consultant to the Committee. She submitted a prepared statement which included the following points. After the 1954 cease fire, the French contended the North Vietnamese had withheld 9,500 POWs. The North Vietnamese denied it but released 380 alleged defectors and 450 Foreign Legionnaires within the next two years. The Legionnaires were not French, but East Europeans and were repatriated to European countries under Communist control. Several hundred additional prisoners made up of North Africans, Spaniards, Italians, and other Europeans were released during the 1960's and early 1970's and there are some indications that they had not remained in North Vietnam voluntarily. The only French nationals returned after the initial agreed release were 40 who returned to France in 1962 with their Vietnamese families. All were tried for desertion. The issue of any remaining POWs has appeared closed to both the North Vietnamese and the French since the early 1970's. With respect to deceased personnel, the issue is still not resolved. The Vietnamese have dealt with the French regarding return of remains for 20 years and have shown themselves to be motivated by political and financial considerations, not humanitarian concern. They have treated the return of remains issue as a long-term source of income. The French have chosen quiet diplomacy and have not detailed these costs. Between 1958 and 1966, no remains were shipped from Hanoi to France, but several shipments between 1966 and 1973 brought the 18-year total to about 1,500. Throughout the 1966 to 1973 period, the French had political representation in Hanoi. The location of most of the French remains was well known to the French as their presence in North Vietnam during the conflict allowed them to bury most of their own dead in their own cemeteries.

Responding to questions from Mr. Ottinger, Ms. Lauve stated she was uncertain whether normalization of relations provided faster progress for the French. She believes their experience demonstrates that money is a primary consideration to the Vietnamese and that this causes them to go slowly with no desire to ever complete the return of remains process.

Responding to questions from Mr. Harkin, Ms. Lauve stated that the United States might speed up its recovery of remains by not seeming too eager; while steps such as removal of trade

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Subject: The French Experience in Recovering POWs, Obtaining Accounting for MIAs and Recovering Remains

embargos might get things started, the Vietnamese will require more as they go along. They consider the matter a financial reservoir.

Ms. Lauve advised Mr. Gilman that she does not believe the French will ever obtain a full accounting for remains. They established normal relations only after diplomatic bargaining and substantial expenditure of money.

Chairman Montgomery asked Ms. Lauve's opinion of the Vietnamese attitude towards the French and Americans. She replied that the Vietnamese had sufficient cultural ties with France that they have a love-hate attitude; they may not view us the same way and may also think we are more vulnerable than the French because of the visibility of anti-war protests during our presence in Southeast Asia. The Chairman asked whether she believed there could still be live American POWs and she said no, because they would see this as a threat to their ability to capitalize on return of remains. She suggested that if they were asked for return of deserters, it might provide them a face-saving basis for releasing anyone still captive. The Chairman responded this would be unlikely to work out as they had already been clearly asked for any Americans in their custody. Mr. Montgomery commented that it should be clear by now that the Vietnamese will get no financial aid from Congress and that if they would provide information it would speed things up. Ms. Lauve responded that it may be difficult to convince them of this.

Mr. Gilman asked whether the French employed any third country in obtaining an accounting for MIAs. Ms. Lauve responded that they had employed the International Red Cross and stated that if the United States were to seek the assistance of a third country, it would have to be one which was doing something for Vietnam and she could not think of a good candidate.

As an example of the financial value of the remains recovery process to the North Vietnamese, Ms. Lauve stated that the North Vietnamese exacted an agreement from the French to pay for the upkeep of cemeteries having French graves. Despite upkeep payments, the cemeteries are all weeds.

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In June of 1966, in retaliation for the bombing of North Vietnam, Hanoi announced that captured airmen would be tried for war crimes. That announcement naturally shocked American public opinion. In June and July the entire system of collecting, disseminating and processing information on missing personnel was reviewed and streamlined. Interagency cooperation expanded and was gradually formalized.

