



NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

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DOLE DISAPPOINTED WITH PROGRESS ON MIA ACCOUNTING

Senator Bob Dole said today that he is disappointed that the Vietnamese Government did not provide more information on missing American servicemen to the Presidential Commission that recently visited Hanoi, and he fears the issue will become "an unobtrusive footnote" to forthcoming discussions in Paris on resuming U.S.-Vietnamese diplomatic relations.

"The Woodcock Commission returned essentially empty-handed, yet the Administration appears determined to proceed with plans for normalizing relations with Vietnam," Dole said today in a statement prepared for presentation to the Senate. "I am pleased that President Carter acted early in sending an executive commission to Vietnam to raise the subject of an accounting, but the commission's visit, in fact, produced no tangible accounting for 2500 missing Americans in Southeast Asia." Senator Dole pointed out that the remains of eleven U.S. casualties which the Commission brought back had already been identified by the Vietnamese Government last September "and should have been returned long before now."

Dole said he plans to meet with officials of the Department of Defense today to discuss the accounting issue, and to determine what documented evidence the Department may have about American servicemen known to have been killed or taken captive by the Vietnamese. He said he was leery of suggestions that the Vietnamese have provided us with all MIA information currently at their disposal, and cited a comment in the Commission's own Report to the President that the Vietnam Government "almost certainly has at least some additional MIA information available." The Senator said this did not reflect genuine progress and cooperation on the subject.

"My chief concern at this point is that momentum appears to be building towards early normalization of U.S. relations with Vietnam, without tangible progress towards the accounting we have been seeking," Dole commented. "At a time when this Administration addresses itself so eloquently to the matter of universal compassion for human rights, it seems only fitting that the same criteria of judgment needs to be applied to Vietnam's treatment of the MIA issue. I can say with confidence that the Congress and the American public are not going to forget the MIA accounting."

Senator Dole added that Americans are still listed as missing in Laos and Cambodia as well. Although officials of those governments have not been cooperative in efforts to discuss an accounting, Dole said he will urge the Administration to continue to press for progress in those areas as well.