

SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL HEARING
CHAIRIED BY CONGRESSMAN ROBERT K. DORNAN
JUNE 28, 1995

STATEMENT OF CAROL HRDLICKA, WIFE OF COL. DAVID L. HRDLICKA
KNOWN TO BE ALIVE & IN CAPTIVITY. COL. HRDLICKA WAS NEVER
RETURNED.

Thank you Mr. Chairman for having the moral courage and integrity to address the problems of getting at the truth about our honorable men that were abandoned by their government. I wish to express my appreciation to the chairman & committee members for allowing me the opportunity, to one more time, address the problems the families have had getting the truth about our loved ones.

David L. Hrdlicka was 33yrs old and a career Air Force pilot who loved his flying and believed in protecting his country. Our children were small, David M. 7yrs old, Denise 4yrs old and Damian 3yrs old, he was looking forward to their growing up so they could share his love of the outdoors. He believed by protecting his country he was protecting his children and their future. He trusted the government. He would have never believed he would have been sent into a situation where his country would not come rescue him, or be denied by the very government he thought he was protecting.

David and I were married when I was just nineteen, so I matured as an Air Force wife. On May 18, 1965 I was only 27 when the McConnell AFB Commander, Col. Dannacher told me the news David had been shot down. David was my whole life and I didn't expect to have the responsibility of raising three small children on my own. I always thought I would have David to help share ideas on how the children should be raised. I was also advised David had been lost in Laos which was considered to be a secret war and I should not say anything because I could cause David to be killed. It was not until the 1990's I discovered other families had also been told the same thing. I always did what was asked of me by casualty and trusted them to handle David's case because I believed they had the background and training in such matters where I was just a military wife and didn't have the expertise. I believed them when they had a Presumptive Finding of Death Hearing in Nov. 1977 and declared David "KIA". Only recently did I find out that it was an informal hearing and no evidence was presented at that time.

I followed their direction and tried to go on with my life. Thirteen years later, in 1990 I received a letter from DIA stating a source had information that David had tried to escape in 1989. That was a shock to me. Then DIA went on to debunk the source. In July of 1990 I received another report stating a "General Chaeng was suspected of holding D. Hrdlicka and friends". To my shock and horror I began to realize I had been betrayed by

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the very government I had trusted for 25 years. I believe the only reason I received the Chaeng report was because Col. Millard Peck was in charge of the DIA POW/MIA office at that time. Col. Peck later resigned because of the way the families were denied the truth about their loved ones.

At that point I decided to start my own investigating. The more I questioned and asked for answers the more I was ignored. I asked for evidence of David's dying in captivity and was told they had none. The DIA had used old reports, which they later admitted did not correlate to David, to falsify the fact he died. The JTFFA were told by the Laotians David's grave had been blown up by the B52 raids. Later the Laotians told them there was another grave site which was excavated. It contained no bone fragments or artifacts. Why do the Laotians keep changing their story?

This is the same thing that has been going on with the U.S. government for years. I will give you a couple of examples in my case of deceiving and lying by the DIA. In 1992, I sent a Freedom of Information request in on my husband, David L. Hrdlicka, asking for rescue attempts, all information, and information on an operation called "Duck Soup". Mr. Trowbridge of DIA, who coincidentally did the analysis on David's 1966 reports, responded--there was no such operation as "Duck Soup" and there had never been any rescue attempts for David. Low and behold, General Secord testified before the Senate Select Committee that there were rescue attempts for David made as late as 1967 and there were a raft of cables in CIA on that operation. Just in the last few months I have received documents describing there was such an operation as "Duck Soup" which took place in the Sam Neua area in June of 1965. Mr. Chairman, I would like these documents entered into the record. Guess whose name is in one of the cables regarding the Sam Neua area? Davids.

The DIA continues to state I have been given all the information when my basic requests are, to this date, not answered. One outstanding example--I have requested the answer to a question being asked in a Stony Beach report where a U. S. investigator in June 1989 is questioning a General Chaeng "suspected of holding D. Hrdlicka and friends". I have asked for the "outcome of that conversation" for 5 years, and to date I have not received the answer. I have asked for David's authenticator code or whatever they used to identify him in case of his being shot down, I have not received that. In 1994, I received documents found by a private researcher, Mr. Roger Hall. These documents pertain to David by name and I had not been provided these documents by the very agencies that tell me they have given me "all the information". The Chairman, Senator John Kerry promised, during my testimony before the Senate Select Committee, that he would get the answers on these same reports for me, well I have not heard a word from Senator John Kerry. Senator John Kerry promised, on the record, to arrange a meeting for me with the same Vietnamese officials he had met with, he has never fulfilled that promise either.