The major elements of the community working of PW/MIA problems were the Defense Intelligence Agency, the intelligence branches of the military services, the National Security Agency (NSA), the Central Intelligence Agency, and the Department of State. A brief listing of the types of sources developed by these various agencies gives an indication of the scope of the collection effort:

- CIA and the military services cooperated in directing intelligence agents against key requirements, such as location of prison camps, information on movement of prisoners, and identification of prisoners.
- The large network of debriefing and interrogation centers developed in liaison with local government intelligence agencies in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia produced a most useful product. This mechanism interrogated several hundred thousand prisoners of war, and also debriefed refugees and ralliers. The best sources were debriefed or interrogated in depth; they provided very valuable information on the Communist prison system, techniques and policy of exploiting prisoners, location of prisons, and less frequently, actual identification of prisoners.
- Photo reconnaissance produced immense quantities of imagery, an expensive but effective tool when used in conjunction with interrogation reports. Photography could often be used to evaluate information from persons who had been in areas where their information could not otherwise be checked. Photos were also used for operational planning of rescue attempts.
- With the cooperation of many government agencies, a massive collection effort was launched world-wide to pick up all overt and unclassified media coverage and photography of the PWs and the prisons where they were held. This effort was coordinated by CIA, but the end product was analyzed and disseminated by DIA. Many men were confirmed in captivity as a result of this effort.

- Escaped American prisoners and released PWs were valuable sources of information on the prisons they had been in and persons who were left behind.
- After the build up of U.S. forces in South Vietnam, a huge volume of captured documents flowed regularly into a joint document analysis center. Hundreds of documents were found that helped explain the Communist prison system, outlined plans for exploitation or movement of prisoners, and occasionally furnished a lead to the location of a prison camp.
- Communist radio broadcasts were carefully monitored for information about PWs. Alleged confessions by the PWs, a favorite device with North Vietnamese Communists as well as with other Communist Governments, were carefully examined for general information on the condition of the PWs.
- Communications intelligence was used to confirm shoot-downs and truck movements and to provide information on movement of PWs.
- Indigenous ground reconnaissance teams operating in contested and hostile territory supported many aspects of the PW/MIA intelligence effort. In Laos teams maintained safe sites on hill tops. Civilian and military pilots were given the locations of these safe sites and on numerous occasions pilots were able to avoid capture by making their way to a safe site and to wait for exfiltration. On one occasion in 1964 a Navy pilot downed in northern Laos escaped from a Pathet Lao prison and made his way to a safe site, where he was recovered. The teams also participated in many SAR efforts, some successful, some unsuccessful. One team investigated a crash site and brought out the remains of a civilian pilot, thus changing his status from MIA to KIA. Indigenous reconnaissance teams followed standard procedures of checking out, if possible, all crash sites, prison sites and reported sightings of Americans. Some teams specialized in collecting intelligence, and produced disseminable information on sightings of American PWs.

As a result of the activities I have just described, an extensive data base was compiled.

This base included:

- thousands of debriefing and interrogation reports.
- all the escapee and releasee debriefings,
- information from sensitive sources,
- unclassified information from the media,
- pictures and research on prison locations,
- photographs and movies, in which PWs, gravesites, or prisons were shown, and
- eye-witness reports from those who participated in combat actions in which other Americans were lost.

Intelligence analysts, collating and interpreting this data, remained particularly alert to any leads concerning our missing personnel. The data base was also used in preparing papers for the American delegation to the Paris Peace negotiations, and in exerting diplomatic pressure for improved treatment of PWs. It is this same data base that now enables us to pinpoint those cases of missing personnel about whom the enemy certainly must have hard information.

Information in this data base has been provided to all the services and members of the intelligence community, as needed, and all pertinent information released to the service personnel offices for the benefit of families concerned.

Mr. Chairman, I have referred to the complexity of the intelligence problem, the build up of our collection assets after 1965, the types of sources and information obtained, and the resulting data base. Now I would like to summarize the results of extensive analysis of this data base, in the effort to determine whether any Americans may still be alive in captivity in Southeast Asia. I will summarize country-by-country, in the order: Cambodia, Laos, North Vietnam and South Vietnam.

CAMBODIA

Personnel who returned to the U.S. during Operation Homecoming said that everyone they saw or knew of in captivity had been accounted for either as returnees or on the list of those who died in captivity.

