



NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

(R.—Kans.)

New Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510 (202) 224-6521

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CONTACT: BOB WAITE, BILL KATS
202-224-8953, 224-8947

CREATION OF COMMISSION TO ACCOUNT FOR AMERICAN MIAs IN SOUTHEAST ASIA PROPOSED BY DOLE

WASHINGTON -- Sen. Bob Dole (R-Kan.) today introduced a bill calling for the creation of a special investigating commission to secure a full accounting of the approximately 2,300 American servicemen missing in action and being held as prisoners of war as a result of the Vietnam war.

The resolution calls for the commission to be composed of "individuals selected because of their impeccable credentials and their long-standing service to the principles embodied in the United Nations Charter." The Dole resolution was introduced in conjunction with a concurrent resolution on the House side, introduced in January by Rep. Tennyson Guyer (R-Ohio). In 1976, Sen. Dole introduced a concurrent resolution to establish a presidential task force on the POW/MIA issue, which passed in the Senate, but unfortunately never got out of committee in the House.

The final report of the House Select Committee on MIAs concluded that the North Vietnamese have information on many Americans missing in Indochina, and more recently Marine Private Robert Garwood, who just returned to the United States, stated that he knew of Americans still in POW camps, Dole said.

"Past efforts to obtain a reasonable and accurate accounting from the governments of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia have not been productive," Dole said. "Since the military and congressional inquiry teams have expired, there is a crucial need for some vehicle to continue the efforts to seek out the whereabouts of these men still in question, and to continue to push for cooperation from these governments. We have been witnessing a callous disregard for basic human rights of American MIAs and POWs and their families. I believe this commission could address these gross violations and promote a more acceptable level of cooperation from the Vietnamese, Laotian and Cambodian governments.

"By obtaining more responsive cooperation and more satisfactory results, this could remove an important obstacle to improved relations with Vietnam, and could help open the doors to discussions of trade, UN membership and U.S. recognition. It is vital that we sustain an active effort to achieve progress toward an accounting before agreeing to trade, aid or formal diplomatic ties with Vietnam. In order to really close the final chapter on the Vietnam war, I submit the need for a full accounting is essential."