

FORM 10001/001Z F-24Z

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MEMORANDUM TO CONGRESS

FROM: JOHN R. HOLLAND, Director, AFFA

SUBJECT: Rebuttal of a Memorandum to Congress, from Ms Griffith  
of the National League of Families, Subject:  
Opposition to HR 1730 (See Inclosure #1)

Members of Congress oft rely on grass roots organizations to guide them in their decisions on various subjects. This is a laudatory process. However, some leaders of these grass roots organizations become so enamoured with their self-importance that they begin giving their personal opinions as the considered decisions of the organization's members.

I fear that the National League of Families began to suffer this fate several years ago. The Members of Congress should look very closely at the 'leadership' of this organization. I do not believe that this 'leadership' is now relaying grass roots opinions to you.

I have long been concerned about the extended POW/MIA Dilemma. Thus, I was, and am, displeased that the league confined its membership to families of those missing in SE Asia. However, I supported their efforts until I became totally disenchanted with the 'leadership'.

It is my belief that if we can settle one segment of this Dilemma, it will all be settled. I believe that Congressional action is absolutely necessary to bring it to a successful closing. In recent years, the league 'leadership' has apparently been ignoring this possibility. They have been allowing that the only way to end it is by 'government to government relations'. It is toward Congressional action that I have been directing my efforts.

I am one who encouraged Congressman John Rowland to introduce HR 1730, "The Missing Service Personnel Act". Because Ms Griffith (but not the league members) has come out in opposition to HR 1730, I feel that I should chronicle a few facts about Ms Griffith and the league's rubber-stamp 'leadership', as I rebutt her opposition.

As I write this, I believe I am speaking for many of the league's members, as well as thousands and thousands of veterans and other concerned citizens, who are aware of the nefarious actions of Ms Griffith and the 'leadership'.

For more than three years Ms Griffith, and the 'leadership', have been unable to muster a quorum at the annual meetings of the league. So, I question whether any of them have the authority to speak for the majority of the members of that organization. I know full well that none of them speak for the great majority of veterans and other concerned citizens. In fact, many veterans consider Ms Griffith akin to 'Hanoi Jane' Fonda.



Ms Griffith and the 'leadership' have a history of running rough-shod over the rights of the members. Information, received from the government, that was meant to be shared by all members, has been denied them. Further, the full rights of some members to participate in the organization's deliberations have also been denied.

League members who had pre-registered for the annual meeting in 1988, even those who had received government assisted travel to attend, were denied access to all meetings. Without pre-meeting notice, Ms Griffith and the 'leadership' decided that no member could attend these important meetings unless they had also registered to attend the final banquet!

This capricious decision denied pre-registered members of the right to participate and vote. Further, it denied their presence when President Reagan addressed what he apparently believed to be all interested and registered members of the organization.

(As an aside - Some of the service casualty officers, who attend these functions, became so appalled, at this lack of concern for the members, that they attempted to intercede in their behalf. Their gracious actions were ungraciously rebuffed by Ms Griffith, and thus by the entire 'leadership'.)

In 1975 the members of the league passed a resolution encouraging the US Government to cease all economic and other forms of aid to Laos (See Inclosure #3). At the 1985 meeting this matter was again raised before the members. Ms Griffith encouraged the members to withdraw the afore mentioned resolution.

The Laotians have never accounted for the hundreds of missing men, that they admitted to be holding in 1973. Thus, the members decided, by a fair majority, to continue support of the ban.

Shortly thereafter, at a board meeting, Ms Griffith and the board overrode the decision of the members and voted to remove the prohibitions against this assistance. A letter from the Lao Embassy indicates how the wishes of the members were abrogated. (See Inclosure #3, reverse side)

Several years ago the CIA furnished the league several thousand documents pertaining to the Dilemma, with the understanding that the documents would be made available to the family members on request. After this, whenever the families submitted FOI's to the CIA they were told to peruse the documents at the league office. (See Inclosure #2)

These documents were not kept at the league office. They were stashed at the residence of the Chairman of the Board, and few, if any, other family members were allowed access to them. This matter was discussed at an annual meeting, and the members passed a resolution that the documents must be returned to the league office. To date this has not been done, and these important documents probably still repose at the Chairman's residence.



Ms Griffith and the 'leadership' have publically castigated and defiled many honorable individuals (including Ex-POW's, Congressmen, and ex-Congressmen). They have also attacked, defamed, and ridiculed other organizations, including a very viable veterans organization (i.e. Veterans of the Vietnam War), and many organizations that have the POW/MIA Dilemma as their reason for existing (among these are The National Forget-Me-Nots, that has nearly as many family members as does the league, and Task Force Omega, that has as one of it's leaders, a past Chairman of the League's Board). (See Inclosure #4)

To join this exalted group it is only necessary to make a statement, or take a stance, that differs even slightly from Ms Griffith's point of view.

As one who was instrumental in HR 1730 being introduced, I find Ms Griffith's opposition to it very misleading, badly misconstrued, and definately self-serving.

Ms Griffith insinuates that HR 1730 fails to address the problems of the entire (sic) audience affected. She is totally wrong. HR 1730 was designed to correct all of the problems caused by the present law. HR 1730 considers family members who are blantly ignored by the present law.

Another reason HR 1730 should be made into law is to explain past decisions of death, decisions that verged on being automatic decisions. The families should be entitled to know why the decision is made. We must protect our future generations of service personnel from suffering the same unwarranted fate that many of their abandoned predecessors met.