An Army deserter, was reported to be living in Cambodia as of May 1974. He deserted in 1967, and was associated with the Vietnamese Communists for several years both in Vietnam and Cambodia. He reportedly left

— the Vietnamese Communists in October 1973 and joined the Khmer Rouge.
 —No new information has been received to confirm his whereabouts since May 1974.

Several U.S. personnel known to have been captured in Cambodia prior to April 1975 have never been accounted for. No reliable information has been received on these persons for years. After the evacuation from Phnom Penh in April 1975 two U.S. civilians were not accounted for. There is no confirmed information on the status of these individuals.

LAOS

Returnees during Operation Homecoming had no first hand knowledge of any Americans captured in Laos other than the nine who were released by the DRV in Hanoi.

U.S. personnel known to have been captured in Laos have not all been accounted for. The new Communist Government of Laos has not provided information on missing Americans.

In September 1974 an American citizen, and an Australian citizen, disappeared in central Laos. The last reliable report said they had been sighted alive near Ban Phontan in late February 1975.

An American pilot was released in the prisoner exchange of September - November 1974; he had no knowledge of other Americans in captivity in Laos.

NORTH VIETNAM

Careful analysis of all debriefings of returnees from North Vietnam during Operation Homecoming established that all men known to the returnees to have been in the prison system had been accounted for. The returnees knew of men who had been seen in captivity on the ground but not in the prison system; many of these were not accounted for and are now on the list for which we have asked the DRV to account.

There has been no substantive reporting, confirmed or confirmable, of Americans still being held captive in North Vietnam. Many rumors have been carefully analyzed. Some have related to men already released.

After the fall of Saigon, nine Americans captured during the Spring of 1975 in the central part of South Vietnam were taken to Son Tay prison in North Vietnam for interrogation. They were later released from Hanoi.

Their debriefings had no substantive information on additional Americans held in captivity in North Vietnam.

SOUTH VIETNAM

All persons known by returnees during Operation Homecoming to have been in captivity in South Vietnam were accounted for.

An American soldier captured in Quang Nam province in 1965 was held with some of the returnees; the returnees said that from 1967 to 1969 they had seen this individual working with the enemy. There were reports of an American, possibly the same individual, operating with the enemy in northern South Vietnam as late as August 1973.

There are still a number of Americans in Saigon. There have been reports that a few of them are in jail. These cases of Americans in Saigon, are being handled separately from the PW/MIA cases, since the names and circumstances are well known.

There are cases of men known to have been captured in South Vietnam for whom there has been no accounting. We have no new substantial information on any of these cases.

In summary, there are cases where we are certain that the Communist governments of Indochina could account for the fate of persons known to have been alive since 1973 and in captivity or under Communist control. But we have no firm evidence that American PWs from the period before 1973 are still being held.

The above presentation deals with PWs. How would we summarize the situation regarding MIAs? The intelligence community has very little new information to offer on this subject. You may find useful a summary of what we think the Communist governments of Indochina should know and be able to provide concerning our MIAs. The Select Committee has heard expert evidence to the effect that it is highly improbable that all MIA cases can be resolved, given the nature of the terrain and the formidable challenges in ejecting from high performance aircraft. The following summation by no means alters that conclusion. Again, we will follow the order Cambodia, Laos, North Vietnam, South Vietnam.

CAMBODIA

The government of Cambodia has repeatedly claimed that it has no knowledge of any U.S. PWs held in Cambodia. Given the extreme upheaval of all the national institutions of Cambodia, it is quite possible that this is a fact; central records of PWs and other captives of the Khmer Rouge may not exist today. At any rate, we do not hold high hopes of obtaining PW/MIA information from the present government. We have no reports of such central records.

LAOS

Prior to the Communist take-over in Laos, the Pathet Lao enjoyed continuity and stability in their administrative capital at Sam Neua.

There were confirmed reports of at least three American PWs held in caves there. There were unconfirmed reports of several others. From time to time the Pathet Lao gave evidence of having an organized prison system.

