

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Week of April 27, 1987

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DOLE PRAISES CHOICE OF VESSEY AS POW/MIA ENVOY

Washington, DC -- President Reagan's choice of General John Vessey, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to serve as presidential envoy to Hanoi shows the Administration "has again clearly demonstrated their seriousness on the POW/MIA issue," said Senate Republican Leader Bob Dole (R-KS).

In a speech on the Senate floor, Sen. Dole said, "As we all know, Hanoi made a commitment in 1985 to engage the U.S. on resolving the fate of our MIAs as a separate, humanitarian issue, and to work for its complete resolution within two years. Early negotiations were promising and many of our heroes' remains have been returned.

"But as this year's deadline approaches, we find that both technical and policy talks have stalled. The Vietnamese claim this is due to internal political reasons. Well, now they've had their elections and I would hope that they will once again negotiate in good faith and not attempt to link resolution of the POW/MIA issue to other political matters. It's clearly in Vietnam's interest to resolve this remaining vestige of the war.

"With the Vessey initiative, the Administration has again clearly demonstrated their seriousness on the POW/MIA issue. As early as last fall, President Reagan saw the need to accelerate Vietnamese cooperation and approved one of America's finest, Jack Vessey, as his personal emissary to Hanoi. This appointment was just recently presented to the Vietnamese; unfortunately, the initiative was leaked. Nonetheless, Jack Vessey will do a fine job - the next move is up to the Vietnamese.

"We would all hope that a realistic agenda for resuming the talks will be forthcoming and that Hanoi will continue serious negotiations on humanitarian grounds. Many American families wish to resolve once and for all the fate of their loved ones who served our country so selflessly. We must all continue our commitment to seeing a speedy resolution to the POW/MIA issue and we wish Jack Vessey all the best in his efforts on behalf of a grateful nation," Sen. Dole concluded.