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I have offered many times, at my own expense, to meet with any officials and go over documents they say show David died in captivity. Yet, when I have asked for evidence that David died in captivity, I am told there is no evidence. The DOD publishes a POW/MIA Fact book wherein it states there are intelligence reports that indicate David died in captivity, I have asked to see the exact reports they refer to, and am told I have the reports. Mr. Chairman, I do not have any report that has David's name on it stating he died in captivity. How is it that government agencies are able to circulate false information? Col. Schlatter of D.I.A. has finally admitted there were reports correlated to David that, do not, correlate to David, (many of which state a POW died on dates when David was still known to be alive). Where is Congressional oversight?

Congressman Dornan, I beg you, get the Government Accounting Office to do an investigation of the DPMO, DIA, and the JIFFA to include the shredding of documents in Bangkok. We have reports that show the JIFFA wasting taxpayers money and doing an unprofessional job closing out cases. They have committed fraud, waste, abuse. The taxpayers money has been wasted under the guise of investigating the cases of POW/MIAs.

There are documents that show the D.I.A. has known for years that remains of American servicemen are warehoused in Vietnam---why are we still putting young people at great risk and wasting 100 million dollars each year of taxpayers money digging at remote crash sites? Robert McNamara has just recently admitted he knowingly sent young men off to their deaths (to be murdered)--today we are sending young people into harms way again by digging at remote crash sites, don't these officials ever learn by their mistakes? It is high time that the DIA be held accountable for the waste and irresponsible handling of the POW issue thru oversight. The D.I.A. has been condemned by their own officials. In a 1985 memo from Thomas A. Brooks, Assistant Deputy Director for Collection Management to B. General Shuffelt they are charged with shoddy work, not using basic analytical tools, not following up on cases, and all in all unprofessional. They were also condemned by General Tighe and again in 1991 by the resignation of Col. Peck. It is the responsibility of Congress to make sure the taxpayers money is not wasted. At this point, it would be more cost effective to remove D.I.A. from their current role and go to the private sector where honest, skilled investigators could be hired.

I have exhausted every avenue, at my own expense, to find the truth about David's fate without the aid or assistance from the very agencies that were charged with solving his case. We even tried to take the evidence to the White House in November 1993. The President has not afforded the families the opportunity to present the evidence to him in person. The public is told there is much progress on the MIA issue but what the public is not told is, there were over 300 men left alive in captivity---what happened to them? These men were never missing, they were prisoners. However there has been a

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systematic campaign to convince the American public that all the servicemen are MIA, that is not the case.

One prominent problem is getting the government agencies and officials to address the fact there were men captured alive, held in captivity, and never returned--what happened to them? These men were never in a missing status. Why is it then, the U.S. Government officials such as Assistant State Secretary Winston Lord, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense James Wold and Deputy Secretary for Veterans Affairs Hershel Gober will not address that question to the Vietnamese or Laotians? Instead, these officials consider the number one criteria remains & relay that to the Vietnamese & Laotians. On the recent high level Presidential Delegation, the number one talking point is still remains. The number one talking point should be, what happened to over 300 men that were alive and in the prison system, did they just disappear into thin air? If these men died in captivity then the Vietnamese & Laotians know where their remains are buried and should have returned them years ago. The Vietnamese were meticulous record keepers, did they just lose these men in their prison system? It is a known fact that the Laotians admitted they held prisoners and would not release them until the U.S. Officials came to Vientiane to make arrangements for the release of the prisoners they held, the Laotians said they would not release their prisoners through Hanoi. That meeting never took place and no one was released from Laos.

David was sent into harms way by the U.S. Government into an covert, unconstitutional war in Laos, where is oversight by Congress? David was an ordinary serviceman, why was he used in a covert action? By being sent into an covert, unconstitutional war in Laos there was no leverage to get him released. David's constitutional rights have been violated and I need the help of the Congress to protect David's rights.

For many years I believed in and trusted every government official. I accepted as fact everything they told me about David's case. However, after seeing the evidence, I realize my trust has been betrayed. What is even worse the U.S. Government has betrayed their honorable servicemen. How is it that for more than 20 years this continual pattern of lying and deceiving the families has been allowed to continue? We have had many hearings and heard many promises, then in the end we are always patted on the head, and business as usual returns. People within the agencies, such as Mr. Trowbridge, are promoted and continue on in their jobs. Where is Congressional oversight? I've heard the lies and the promises, yet today, I am no closer to finding the truth about David's whereabouts or fate.

Please, Congressman Dornan, ask GAO to do an investigation while you continue your formal hearings and oversight. Will you do this for David and all the other honorable men who may still waiting to come home?