On 26 September 1973 a U.S. Embassy official met with a high ranking Pathet Lao official who stated that the Pathet Lao Central Committee in Sam Neua had been gathering information on U.S. MIAs, but that they would probably be able to provide information on only a small fraction of the 300 MIA in Laos.

The above indicates that the Pathet Lao must have some central records and some information on MIAs. The following evidence points in the other direction, implying that Pathet Lao forces removed from Sam Neua were not required to report such information to a central headquarters. A Lao cadre who witnessed the downing of a USAF AC-130 on 21 December 1972 later rallied to the non-Communist government. He said that he had inspected the crash site and supervised burial of remains, then sent reports to the province commander. The reporting was on his own initiative. He said he had no requirement to mark the crash site, the grave sites, or to report on the incident. He said the Pathet Lao did not have an organized system for accounting for enemy crash sites and grave sites. This is considered a credible report.

Perhaps it would be reasonable to conclude that the Pathet Lao may well have useful records of events which took place in the immediate vicinity of Sam Neua, but much poorer records of anything which occurred at a distance.

NORTH VIETNAM

There is no question that the North Vietnamese have knowledge concerning the fate of some unaccounted-for U.S. personnel lost over North Vietnam. A wealth of information on specific aircraft downings was published in the North Vietnamese press throughout the Vietnam war. At times, only the fact that the aircraft was downed in a specific province or district was broadcast; at other times, the fate of the pilot was mentioned. A locality or unit was oftentimes commended for capturing a U.S. pilot or downing a U.S. aircraft.

A Communist source interrogated during the Vietnam war stated that the DRV intelligence and security services maintained central listings of all U.S. PWs detained in the DRV. This source also reported as a DRV requirement that all data pertaining to the death and burial of an American prisoner, whether in the DRV or the South, was to be forwarded to Hanoi as quickly as possible, together with sketches of the burial site. It was reported that the policy office of the DRV Ministry of Defense, Enemy Proselyting Department, was required to examine and store all PW personal effects, documents,

military clothing, hand-carried equipment, and dog tags. When the body of an American was recovered, or when a PW died in captivity in the DRV, all personal effects were turned in to the policy office for storage and the office arranged for burial of the American. Based on this information, and the known Communist proclivity for detailed reporting, it is believed that the DRV/PRG holds significant amounts of accurate information on former and current American MIA/KIA in Southeast Asia.

SOUTH VIETNAM

The PRG, and possibly the DRV, should have information on Americans lost in the South prior to 1973, although the extent of this information is unknown. In early 1973, the PRG released some Americans and provided a list of those who died in captivity, claiming this was a total accounting for all the Americans captured by the PRG. The PRG delegation to the Four Power Joint Military Team (FPJMT) made overtures in 1973 towards repatriating the remains of the 40 Americans they had reported as having died in captivity, but they failed to do so. Since that time the Communists have provided almost no information on U.S. MIAs and the remains of KIAs. From the available evidence we have concluded that more Americans were captured than were acknowledged by the PRG.

It is apparent that the enemy in South Vietnam kept some records on American battle casualties, U.S. PWs, and Americans who died after capture. Captured enemy documents include directives to local units for the collection of identification papers from the bodies of dead Americans.

The extent of these records is not known, and one should not be overly optimistic that such records will be provided and will be detailed enough to resolve MIA cases.

Mr. Chairman, I have just reviewed the intelligence community's data bank and the results of analysis of that extensive set of information. We have tried to answer two questions: First, are there any Americans still in captivity in Indochina? and second, how much do Indochina governments know about American MIAs? Mr. Chairman, in conclusion may I draw the threads of these remarks together into one brief statement?

A review of the Intelligence Community's holdings shows that we have no confirmed information that additional American PWs are still being held in captivity in Southeast Asia or elsewhere, as a result of the Indochina war. Among the Americans unaccounted for, there are some who were known to have been captive at one time. There is good reason to believe that the Hanoi government (and the Saigon authorities, which are being unified with Hanoi) could quickly resolve many MIA

cases if they chose to, that the government of Laos could resolve some, but that the government of Cambodia may not be in a position to give more than vague information.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And, now, if there are any questions I will be glad to try to answer them.