Ms Griffith again avoids the exact truth when she infers that HR 4632 (the fore-runner of HR 1730) was dicussed at the annual meeting in 1988. Ms Griffith became aware of HR 4632 in May 1988, but it was not officially mentioned to the members of the league prior to the annual meeting in July. Actually, it was not mentioned at the meeting until late Saturday afternoon, when Mr Walter Fitts' resolution, in support of it, had to be brought to the floor.

The majority of the members had not heard of HR 4632 prior to this time. They were not furnished a copy, nor even a synopsis of it, and those who were familiar with it were not allowed to discuss it while it was on the floor. The 'leadership' immediately tabled the resolution, and inferred that it would be discussed at a later board meeting. I do not believe that it was discussed at any board meeting thereafter, nor do I believe that it was ever officially mentioned again during the life of the 100th Congress.

Ms Griffith stated that the league should have input in any legislation that pertains the Dilemma. She had a chance to influence The Missing Service Personnel Act in 1988. I approached her, about the necessity of changing the present law, prior to approaching Congressman Rowland. At that time she stated that while she was aware of the deficiencies of the present law, she didn't believe that it was the proper time to seek a change.



Members of Congress should be made cognizant of facts that are well noted in the POW/MIA movement.

Nearly all of the activists in this Dilemma began their efforts by working with, and supporting, the league. However, during the past eight years they have splintered off to form numerous other groups. Most of these activists still support and work with the individual family members whenever possible.

Most activists refuse to work with Ms Griffith and the 'leadership' of the league. Why should they? Few intelligent people, who can recognize truth when they see it, will spend their free time and hard earned money following any individual with a rubber-stamp 'leadership'. This is especially true when the individual demands blind adherence to dictates that are self serving and counter to the beliefs of the activists.

Members of Congress are encouraged to listen to their constituents, who are concerned enough to be informed, about this horrendous Dilemma.

Do not put your complete faith and total trust (and thus the fate of all our missing service personnel - past and future) in such 'a small, distorted, hand basket' as the so called 'leadership' of the National League of Families.

Similar legislation was considered at last year's annual meeting and the families declined to take a position in favor or opposed, primarily due to some of the proposed revisions. The "decision" taken by the families was that the League should seek input into "the revision of the appropriate sections of the U.S. Code as it pertains to persons missing as a result of armed conflict."

The changes to the U.S. Code proposed by Mr. Rowland in H.R. 1734 would directly affect the POW/MIA families who comprise the League. We found it highly unusual that no attempt was made to obtain the families' views.

There are several problem areas in the language proposed by Mr. Rowland, as follows:

- Provides for board hearings or meetings to be open to the public, without considering the wishes of the missing person's family.
- Provides for retrospective addressal of missing status upon request of any member of the missing individual's immediate family.
- Provides for any member of the immediate family to have access to information and prerogatives equal to those of the primary next-of-kin.
- Fails to realistically consider wartime conditions which impact on the availability of detailed information.

*Inch...*





## MEMORANDUM TO CONGRESS

From: *AG* Ann Mills Griffiths, Executive Director

Subject: OPPOSITION TO H. R. 1730

Date: May 25, 1989

The elected board of directors of the National League of Families recently considered the merits of the proposed legislation and voted unanimously to oppose H.R. 1730. While recognizing that relevant provisions of the U.S. Code are outdated, it is our view that serious consideration must be given to developing laws which have far-reaching impact. Any change in the United States Code must take into consideration the full audience potentially affected; i.e. those who served in the past, those now serving and those who will serve in the future.

Similar legislation was considered at last year's annual meeting and the families declined to take a position in favor or opposed, primarily due to some of the proposed revisions. The "decision" taken by the families was that the League should seek input into "the revision of the appropriate sections of the U.S. Code as it pertains to persons missing as a result of armed conflict."

The changes to the U.S. Code proposed by Mr. Rowland in H.R. 1730 most directly affect the POW/MIA families who comprise the League. We found it highly unusual that no attempt was made to obtain the families' views.

There are several problem areas in the language proposed by Mr. Rowland, as follows:

- Provides for board hearings or meetings to be open to the public, without considering the wishes of the missing person's family.
- Provides for retroactive addressal of missing status upon request of any member of the missing individual's immediate\* family.
- Provides for any member of the immediate family to have access to information and prerogatives equal to those of the primary next-of-kin.
- Fails to realistically consider wartime conditions which impact on the availability of detailed information.

*Incl #1*



Finally, much as the families would like the ability to mandate accountability for our missing relatives, it is not possible: the answers sought are in the hands of others. Cooperation of those governments must be voluntary, forced or determined to be in their national interest. The latter scenario has been the most productive, since "force" was not an option to the American people or the Congress, and initially there was little indication of volunteerism on the part of Vietnam or Laos. Both countries have markedly increased cooperation, and the families are optimistic that current levels of activity will result in significant progress; however, greater seriousness by Hanoi is still required. Thus far, Phnom Penh has been unwilling to cooperate despite public claims to have remains of Americans in their possession.

It is our hope that you will consider the views of the POW/MIA families in deciding whether H.R. 1730 warrants your support. We urge your opposition. Should you wish to discuss this matter, please feel free to contact me.

cc: Board of Directors  
State & Regional Coordinators

\* Spouse, each adopted or natural child, each parent and each sibling.

