

Bob Dole



NEWS

U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE MAJORITY LEADER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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VIETNAM NORMALIZATION

**CENTRAL QUESTION OF WITHHOLDING POW/MIA INFORMATION
REMAINS UNADDRESSED; DOLE URGES EXAMINATION OF FUTURE COOPERATION
ON POW/MIA & HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES**

President Clinton announced today that he was taking steps to normalize U.S. diplomatic relations with the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. In his statement, President Clinton cited progress in POW/MIA cooperation.

Unfortunately, President Clinton did not address the central issue: is Vietnam continuing to withhold information and remains which could easily be provided? The President ignored this question in announcing his decision -- for the very good reason that all signs point to Vietnam willfully withholding information which could resolve the fate of many Americans lost in the war.

On Veterans Day in 1992, President Elect Clinton stated, "There will be no normalization of relations with any nation that is at all suspected of withholding any information." That was President-Elect Clinton's standard. The standard was not simply cooperation. The standard was not simply allowing field operations. The 1992 standard was at all suspected of withholding any information. By 1994, the standard has clearly changed from suspected of withholding information to selective cooperation. As I said yesterday, if President Clinton was unable to state unequivocally that Vietnam had done all it could do to provide information on POWs and MIAs, it would be a strategic, diplomatic and moral mistake to begin business as usual with Vietnam.

President Clinton has made his decision today. Congress has no say in this decision. In the coming weeks and months, Congress will monitor the progress of relations with Vietnam. Our role will not be passive. Congress must approve any additional funds for U.S. diplomatic operations in Vietnam. The Senate must confirm any U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam. Any further improvement in relations will require action by Congress -- granting of Most Favored Nation status or beginning any operations by the Export-Import Bank, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, or the Trade and Development Agency.

President Clinton said today that we should look to the future. I agree that we should look to the future, and examine future Vietnamese cooperation on POW/MIA issues, as well their record on human rights in the aftermath of today's announcement. But as we look to the future we will not forget the past -- especially the importance of doing all we can to resolve the fate of those Americans who made the ultimate sacrifice in Vietnam.

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* Remarks delivered on Senate floor, approximately 4:50 p.m.