NATIONAL LEAGUE OF FAMILIES
OF AMERICAN PRISONERS AND MISSING IN SOUTHEAST ASIA
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MEMORANDUM TO: REGIONAL AND STATE COORDINATORS

I have received a number of inquiries asking if the recent remarks of the League's executive director in the December Newsletter and Memo to Coordinators represented the views and official position of the League's Board of Directors. I would like to clarify this for you.

The answer is NO, the views expressed are strictly personal and do not represent the official position of the Board.

The purpose of the Newsletter is to provide information to its readers on the League's activities, projects, and important information on the POW-MIA issue itself. It is not to be used as a vehicle for expression of personal opinion, to continuously praise the government or its officials unless such praise is earned, or to attempt to censor the expressions and thoughts of League members.

We are all pleased the President has proclaimed the POW-MIA issue to be one of "highest national priority" - and I believe the President to be sincere when he makes such a statement. Implicit within such a statement is that the President expects results. He does not have to follow up and "pledge or guarantee" results separately. Further, he does not have to separately establish a specific timeframe as a high national priority problem implies action to be taken immediately to resolve that problem. For the US government or others to alibi the reason for no results on return of live POWs simply because the President did not promise results or pledge a timeframe is ludicrous.

We hold the President to his pledge of resolving this problem on a "high national priority" basis with the only result satisfactory to us being the return of our live prisoners. Action, not rhetoric, will bring our men home. If we do not get action - and get it soon - then all statements, assurances, or promises are indeed rhetoric and meaningless. If constructive criticisms would "severely damage our public awareness efforts" and cause rhetoric to be discontinued, then it brings to question the sincerity of those working on the issue. The lives of our men are at stake, and if some officials are too thin skinned to take some criticism, they should step aside and let more sincere ones take their place.

The greatest weakness, past and present, is in our intelligence operations in Vietnam and Laos, or the lack of them. All the

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modern and high technology methods for collection of intelligence used today, i.e. satellite photography, electronic intercepts, etc. will not provide the evidence needed to prove our men are alive, who they may be, or where they are being held and other vital ingredients needed by the President to secure their release. Only human intelligence (agent) through covert operations, on the ground in country, can do this. Unfortunately, this capability does not exist. If it did exist, we would have had our men home long ago.

To support the above, only three months ago on 14 October, 1983 former Congressman John Le Boutillier (R-NY) stated, "We don't have one agent on the ground in Laos or Vietnam". In view of Le Boutillier's knowledge of classified material and experience during his two years on the House POW-MIA Task Force, I believe him. Supporting this position, Senator Barry Goldwater, Chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee told me two years ago, during a discussion of the POW-MIA problem, the US intelligence agencies did not have the capability to conduct covert operations in Vietnam and Laos - all of our operations were shut off when the war ended.

In discussing the Senators comments with two ranking military intelligence officers in July of last year, one confirmed Goldwater's assertion to me. Even later, in September of last year, only four months ago, a high level State Department official stated he had been told the same thing. This explains why we have not had our live men released and why, after three years in office, the Reagan administration has not made any progress towards that goal.

We do not wish to listen to repetitive rhetoric or promises from high government officials. After listening to the same story for so many years, it has little meaning. More important time and effort should be devoted to securing results, and securing them soon, than to flattering or misleading the families and the American people.

Until the Reagan administration achieve positive results and secure the release of our men, we must keep pressure on the President of the United States, holding him to his pledge of high priority and guarantee of results. He is the only man who can ensure results and, in our democratic form of government, he must respond to the demands of the American people. The hundreds of thousands of letters to the Vietnamese over the past two years have not produce a single live American, so the time is now to flood the President with letters and messages letting him personally know we hold him responsible and we expect results.

This is an election year and either this administration or a new one will take over in January. We can not wait any longer. We are tired of rhetoric, assurances, promises - or call it what you like - we want our men home and home this year.

Do not be intimidated or or mesmerized by what you hear. Regain your independence and speak out and speak out loudly - our men are dying every day, every week, or every year. THINK ABOUT IT!

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